

# Euphemisms: Navigating Meaning Constrictions and Expansions

Numonova Zebinso Usmonjon Qizi, Zokirova Dildoraxon Muydinovna,  
Haydarova Nigoraxon Tuxtasanovna, Djumaboyeva Mohiraxon Anvardjanovna,  
Hamidov Nodirbek Zakirovich and Anvarbekova Oydinoy Zafarbek Qizi  
*Andijan State Foreign Languages Institute, Andijan, Uzbekistan*

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**Abstract:** This article explores the study of euphemisms within the field of world linguistics, delving into its conceptual level and examining the lexical-semantic characteristics of euphemistic language. It analyses the concept of meaning in verbalizers of euphemisms, particularly in English and Uzbek languages, investigating various types of meanings and the phenomena of narrowing and widening of meaning. Within linguistics, the phenomena of narrowing and widening of meaning have been extensively researched, primarily within the realm of lexicology, yet they impact all levels of language. Meaning is a fundamental aspect of language, studied across disciplines such as linguistics, philosophy, psychology, and literary studies, each offering diverse perspectives on its nature and exploration. As meaning persists alongside linguistic forms within dialectical laws, it remains a subject of enduring interest and investigation.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Euphemisms are one of the most common phenomena in the process of language use in the history of mankind. The word euphemism comes from the Greek words eu- "good" and phemi- "speaking" and is a word used in spoken or written speech that is emotive because of its neutral "function" and is used instead of rude or "indecent" words (Arnold 2012). Linguistic analysis of a certain concept and language units representing it remains one of the most urgent tasks. Searching for the method and methodology of the researched euphemism and language units representing it on the example of languages of different systems, in this regard, the fact that its research in languages of different systems has not been sufficiently carried out shows the relevance of the topic. Also, there are very few euphemisms in different structured languages studied; euphemism as a concept has not been researched, there are no clear ideas about the field of linguistics, what level of language euphemism belongs to, and the object of the image. Probably because euphemism is considered a lexical unit, it took place in the department of lexicology. The study of taboos and euphemisms in language is important not only for linguistics but also for language history and ethnography (Holder 2012).

Taboos and euphemisms in the language indicate something respectful in speech or on the contrary, a negative concept arises based on the prohibition of words denoting the event. The concept of a natural connection between an object and its name, characteristic of the first periods of cultural development, the word magic and taboo, that is, the names of certain objects and events (names of God, spirit, devil, death, disease, certain animals, names of human body parts) causes prohibition. The wealth of taboos and euphemisms is not only in their wide quantitative content but also in the breadth of its semantics and The goal of the taboo is to eliminate the word, not the concept, which is necessary for society. In this way, the taboo mechanism is determined by replacing a word with another word or changing its name. A word or phrase that replaces a taboo word is a euphemism. Thus, as one of the channels that influence the language of society, taboo causes important changes in the language: the disappearance of words, the development of synonymy, the change of words. The use of taboos and euphemisms in speech, their language-specific features are relevant not only for English and Uzbek linguistics but also for its history and modern ethnolinguistics.

Oral communication processes, which are the most important type of human activity that is subject to certain rules and regulated by a number of factors. One of the most important factors is the requirement that any statement must have a reasonable meaning. Therefore, the word as a universal linguistic sign, all theories of meaning intended to explain the meaning of any statement addressed to the speaker in a given situation and to reveal the essence of communication and the elements necessary for its implementation which focuses on the analysis of meaning. In the linguistic aspect, taboos and euphemisms have been studied since the end of the 19th century.

A. Maye studies the linguistic features of taboos and euphemisms on the example of ancient languages and defines this process as a change in word semantics. Taboos and euphemisms were widely studied in the 1960s and 1980s by S. Widlak, Dj. Keeney, Dj. Lawrence, E. Partridge, A. Richard Spears, J. S. Neaman, C. Silver, D. Oakes, K. Allan and others. has started. The lexical materials up to this period were organized and reflected in special dictionaries. In English lexicography, euphemisms are included in explanatory dictionaries. Although there are inconsistencies in the theory of taboos and euphemisms, its general features and characteristics are defined. Taboos and euphemisms have been studied by many Turkic peoples, especially Kazakh, Turkmen, Altai, Azerbaijani, and Uzbek linguists. Among them, we can cite the monographs of linguists such as S. Altayev, N. Ismatullayev, N.M. Jabbarov. Of these, it is necessary to highlight the candidate's thesis of the Uzbek linguist N. Ismatullayev. In his research, the author collected data on taboos and euphemisms, reacted to them, summarized them, and came to certain conclusions.

This research is not only for Uzbek linguistics, but also one of the works that gave a new color to the problem of euphemism in world linguistics. Many scientists, while studying the phenomenon of euphemism in language, cited this research as a basis. The phenomenon of euphemism A.M. Katsev, N.S. Boschayeva, L.V. Artyushkina, It was studied by V. P. Moskvina and other linguists, and its various aspects were covered from different points of view. For example, L.V. Artyushkina studied the exchange and semantic type of euphemism, while N.S. Boschayeva studied its pragmatic aspect in detail. G. G. Kujim illuminates euphemism as a meliorating tool of language, while A. M. Katsev interprets it from a socio-psychological point of view.

## 2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The article employed comparative, linguocultural, and conceptual methods to investigate euphemisms and the narrowing and widening of such phenomena in both English and Uzbek languages. These methodologies allowed for a comprehensive examination of how linguistic expressions evolve and adapt within different cultural and linguistic contexts. By comparing the usage and cultural implications of euphemisms in both languages, the study aimed to uncover similarities, differences, and underlying patterns, shedding light on how speakers employ language to convey sensitive or taboo topics in diverse cultural settings.

Through the application of comparative analysis, the research delved into the nuances of euphemistic language, exploring how meanings may shift or become more constrained or expansive over time. By employing linguocultural and conceptual frameworks, the study not only examined linguistic structures but also delved into the cultural and cognitive dimensions that influence the usage and interpretation of euphemisms. This multidimensional approach provided valuable insights into the complex interplay between language, culture, and cognition, enhancing our understanding of how euphemisms function as communicative tools in both English and Uzbek societies.

## 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The concept of "meaning" encompasses various aspects and is defined differently across human activities. It generally refers to the role played by an object in daily life, aesthetics, science, production, socio-political contexts, and more [8]. Linguists hold diverse views on defining word meaning, interpreting it through functional, behavioral, and other lenses. They often adhere to referential or conceptual theories, where meaning arises from a word's association with an object or event as a dual sign. The former focuses on the referent, while the latter emphasizes the connection between the word and the concept, reflecting in the mind of the perceiver. Lexical meaning, as per linguistic encyclopedias, is a product of mental activity, intertwined with cognitive processes like understanding and summarization.

Linguistic and extralinguistic factors influence lexical meaning, leading to quantitative and qualitative changes. Extralinguistic factors include societal, cultural, and technological shifts, while

linguistic factors entail processes like assimilation and semantic transfer. Semantic changes occur through metaphors, denotative shifts (widening/narrowing of meaning), and connotative shifts (degradation/elevation). These changes often involve implicit comparisons or hidden associations. For instance, "eye" originally referred to a needle's hole but gained a meaning based on its resemblance to the human eye.

Associative connections also drive semantic shifts. For example, "accuse" evolved from meaning "to hold responsible" to "to declare guilty," reflecting semantic proximity. Similarly, "copper" shifted from denoting a metal to referring to coins made from it, showcasing a semantic shift based on association. Narrowing of meaning occurs when a word moves from a general to a specialized field, as seen in the transition of "admiral" from meaning "amir" to a fleet commander.

Semantic shifts also involve widening or generalizing meaning alongside narrowing. This process often leads to higher levels of abstraction in the new sense compared to the previous one. For instance, "junk" shifted from denoting an old rope to encompassing any garbage or useless items. Similarly, "bird" expanded from meaning a bird's baby to encompassing all feathered animals. These semantic changes reflect the dynamic nature of language and its adaptation to evolving contexts and perceptions.

The connotative aspect of meaning refers to the speaker's attitude towards an object or event, conveyed through words beyond their literal content. This expressive function of language, mediated by dictionaries, often sees meanings evolve over time, a phenomenon known as semantic elevation or amelioration. For instance, "accumulate" once meant "pile up" but now carries a more positive connotation of gathering in quantity or quality. Similarly, "enthusiasm" shifted from denoting "madness" to representing a thirst for engaging activities.

The psychological factor heavily influences linguistic meaning, as people rely on associations when naming concepts. Metaphor, a potent semantic tool, spawns secondary meanings, often unrecorded in dictionaries but prevalent in speech.

Narrowing and widening of meaning, fundamental linguistic phenomena, reflect the dialectical nature of language. Meaning encompasses denotative, significant, pragmatic, stylistic, structural, and psychological dimensions, shaped by extralinguistic, linguistic, and psychological factors. Euphemism and taboo formation, explored by scholars like J. J. Varbot, often arise through semantic expansion.

Meaning change, driven primarily by linguistic factors and secondarily by extralinguistic ones, occurs through phenomena such as metaphor and metonymy. Extralinguistic influences encompass psychological, social, prosodic, geographical, situational, and interpersonal aspects, vital for understanding meaning shifts pragmatically.

Contemporary linguistics delves into meaningful fields and idiomatic divisions, both pragmatic bases for meaning change. Lexical meaning shapes associative-thematic fields, expanding under various influences like speech processes, situations, and geographical contexts.

In summary, the study of meaning, undergoing constant change influenced by multiple bases, is crucial across various disciplines like linguistics, philosophy, and psychology, enriching language with its multifaceted nature.

Table 1: Inscribed in Ink: Interpreting Symbols of Belief and Society.

Ro'molcha		
Rashk	Matoh	Tashvish-quvonch
Taqdir	Qaytim	Tutkich
Muhabbat	San'at asari	Arg'amchi
Shubha	Parol	Gender
Men	Ko'z yoshi	Jirkanish
Ajralish	Xurofot	Gigiena
Asos (ashyoviy dalil)	Eslatish	Piktografiya
Yodgorlik	Ramz	Qadryat
Tarix	Tilak	Sen
To'siq (oftobdan)	Oqliq	Orzu
Hissiyot	Artkich	Yaxshilik-yomonlik
Hayajon	Fojia	Dard
Madaniyat	Afsona	Yoqa
Bezak	Kir	Hamyon
Yelpig'ich	Foks	Qalb
Bint	She'r	Qalin
Sovg'a salfetka	Sabr	Tovar
Sir	Boylik	ehtiyoj

Expanding the semantic and pragmatic associations of the word "handkerchief" is boundless. Each word within its associative-thematic space

connects to "handkerchief" through linguistic and extralinguistic meanings, including metaphorical, metonymic, synonymous, homonymous, or antonymous connections.

For instance, linking "handkerchief" to "jealousy" relies on various extralinguistic bases such as the tragedy "Othello," gender dynamics, customs, social context, and faith. Linguistically, this connection manifests through metonymy. While linguistic bases primarily convey the expression of jealousy, extralinguistic factors serve as auxiliary means. Understanding such meanings requires a pragmatic analysis of language and speech.

In speech, the word "handkerchief" may evoke presuppositions, shaped by cultural traditions, beliefs, and the context between speakers and listeners. These presuppositions, as in the example of visiting Osh with a handkerchief, can be understood only within a shared cultural framework.

The evolution of word meanings, exemplified by the versatility of "get" in Modern Uzbek, stems from linguistic and non-human factors. Non-literal meanings often emerge from name transfers, including simile, metonymy, synecdoche, and metaphor. Linguistic factors, such as ellipsis or assimilating meanings from other languages, also contribute to semantic expansion.

In summary, the meaning of words like "handkerchief" undergoes pragmatic narrowing and widening, facilitated by phenomena like implication and presupposition. Understanding these nuances requires considering both linguistic and extralinguistic dimensions, demonstrating the dynamic nature of language evolution.

The second type of change in lexical meaning involves the expansion and narrowing of a word's meaning. For instance, "homeland" once referred to a house or village, but now means the entire country. Similarly, "heart" has expanded to include organs beyond its literal meaning. Conversely, "millet" originally meant grain generally but now signifies a specific type. These shifts create polysemy. In Uzbek, "bakhshi" now encompasses poets and healers, reflecting expanded usage. The word "tahrir" in Arabic initially meant "writing a work" but now encompasses preparing for publishing. Euphemisms also experience semantic changes. For example, "grandfather" evolved from meaning "mother's father" to also include "father's father." In English, "body" can euphemistically refer to a corpse, showing semantic expansion. Such shifts illustrate how language continually evolves, reflecting societal changes and cultural nuances.

## 4 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we find that the processes of narrowing and expanding meaning, derived from the events of meaning change in both English and Uzbek, manifest within the verbal expressions of euphemism. These linguistic tools serve as substitutes for dysphemetic units in communication, facilitating the mitigation of negative impacts within speech dynamics. Notably, the phenomenon of narrowing and widening meaning is evident across both languages, showcasing their universality in linguistic transitions. This observation holds true even in translation processes, as demonstrated through the provided examples.

The presence of these phenomena underscores their integral role in linguistic evolution and communication strategies. They not only serve to soften potentially harsh language but also demonstrate a nuanced understanding of semantic shifts. Such insights shed light on the complexity of language dynamics and the adaptability of expression across cultures. This recognition further highlights the intricate interplay between language, culture, and communication effectiveness, emphasising the need for nuanced approaches in linguistic analysis and translation practices.

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