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Euphemism as means of political correctness in media

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The problem of euphemism has attracted the attention of researchers over the past decades. It was researched from the perspective of different linguistic approaches and directions: pragmatic, stylistic, gender, discursive and functional-semantic. Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines euphemism as "the substitution of an agreeable or inoffensive expression for one that may offend or suggest something unpleasant; *also* : the expression so substituted" [2]. The word *euphemism* comes from the Greek word $\epsilon \upsilon \phi \eta \mu \iota \alpha$ (*euphemia*), meaning "the use of words of good omen which in turn is derived from the Greek root-words *eu* ($\epsilon \upsilon$), "good/well"+ *pheme* ($\phi \dot{\eta} \mu \iota$) "speech/speaking meaning glory, flattering speech, praise. Euphemism is a complex phenomenon analysis of which should include its linguistic nature and extralinguistic background and functional peculiarities as well. It is based on the rethinking of reality from the viewpoint of values, norms and stereotypes of the society. The discrepancy of the reality and its idealized model makes the speaker wish to conceal this disagreement and to distract the audience's attention from negative events and experiences in the world. Simply put, euphemisms are used to avoid the negative meanings and connotations of the words and subjects, for example: *pre-owned vehicles* for *used cars; a* student being *held back* a grade level for having *failed* the grade level; *correctional facility* for *prison.* Thus, euphemisms can be considered as linguistic means of political correctness. Being politically correct means "conforming to a belief that language and practices which could offend political sensibilities (as in matters of sex or race) should be eliminated [2]. Politically correct euphemisms are among the most frequently used. "Good and bad become "appropriate" or "inappropriate". A ghastly problem becomes a less alarming "challenging issue". Spending is investment; cuts are savings. "Affected by material error" means money stolen from the budget" [3]. Commonly, euphemisms encompass the subjects such as religion, politics, sex, death, different functions of the human body, diseases and jobs. Let us examine the last category in more detail. Lately the names of jobs and occupations were renamed to become sexually neutral. Speakers of English have found new ways to avoid that: *flight attendant* (since the terms steward and stewardess are no longer used), *sales person* (instead of a salesman and saleswoman, *police officer* (instead of policeman) and *chairperson* or *chair* (instead of chairman) [1]. Nigel Rees points out that the neologism "firefighter" accomplishes two things. "It removes any irrelevant side issues of gender and it also more vividly describes what the person, male or female, actually does. He or she is not just a "fire man"but a person whose job it is to fight fires. You can't find a clearer job description than that. Unfortunately, the coinage is all too rare in its precision and usefulness" [Rees, 2006]. Another aspect of job euphemism is a job's status. Pride and an awareness of the low social status of some jobs encouraged the search for more acceptable trade descriptions ("cleaners" became "cleansing personnel "office cleaning operatives and even "domestic assistants", *custodian* or *caretaker* substituted *janitor*). Euphemism in the workplace does not end with job descriptions. There

are several terms for job termination and most of them seem to have emerged by the early 1990s. They include: "career change opportunity "decruitment "downsizing "having to let people go "negotiated departure "rationalisation (of the workforce) "restructuring"and "workforce imbalance correction"[4]. The following examples have been compiled from recent articles in British and American press: 1. He **passed away** after a long illness. 2. Many of the outlying villages suffered **collateral damage**. 3. The store sells clothing for the special needs of **physically challenged** people. 4. There is no consistent evidence that company **downsizing** leads to better financial performance. 5. A U.S. **air support mission** destroyed enemy fighting positions on the southeast side of the city. 6. He was accused of **substance abuse** and taken to a correction facility. 7. The market of **pre-owned** vehicles is constantly growing. 8. **Senior** citizen should have certain social benefits. 9. Children from **underprivileged** families often have neither a personal computer nor Internet access. 10. AOL Time Warner will have to deal with a long list of **challenges** before resuming its position as one of the market's better investments. Summing up, English vocabulary is rich in euphemisms, i.e. inoffensive expressions substituting the one that is considered offensive. The common reason for creating and using euphemisms is to make the situation or state sound more tolerable, socially acceptable ("culturally-deprived area" vs. "slum", "air support mission" vs. "aerial bombardment", "senior citizen" vs. "retiree", "pre-owned car" vs. "used car", "pretty-plus" or "full-figure" vs. "overly large" (for large clothing sizes). Some euphemisms serve as avoidance or discretion, political correctness ("house cleaner" vs. "maid", "Native American" vs. "Indian", "people of color" vs. "black", "African American"). Euphemisms are used more than ever these days, especially by politicians to influence our thoughts and feelings. Euphemisms have also become instruments of modern media in their attempts to construct the desired contents, to manipulate the public's opinions.

Литература

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