

SEMANTIC AND FUNCTIONAL COMPARISON OF EUPHEMISMS IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH

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Abstract

This article presents a comparative analysis of the semantic and functional aspects of euphemisms in Uzbek and English. The study explores the role of euphemisms in society, their social, cultural, and pragmatic characteristics. The findings indicate that in Uzbek, euphemisms are primarily based on norms of politeness and respect, while in English, they are widely used in formal and diplomatic discourse. Additionally, the research highlights the importance of contextual appropriateness in the translation of euphemisms. This study is of practical significance for the fields of linguistics, translation studies, and cultural studies.

Keywords: Euphemism, semantics, pragmatics, comparative analysis, linguistics, translation, cultural studies, political correctness, communication.

Introduction

Language is a crucial reflection of human cognition and culture. Every language possesses unique semantic and pragmatic features that manifest differently in speech. Euphemisms, as a means of linguistic softening and polite expression, are a phenomenon characteristic of various languages and cultures. Their formation, usage, and semantic changes are closely linked to the moral, social, and psychological norms of society. This article aims to conduct a comparative analysis of the semantic and functional aspects of euphemisms in Uzbek and English. In Uzbek, euphemisms are primarily used in accordance with norms of etiquette, respect, and social standards, whereas in English, they are more commonly found in diplomacy, humor, and formal communication. Therefore, studying the characteristics of euphemisms in different cultures is significant not only from a linguistic perspective but also from a cultural and social standpoint. Throughout the study, the main types of euphemisms in Uzbek and English, their semantic properties, and functional directions are analyzed. Additionally, differences and similarities between the two languages are identified, with special attention given to the peculiarities of euphemisms in the translation process. The findings of this study are expected to contribute scientifically and practically to the fields of linguistics, translation studies, and cultural studies.

Literature Review:

Euphemisms are one of the widely studied phenomena in linguistics, with their semantic, pragmatic, sociocultural, and psycholinguistic aspects being analyzed by various scholars. To comprehensively explore this topic, special attention must be given to the lexical meaning of euphemisms, their role in communication, and their connection to the social context. Initially, euphemisms were considered as softened forms of taboo words. However, over time, their communicative functions expanded, serving as a means of maintaining social reputation,



politeness, and diplomatic speech patterns. G. Lakoff emphasized the relationship between euphemisms and moral and social norms, analyzing their manipulative potential in communication. Since figurative language is a key feature of political discourse, Lakoff's Conceptual Metaphor Theory helps to understand how euphemisms achieve their communicative and social objectives in real language use.[1] From a semantic perspective, euphemisms should be distinguished from both taboos and the principle of political correctness. The key difference between taboos and euphemisms is that taboos are primarily historical phenomena, often associated with natural disasters or malevolent forces. Euphemisms, on the other hand, are temporary linguistic units that serve as neutral alternatives to unpleasant or socially inappropriate meanings.[2] The analysis of euphemistic strategies-both at the semantic and syntactic levels-is carried out within theories that consider euphemisms as linguistic expressions of social and interpersonal relationships. In this context, language is understood not only as a social practice but also as a tool for social action, influencing how social and political events are perceived and how people react to them. Language, therefore, plays a significant role in shaping individuals' speech behavior, which is directly linked to its usage context. Consequently, in a socio-political context, political discourse functions as a form of social control, reinforcing and legitimizing power through language.[3] Similarly, euphemisms should be distinguished from political correctness. Political correctness refers to attempts in various cultures to regulate language, terminology, and perspectives in public discourse, primarily to avoid potentially offensive or inappropriate expressions.[4] From a semantic classification perspective, different euphemisms are used to soften expressions related to death, illness, job loss, and other sensitive topics.

For instance, in English, the phrase passed away is commonly used in formal and polite speech to refer to death, whereas in Uzbek, expressions like olamdan o'tdi (passed away), yorug' dunyoni tark etdi (left the bright world), and vafot etdi (deceased) are preferred. In the medical field, euphemistic expressions help to soften descriptions of a patient's condition. English phrases like he is in a better place or he is no longer with us are used to describe someone's passing, while in Uzbek, equivalents like jon taslim qildi (gave up the soul) and hayotdan ko'z yumdi (closed eyes to life) are common. Euphemisms are also widely used in discussions of socially uncomfortable topics such as job loss. In English, terms like downsizing (reduction in workforce), let go (dismissed), or made redundant (forced to leave work) are frequently used. In Uzbek, similar expressions such as ishdan bo'shatildi (was dismissed), shtat qisqartirildi (position was reduced), and ish joyini tark etdi (left the workplace) serve the same function by presenting job loss in a softened manner.

In the context of political and military discourse, euphemisms often serve to obscure or soften harsh realities. In English, the term collateral damage is used to refer to civilian casualties during wartime, whereas in Uzbek, expressions such as yo'qotishlar (losses), fojia (tragedy), and halok bo'lganlar (those who perished) are used to convey a similar meaning. This demonstrates how euphemisms in different languages adapt to cultural and ethical norms, shaping the way sensitive information is communicated. Several studies within Uzbek linguistics have examined the social and cultural aspects of euphemisms. One notable study analyzes the semantic and functional characteristics of political euphemisms in both Uzbek and



English. It highlights how euphemisms in political discourse are used to convey information more subtly, persuade audiences, and exert social influence. The study also explores the role of euphemisms in speech strategies within society.[5] Another study focuses on the relationship between euphemisms and cultural norms, emphasizing how euphemisms are deeply intertwined with the speech and social etiquette of different communities. It examines the communicative and social functions of euphemisms, shedding light on their linguistic properties and how they reflect national and cultural differences. [6] Furthermore, a study on gender-related euphemisms explores how linguistic expressions differ based on gender norms in various cultures. It examines how men and women use euphemisms differently, the influence of gender stereotypes, and the social expectations associated with language use. By analyzing theoretical sources and practical examples, the study highlights the role of euphemisms in gender linguistics.[7] These scholarly contributions provide valuable insights into the diverse aspects of euphemisms. Research on political discourse reveals how euphemisms function as tools of social influence, while linguistic and cultural studies emphasize their communicative and societal roles. Additionally, gender-based research highlights the differences in euphemism usage between men and women. According to these studies, euphemisms serve as a strategy to maintain face in communication, encouraging speakers to express sensitive topics in a softer manner. This tendency is particularly evident in discussions on death, illness, political matters, and social inequalities. For instance, in English, terms like financially challenged or low-income individual are used instead of poor, while in Uzbek, equivalents such as moliyaviy qiynalgan (financially struggling) and kam ta'minlangan (low-income) are preferred. Euphemisms represent a multifaceted linguistic phenomenon that requires semantic, pragmatic, cultural, and social approaches to be fully understood. The comparative analysis of Uzbek and English euphemisms demonstrates that each language develops unique euphemization strategies based on its cultural and societal values.

Research Methodology:

This study conducts a comparative analysis of the semantic and functional aspects of euphemisms in Uzbek and English. A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods is used to identify the linguistic characteristics of euphemisms based on various sources. First, a literature review is conducted to explore theoretical approaches to euphemisms, their semantic classification, and functional characteristics. Euphemisms are closely linked to moral and social norms within society, helping to prevent discomfort in communication, maintain politeness, and express respect in sensitive topics.

For instance, in discussions about age, the English euphemism senior citizen is used instead of old person to offer a more respectful tone. Similarly, in Uzbek, expressions like yoshi ulug' inson (elderly person), oqsoqol (respected elder), or nuroniy (venerable person) are used for the same purpose. Cultural context plays a significant role in the formation of euphemisms, and in some cases, direct equivalents do not exist between languages. For example, the English phrase vertically challenged is a softened way to describe a person of short stature. However, in Uzbek, such euphemistic alternatives are less common, with phrases like bo'yi uncha uzun emas (not very tall) or kichik gavdali (small-built) being used instead.



A comparative analysis is then conducted to classify euphemisms in Uzbek and English based on their semantic groups. Euphemisms differ depending on social and cultural contexts. Regarding employment-related euphemisms, English expressions such as downsizing, career transition, or between jobs are commonly used, whereas in Uzbek, equivalents like yangi imkoniyat izlamoqda (seeking new opportunities), mehnat faoliyatini o'zgartirdi (changed professional activities), or tashkiliy o'zgarishlar tufayli bo'shadi (dismissed due to structural changes) are preferred. Similarly, euphemisms related to unemployment are sometimes used to neutralize or add a positive connotation. The English phrase self-employed often implies an independent professional, but it can also be used to describe someone without formal employment. In Uzbek, phrases like o'zini band qilgan (engaged in self-employment) or mustaqil ishlovchi (independent worker) convey a similar meaning.

A corpus analysis is also utilized to examine how euphemisms appear in real texts, including newspaper articles, official speeches, and literary works. For example, in discussing health-related issues, English expressions like under the weather euphemistically describe illness, while in Uzbek, equivalent expressions such as o'zini unchalik yaxshi his qilmayapti (not feeling well) or biroz betob (slightly unwell) are more commonly used. Euphemisms related to disability are also analyzed to understand how they align with social norms. The English phrase visually impaired serves as a more neutral alternative to blind, while in Uzbek, equivalents like ko'rish qobiliyati cheklangan (visually impaired) or ko'zi ojiz (blind) are used. Similarly, hearing impaired is preferred over deaf in English, whereas in Uzbek, phrases like eshitish qobiliyati pasaygan (hearing ability reduced) or eshitishida muammo bor (has hearing issues) are used.

In some cases, euphemisms help alleviate psychological or emotional discomfort. Regarding death-related euphemisms, English commonly uses expressions such as passed away, departed, or no longer with us. In Uzbek, similar euphemisms include olamdan o'tdi (passed away), yorug' dunyoni tark etdi (left the bright world), and hayotdan ko'z yumdi (closed eyes to life). Religious euphemisms are also present in both languages. For example, the English expressions to meet one's maker or to go to a better place imply religious beliefs about the afterlife, while in Uzbek, phrases like ajali yetdi (one's time has come) or oxiratga rixlat qildi (departed for the afterlife) serve a similar function. The study also examines challenges in translation, as some euphemisms lack direct equivalents. For instance, the English phrase custodial engineer is a softened way of referring to a janitor or cleaner. In Uzbek, possible equivalents include bino xizmat ko'rsatuvchisi (building service worker), sanitariya xodimi (sanitation worker), or texnik xizmat ko'rsatuvchi (technical service provider), which sound more formal and polite.

Euphemisms are also observed as tools for political or social manipulation. In military discourse, the English term collateral damage is often used to obscure civilian casualties in war. In Uzbek, more explicit terms such as nojo'ya yo'qotishlar (unintended losses), tasodifiy qurbonlar (accidental victims), or talofatlar (casualties) are used. Similarly, economic hardship is softened through expressions like economically disadvantaged or low-income individual in English, while Uzbek prefers moliyaviy qiynalgan (financially struggling) or kam ta'minlangan (low-income). Finally, the study identifies both similarities and differences between Uzbek and English euphemisms, highlighting the role of cultural, social, and psychological factors in their



development. The findings emphasize that euphemisms in both languages reflect societal values, shaping communication in ways that align with ethical and cultural expectations.

Analysis and Results: The study's findings indicate that euphemisms in Uzbek and English develop under the influence of cultural, social, and pragmatic factors. In Uzbek, euphemisms are primarily based on norms of politeness and respect, whereas in English, they are widely used in formal, diplomatic, and political discourse. Death-related euphemisms are present in both languages in softened forms. English expressions such as passed away, departed, or no longer with us correspond to Uzbek phrases like olamdan o'tdi (passed away) or yorug' dunyoni tark etdi (left the bright world). Similarly, euphemisms related to illness and disability are used to avoid direct or harsh wording. The English phrase visually impaired replaces blind, while in Uzbek, ko'rish qobiliyati cheklangan (visually impaired) serves as an equivalent.

Social and economic euphemisms also show variation between the two languages. In English, terms like economically disadvantaged or low-income individual are commonly used, while in Uzbek, equivalents such as moliyaviy qiynalgan (financially struggling) or kam ta'minlangan (low-income) are preferred. Euphemisms for job termination also differ: English expressions such as downsizing or career transition are translated into Uzbek as tashkiliy o'zgarishlar tufayli bo'shagan (dismissed due to restructuring) or yangi ish izlamoqda (seeking new employment). In political and military contexts, English euphemisms often obscure harsh realities. The term collateral damage refers to civilian casualties during warfare, whereas Uzbek equivalents, such as nojo'ya yo'qotishlar (unintended losses) or halok bo'lganlar (casualties), provide a more explicit meaning. An analysis of translation challenges reveals that while some euphemisms have direct equivalents, others require contextual adaptation. For example, the English term custodial engineer, a softened term for janitor, can be translated into Uzbek as sanitariya xodimi (sanitation worker) to maintain a polite tone. The study confirms that euphemisms in both languages align with ethical and cultural norms, making their study important for linguistics and translation studies.

Discussion

A comparative analysis of euphemisms in Uzbek and English demonstrates that both languages develop euphemisms according to social and cultural conventions. In Uzbek, euphemisms primarily serve to maintain politeness, avoid directness, and uphold social decorum, while in English, they are commonly employed in diplomacy, political correctness, and persuasive communication. Although euphemisms related to death, illness, and disability exist in both languages, English tends to use more neutral or even positive expressions. For example, passed away or gone to a better place in English correspond to Uzbek phrases like olamdan o'tdi or hayotdan ko'z yumdi (closed eyes to life). In health-related discussions, English uses euphemisms like under the weather or differently-abled, whereas Uzbek uses phrases like biroz betob (slightly unwell) or imkoniyati cheklangan (limited ability).

Economic and employment-related euphemisms also highlight differences in linguistic strategies. English euphemisms such as economically disadvantaged and low-income individual soften financial hardship, while Uzbek equivalents include moliyaviy qiynalgan or kam ta'minlangan. Similarly, euphemisms for unemployment in English, such as between jobs



or career transition, are rendered in Uzbek as yangi ish qidirmoqda (looking for new work) or mehnat faoliyatini o'zgartirdi (changed professional activity). Political and military euphemisms in English are often used to manipulate perceptions, as seen in collateral damage, which downplays civilian casualties. Uzbek equivalents such as nojo'ya yo'qotishlar (unintended losses) or fojia (tragedy) provide a more direct representation of reality.

Translation challenges further emphasize the need for contextual adaptation. Some euphemisms lack direct equivalents, requiring culturally appropriate substitutions. For instance, custodial engineer in English is softened compared to tozalovchi (cleaner) in Uzbek, so sanitariya xodimi (sanitation worker) is a more suitable alternative. This illustrates the necessity of considering cultural nuances when translating euphemisms.

Conclusion:

The findings of this study reveal that while euphemisms in Uzbek and English share semantic and functional similarities, their usage differs significantly. In Uzbek, euphemisms are rooted in norms of politeness and social etiquette, while in English, they are frequently used to create a softer or more diplomatic tone in formal and political contexts. Euphemisms related to death, illness, socio-economic conditions, and military discourse vary across the two languages, and direct translation is not always possible. Therefore, translators must consider contextual and cultural appropriateness when dealing with euphemisms. This research contributes to the fields of linguistics, translation studies, and cultural studies, emphasizing the need for further exploration of euphemism usage trends in different languages and communication contexts.

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