

## LINGUISTIC PECULIARITIES OF EUPHEMISMS IN MEDIA DISCOURSE

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Nowadays particular attention is paid to media discourse. In this research most actual emotional and estimated qualification of euphemisms is represented. The analysis of euphemisms in the text of the newspaper realizes itself on the level of the media discourse. The aim of this article is to identify euphemisms used in the English and Georgian newspapers. The article deals with the semantic, structural and pragmatic peculiarities of euphemisms. To reveal peculiarities of the English and Georgian euphemisms, they are analyzed according to the lingua-cultural approach and consequently are classified according to their semantic and pragmatic features. The use of this stylistic device in the discourse is dictated by social conventions to seek refinement in the unacceptable form, to follow the rules of the moral and ethical standards accepted in the society, for the purpose of avoiding of "the communicative conflicts," and also with the purpose to veil some socially unacceptable and unattractive phenomena of reality.

**Keywords:** Euphemisms, peculiarities, semantic and pragmatic features, lingua-cultural approach.

### Introduction

A word has a great force which causes different reactions. So, the language users try to avoid using words which are rude, unpleasant, embarrassing or too direct. A euphemism is a substitution of a statement in place of one that may be unpleasant or hurtful for a recipient by a less offensive or upsetting expression. The main reason for choosing the euphemisms for analysis was the fact that despite the number of works written in English language, there are still many aspects that have not been examined yet, especially in Georgian language. Also euphemisms belong to a layer of the language that may change rapidly, especially the Georgian language that is affected by the influence of other languages like English, for example this process of euphemisation.

Euphemism reflects the various states of social psychology. Many factors of social psychology may account for euphemizing. However, avoiding taboos, being polite and disguising one's speech are the most basic and typical ones. To avoid taboos is the principal psychological basis on which euphemisms are created. In many cultures, the names of gods and devils are taboos and people try to avoid mentioning them directly. That's why English people euphemize the name of "Satan" as "god of this world", "his sable majesty", "old gentleman in black" or "old Harry". They even spell god as "g-d," or "gosh", etc. In this sense, we can say the

existence of taboo words or taboo ideas stimulates the creation of euphemism. ([www.cscanada.org](http://www.cscanada.org)).

Fromkin and Rodman define a euphemism as “a word or phrase that replaces a taboo word or serves to avoid frightening or unpleasant subjects” (1993, 304). This device is dictated by social conventions which are sometimes apt to be over-sensitive, see "indecent" where there is none and seek refinement in absurd avoidances and pretentiousness ( G. Antrushina, 1999:201)

Language is a system of characters that came into being from men's common labour, being developed and enriched in the course of time. With the development of our society, a fair number of words are labelled frivolous, vulgar or at least inconsiderate, and some kinds of languages are forbidden, as different religions, superstitious beliefs, social customs and other reasons. In communication, for better maintaining social relationship and exchanging ideas, people have to resort to a new different kind of language, which can make distasteful ideas seem acceptable or even desirable ([www.docstoc.com](http://www.docstoc.com) ).

Euphemisms are words we use to soften the reality which is around us. Euphemisms are universal features of language usage; almost all cultures use them to talk about things that are terrifying. Euphemisms are often found in colloquial expressions which are familiar to native speakers of a particular culture, but are not easily understandable by other culture. Even if understood, they may be difficult to translate by an appropriate equivalent or at all. Euphemisms may be used due to genuine concern not to hurt someone's feelings.

There are different viewpoints on euphemisms presented to demonstrate attitudes of various scholars on this phenomenon. Karlo Jorjaneli gives the classification of euphemisms according to linguistic means and their motives.

As a euphemistic substitution in the newspaper text some lexical items can be grouped according to their common semantic or emotional and evaluative, characteristics. Engaging words of generally positive meaning for euphemistic renomination are important as decoding the meaning of the given words positive connotations are actualized that enables to smoothen the most unpleasant associations. In a typical newspaper text a euphemism is a phrase which represents a particular degree of manifestation of the trait. Such expressions are perceived as less categorical and signal a subjective attitude of the author.

In English language euphemisms are used to lend “status”, for instance: "sanitary engineer" is used instead of “garbage man”, “dustman”. "Senior citizen" instead of "retiree" or old person.

We use euphemisms in different spheres of life without considering which euphemism to use and when, however, it is not so easy to classify them as there is no uniform standard. Euphemisms can be classified according to different criteria, rules, or principles. The following is a presentation of some possible classifications of euphemisms. Rawson divides euphemisms into two general types, namely, positive and negative which are distinguished according to the evaluative aspect (1981). (Laura Samoskaite 2011: 11)

Laura Samoskaite divides euphemisms into six semantic categories that may be appropriate to the Georgian and English languages. We enriched this division with English and Georgian examples and added one more category.

1. Profession euphemisms. People always use cleaning operative for road sweeper or dustman, sanitation engineer for the garbage man, meat technologist for butcher, and the hairdresser has turned into beautician, etc. დამლაგებელი–დასუფთავების სამსახური; დალაქი–სტილისტი; ბიზნესმენი instead ვაჭარი;

2. Disease euphemisms. In the disease euphemisms, people always use long illness to replace cancer, ხანგრძლივი და მძიმე ავადმყოფობა or უკურნებელი სენი (incurable disease) instead of სისმსივნე; social disease replaces syphilis and AIDS, also they use lung trouble to substitute tuberculosis; and so on.

3. Death euphemisms. In many societies, because death is feared people tend to avoid mentioning death directly and talk about it in a euphemistic way. So, death has hundreds of soft, decent, and better-sounding names, such as to breathe one's last, fall asleep, go west, join the majority, lay down one's life, pass away, pay the debt of nature, reach a better world, to be at peace, to return to the dust, etc. There are many euphemisms for the word "die" in the Georgian language. In Georgian for the word მოკვდა (die) we use the following euphemisms: გარდაიცვალა (passed away), მიიცვალა (passed on), თვალები დახუჭა (closed eyes), სული ამოხდა (soul left), სიცოცხლეს გამოესალმა (said farewell to life), არ არის ცოცხალთა შორის (Is not among alive), სამუდამოდ მიიძინა (went asleep for good), საიქიოს გაემგზავრა (departed to the heavens), წერილი წაიღო (took the letter to the Master), სამუდამოდ დადუმდა (went silent for good), სამუდამოდ დაგვტოვა (left forever). Many of these euphemisms reflect the social experience and culture of the Georgian people. As the euphemisms მარილზე წავიდა ("went for salt"- this euphemism comes from the old story that the people had to cross the river which was very dangerous for their life to bring salt at home),

4. Sex euphemisms. Euphemisms concerning sex: willing woman, gay boy etc. მსუბუქი ყოფაქცევის ქალი; არატრადიციული ორიენტაციის მქონე პიროვნება, და ა.შ.

5. Crime euphemisms. In the field of crime euphemism: five-fingers, gentleman of the road, hero of the underground, the candy man. These phrases are often used to substitute for pickpocket, robber, heroin, and drug pusher. ცხაურებს მიღმა-ციხეში(in prison); ნარკოტიკის მომხმარებელი-ნარკომანი (drug addicted). In the English language for the word criminal (adj) the following euphemism illegal is used. For instance:

"He has called on the Chief Prosecutor's Office to launch an investigation into the alleged involvement of former senior Interior Ministry officials in setting up **illegal** armed groups in 2012." ("The New York Times")

6. Political euphemisms. Since the function of euphemism can reduce the unpleasantness of a term or notion, it is natural that announcements of governments will often resort them to understate the facts, e.g. 15 student unrest can be used to replace student strike; police action, search and clear, war games are used to substitute for aggression, massacre and war exercise ([www.51lw.name.html](http://www.51lw.name.html)).

"The president's statement praises Thatcher as one the "great champions of freedom and liberty" and goes on to observe "she stands as an example to our daughters that there is no glass ceiling (=promotion limit for women)that can't be shattered." (The Least Interesting Fact About Margaret Thatcher. <http://news.yahoo.com> )

7. Euphemisms of mental and physical ability. We can also divide euphemisms according to mental and physical ability to make difficult or emotional situations more acceptable. There are

lots of examples of such euphemisms in the English and Georgian languages, there are some of them:

Georgian	English
ყრუ – სმენა დაზიანებული/დაქვეითებული	deaf - not able to hear, hearing impaired
ბრმა – მხედველობა შეზღუდული	blind - not able to see, visually impaired
ინვალიდი – შეზღუდული შესაძლებლობების მქონე	invalid – people with limited ability;
სულელი – გონებრივად შეზღუდული	idiot – mentally challenged, mental disability

“Many **hearing-impaired** people use sign language.” (“Georgia Today”).

We can divide euphemisms into universal and national. Universal euphemisms are typical for several cultures and national euphemisms are typical for one specific culture. In the Georgian language we have a euphemism **ბატონები** (masters -all infectious diseases) for the following diseases წითელა (measles), ჩუტყვავილა (chicken-pox).

There are lots of universal euphemisms, for instance:

**ორსული – მომლოდინე (She is expecting); pregnant – in a family way, she is expecting**

Some euphemisms are used in order to make difficult or emotional situations more tolerable. Here are some examples of Georgian euphemisms:

„ ხარისხის დაცვას ვაპირებდი, ბატონი ლევანი რომ **გარდაიცვალა** და იმის მერე რატომღაც ხარისხის დაცვაზე აღარ მიფიქრია“. ( Mr. Levan passed away when I planned to maintain my dissertation and after that I have not thought about it). („გზა“ – “The Way”).

“ როდესაც ერეკლემ ლევან ბატონიშვილის **ცხედარი** თავისი თვალით იხილა, მაშინვე მიხვდა, რომ მოწამლული იყო და ვეჯინელების სასტიკად დასჯაც ბრძანა“. (When Erekle saw Levan Batonishvili’s **deceased body**, he immediately understood that he was poisoned and ordered to punish cruelly Vejini people).

(<http://www.ambebi.ge/masmedia/59814-zhurnali-qgzaq-30>)

The next group of words that are often used in newspaper and magazine articles are words indicating people with some disabilities:

“The money will be used to provide social services for children under eight and students with **disabilities**.”(The New York Time)

“Pensioners, who have the highest number of spare rooms, are exempt, but critics say that a spare room is a necessity for many families, particularly those with ill or **disabled** members”. (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/>)

According to the functions euphemisms can be classified into several groups:

1) Definition which emphasizes the softness of the forms of expression which serves as a direct replacement of the most unpleasant words by less offensive. For instance: მსუქანი - ჭარბწონიანი; fat – overweight, stout, full-figured; მოვრალი–შეზარხოშებული, ნასვამი, Drunk - tired and over-emotional

2) Definitions, which emphasize moral and ethical dimension, as well as the social condition. For instance: In the Georgian language for the word ტუალეტი(toilet), there are following euphemisms: საპირფარეშო, სადაც მეფეები თავისი ფეხით მიდიან (where the kings go themselves); In the English language: Bathroom - restroom, public conveniences; or euphemisms for the word beggar – panhandler or homeless person.

3) Definition, indicating disguising of the euphemism, for whatever reason, to mask the unsightly effects of phenomena. For instance: " Particularly assist people with **limited mobility**." ("Georgia today").

In the modern linguistic discourse researchers are trying to take into account the socio-cultural, linguistic and pragmatic aspects of the euphemism. In our opinion, the definition should reflect the important aspects of euphemism such as contextual dependence and pragmatic orientation. We believe that euphemism is a figure of speech used instead of the direct nominee stigmatic referents to mitigate the negative connotations associated with the communicators; it is qualified in the society as a substitution for an unacceptable form for the moral and ethical norms which is relevant to the situation and is used to avoid "conflicts of communication "and to maintain effective communication.

## Conclusion

Euphemisms are usually employed to avoid saying anything painful or unpleasant. Euphemisms are extensively used everywhere when talking about violence, ability or any other topics that is deemed as taboo or inappropriate for the society. According to different criterion euphemisms can be divided into several categories. In this division we compare English and Georgian euphemisms and we had seen that some of them have an exact equivalent in both languages. Euphemisms help us to express our idea in a nice way without hurting anyone. The main aim of euphemisms is to hide the unpleasant reality by using more positive and acceptable words. Euphemisms are also used to avoid "conflicts of communication "and to maintain effective communication. So euphemisms help people to master the skill of polite conversation better and make their speech appear more appropriate.

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