LINGUISTIC ANALYSES OF EUPHEMISMS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis discusses euphemisms in everyday English discourse. The term euphemism and other related concepts are defined. Furthermore, the ways of forming euphemisms in English and the areas of using these language devices are introduced. The aim of this thesis is to analyze the use of euphemisms in everyday English discourse and find out when they are used as a tool of manipulation. On top of that an influence of using euphemisms on the perception of an unpleasant fact is described.

Keywords: society, euphemism, disease**,** realm, deficiency, *alternative*

АННОТАЦИЯ

В данной статье рассматривается проблемы эвфимизмов употребляюшихся в каждодневном английском дискурсе. Также определяются сам термин эвфимизм и другие к нему относяшиеся понятия.

Ключевые слова: society, euphemism, disease**,** realm, deficiency, *alternative*

INTRODUCTION

In our society, there is a tendency to avoid naming objects and abstract things directly because we do not want to offend others. In order not to hurt someone's feelings we attempt to soften the potentially negative effect of the expressions through using milder alternatives. It means that whenever we come across a sensitive topic we choose such words which minimize an offensive or harsh impact on listeners. As I have always been interested in how the choice of words can effect our perception of various situations and facts, I have chosen a topic of euphemisms as the topic of my thesis.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Euphemism is "the avoidance of words which may be viewed as unpleasant, indecent, or somehow distressing to listeners or readers," according to Southerland and Katamba (1997: 554). [10] Things that are euphemized are frequently taboo. Wang (2013: 156) offers a different perspective on euphemisms, arguing that "euphemism is not just a widespread tactic in people's language use, but also a kind of cultural phenomena." According to Wang (2013: 156) "having a huge impact on people's everyday communication, it can soften a contentious subject and make an awkward dialogue pleasant while sticking to social communicative rules." This definition serves as the foundation for the thesis because it is nuanced and raises the issue of cultural customs in common speech.[8]

There are many different ways to euphemize, and there are various categories into which euphemisms might be put. There are "two broad categories of euphemisms - positive and negative," according to Rawson (1981: 1). The positive ones exaggerate and grandiosely overstate euphemized objects. They use a variety of posh job descriptions, such as help for servant or working girl for whore. The negative euphemisms, on the other hand, get rid of whatever we don't want to deal with openly. For instance, Devil stands for Satan and striped one for tiger.[9]

Another division, according to Rawson (1981), concerns with the intentional or unintentional use of euphemisms. Unintentional euphemisms include the term "cemetery" in place of "graveyard." Few people can recall the reasons for this change's long-ago implementation. When it comes to conscious euphemisms, their use demonstrates the speaker's strong empathy and cohesion. For instance, choosing the appropriate words to express sympathy after someone passes away can highlight their creativity.[2]

In order to create euphemisms, terms from other languages are sometimes borrowed, especially Latin and French since they sound more eloquent. This is according to Rawson (1981). French lingerie, for instance, refers to women's undergarments, whereas Latin is largely employed in Health-related topics are one of the biggest areas where euphemisms are commonly employed. People avoid direct naming because it is an unpleasant part of life and they don't want to intensify their sorrow. When discussing illnesses, demise, dying, and murder, euphemisms are frequently used since fear is the primary and most powerful driving force.

Speaking About Illnesses

Using euphemisms while discussing our medical situations is practically impossible. Historically, the word disease has been used to politely replace the word sick. People do not want to refer to themselves as sick, hence many other euphemistic equivalents have evolved over time. They prefer to use words like sick, under the weather, indisposed, out of sorts, and a little off to describe their health issues. Nowadays, we would rather say that we have a complaint, condition, episode, or occurrence rather than that we are ill.

Looking back in time, the illness was typically connected to a paranormal and enigmatic phenomenon. Direct naming was avoided because many thought they would be caught if they spoke it out loud. hence, stock was enriched by many euphemisms. A great role in forming substitutional words played ethnical biases. It arises from it, that lots of diseases were named after nations, depending on the political situation of a certain period. Syphilis used to be called *French pox*, influenza as *Spanish flu*, there were also *German measles, Tokyo trots* or *Tunis stomach*. Currently, diseases such as AIDS and cancer are met with the same amount of fear as for example tuberculosis in the past but the principle is the same. What is terrifying is inexpressible. Therefore, cancer received lots of euphemisms – *Big C, CA, a long/prolonged/incurable illness*. To the contrary the abbreviation *AIDS* is understood as euphemism which replaced the original terms gay cancer, gay plague or GRID that were aimed at the certain group of people and it did not allow the fact that also heterosexual people might suffer from this illness.

However, not only the realm of physical illness is abundant of euphemisms, but also the area of mental illness. Since the origin of the bad mental condition is not usually clearly specified this

field is covered in mystery and strongly stigmatized. People feel embarrassment of admitting mental problems because physical illness is perfectly acceptable unlike mental ones. Moreover, it is seen as a moral failure and deficiency in person rather than a health issue. As the behaviour of mentally ill people is beyond standard social norm they are usually laughed at. That is why many terms related to mental problems are connected with funny – *funny in the head, funny farm, wacky*. On the other hand, there are some euphemisms created on the base of fear of losing control over one's thoughts and mind – *out of one's mind, losing one's mind, mad* and *crazy*. However, the latter mentioned euphemistic synonyms are currently considered not politically correct as well as *lunatic, be mental* or *become a mental patient*, however, they are still used in press, which the practical part of the thesis shows. Some terms such as imbecile, idiot or retard gained pejorative colouring and are understood as vulgar. Modern euphemistic and not offensive terms are *mentally challenged* and *of unsound mental condition*.

Talking About Death and Dying

The main source of motivation for the euphemistic synonyms labelling death is fear. There are various types of anxiety including fear of the loss of our close relatives and friends, uncertainty what comes after death or where our souls go. Humankind had to face these frights and people tried to find the answers over the thousands of years. In the history, there were periods in which speaking about death was tabularized more than an open discussion about sex. On the other hand, there was the era of the Middle Ages in which the symbols of death were seen everywhere and death was an acceptable part of life. Later on the point of view on death started to change and people saw it as a journey and in this sense euphemisms were created – *pass over, go to a better place, go home, go the way of all flesh, go to the happy hunting ground, go to meet one's maker*.

Euphemisms are vital when dealing with the topic of death and dying and they provide us a certain protection against the unease connecting with this issue. Thus we use – *to pass away, to go sleep, to go away* or *to depart* when speaking about death. Some terms differ according to profession for example euphemisms in a medical sphere *are non-heart-beating donor, losing vital signs* and *negative patient-care outcomes*. Butchers would avoid it using the phrase – *drop off the hook*, actors would refer to it as – *the last* 21 *curtain call*. "Boxers take *the last count*, gourmands *lay down their knife and fork*, gamblers *cash in their chips*, computer programmers *go off-line* (Keyes, 2010: 145)."

After one's death, funerals and ceremony of burying are another sad experience people have to go through. Thus, this sphere of language is also substituted by soothing word equivalent. Funerals are organized by *funeral services* and *funeral director* and definitely not by mortician or undertaker. When referring to the dead person people use euphemisms such as *loved one, dear departed* or *the late Mr./Mrs. X.* Word corpse and the remains have been substituted by the *deceased* or *causality*. The bodies are buried not in a casket, but rather in a *coffin* or even in *alternative containers* when taking new trend in non-traditional funerals into consideration. They *rest in a cemetery*, which used to be a euphemism for graveyard, or their ashes can be *scattered in a garden* or they can *rest in a garden of memories*.

CONCLUSION

In our society, there is a tendency to avoid naming things and objects directly because of various reasons. In order to sound politically correct and not to offend listeners, euphemisms have become an inseparable part of everyday discourse. The main purpose of this thesis is to analyze the use of euphemisms in everyday discourse and to find out when they serve as an instrument of manipulation and whether they influence the perception of an unpleasant situation.

Using euphemisms when dealing with death, dying and diseases is natural the reason for this is that people do not want to hurt the others, which cause searching for milder and gentle equivalents. The appropriate choice of words definitely influences the perception of the unpleasant situation and helps to handle it with ease because many euphemisms express also sympathy and togetherness.

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