



Article

Semantic and Pragmatic Features of Euphemistic Units in Literary Texts

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Abstract: This article examines the semantic and pragmatic features of euphemistic units in literary texts. Euphemisms are interpreted as linguistic means that soften socially sensitive meanings. The study highlights their mechanisms of meaning formation, contextual dependence, and communicative functions. It also discusses their role in enhancing the aesthetic impact of literary discourse.

Keywords: euphemism, semantics, pragmatics, literary text, context, stylistics.

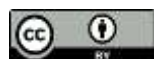
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1. Introduction

Literary text is one of the most complex and multi-layered manifestations of the language system, in which linguistic units serve not only to convey information but also to produce an aesthetic effect [1]. From this perspective, every linguistic device used in literary discourse carries a specific communicative and stylistic load. One such device is euphemistic units. "A euphemism is a means used to soften, mitigate, conceal, disguise, or render less offensive the negative impact of tabooed expressions—those that are prohibited from being stated openly; considered shameful, indecent, rude, coarse, offensive, or insulting; associated with fear, horror, grief, suffering, mourning, pain, resentment, or distress; capable of causing discomfort, offense, or harm to one's dignity; expressing disrespect, mockery, humiliation, or regret; revealing faults, secrets, or wrongdoing related to individuals, public figures, state policies, ideologies, theft, betrayal, or crime; or generally regarded as inappropriate, impolite, or unethical when expressed directly (such as taboo words, dysphemisms, cacophemisms, barbarisms, or vulgarisms) [2]. Euphemisms are employed to present such content in a milder, more acceptable, and aesthetically refined manner, often through descriptive and euphonic expression, in order to create a positive emotional impact on the listener, evoke sensitivity, and achieve communicative elegance and cultural refinement in speech" [3]. Euphemisms function to express concepts that are inconvenient or inappropriate to state directly, presenting them in an indirect and softened form. They develop in close connection with the semantic system of language, emerging through processes of semantic shift. At the same time, euphemisms play a significant role in the pragmatic layer of speech, ensuring communicative balance and reflecting norms of speech etiquette and cultural behavior [4]. This article aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the semantic and pragmatic features of euphemistic units in literary texts and to reveal their functional potential.

strengthens the relevance of our research. Furthermore, relying on my own experience, it can be emphasized that the correct structural organization and semantic clarity of terms used in educational tools are key factors in improving the efficiency of the learning process. Therefore, this study provides a comprehensive analysis of the structural and semantic aspects of educational tool terminology, highlighting their role in the language system, methods of formation, and semantic relationships on a scientific basis[4].

2. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research approach to analyze the semantic and pragmatic features of euphemistic units in literary texts. The primary method used is descriptive-analytical analysis, which allows for a detailed examination of euphemisms within their contextual environment. The research is based on selected samples from Uzbek and English literary texts, where euphemistic expressions are identified and classified according to their semantic formation (metaphor, metonymy, periphrasis, and generalization) and pragmatic functions (politeness, mitigation, concealment, and aesthetic effect) [5]. Contextual analysis is applied to determine how meaning is shaped by discourse and communicative situation.

In addition, elements of comparative analysis are used to highlight similarities and differences in the use of euphemisms across languages and cultural contexts. The study also relies on linguistic theories of semantics and pragmatics to interpret the functional role of euphemistic units [6]. Overall, the methodology ensures a systematic and comprehensive examination of euphemisms as both semantic and pragmatic phenomena in literary discourse

3. Result and Discussion

Semantic features of euphemistic units.

Semantically, euphemistic units are formed on the basis of indirect nomination. They avoid direct expression and create new forms of meaning through semantic transfer. Euphemisms arise in connection with the emergence of figurative meaning in words or expressions; therefore, they are closely related to the regularities governing the derivation of lexical meanings. Metaphorical transfer plays an important role in the formation of such units [7]. In this case, a certain concept is expressed through another image, which reduces the degree of harshness. For example, metaphorical euphemisms can be used to describe physical disabilities. Many such forms can be found in explanatory dictionaries of the Uzbek language. For instance, alternatives for the word "blind" include *a'mo*, *basir*, "visually impaired," *so'qir*, *qori*; for "deaf" or "hard of hearing," expressions such as *botil*, "hard of hearing," or "unable to hear" are used; and for "bald," euphemistic expressions such as "hairless" or "bare-headed" (*taqirbosh*) may be employed [8]. Euphemisms based on metonymic transfer, on the other hand, are characterized by expressing an object or phenomenon through a feature closely associated with it. Euphemisms can also arise through semantic devices such as periphrasis, generalization, and vagueness. In such cases, the expression becomes less precise and takes on a more general and softened tone[9]. In general, euphemistic units serve, from a semantic perspective, to mitigate negative connotations, reduce expressiveness, and create a neutral or positive background.

Pragmatic features of euphemistic units

The pragmatic nature of euphemistic units is determined by their function in the process of communication. They perform various roles depending on the communicative situation. "The derived sememe that emerges as a result of euphemism, like other derived sememes, gives rise to a pragmatic seme." First of all, euphemisms ensure adherence to ethical norms of speech [10]. Through them, respect and politeness toward the interlocutor are expressed. For example: "Excuse me, grandmother, is this Hasan uncle's neighborhood?" At the same time, euphemisms make it possible to express socially sensitive or taboo concepts in an indirect manner. Examples include references to illness, death, and physiological processes. Moreover, euphemistic units regulate the overall tone of speech, maintain communicative balance, and reduce potential conflict [11]. In some cases, they also function as pragmatic tools that convey the author's implicit intentions. From a pragmatic point of view, euphemisms are strongly context-dependent,

and their full meaning is revealed through the speech situation [12].

The functional role of euphemisms in literary texts

“Euphemistic speech is the highest form, the ‘essence’ of human thought and intellect; it is a refined, ‘veiled,’ softened, and aesthetically shaped representation of reality.” In literary texts, euphemistic units are considered one of the important means of shaping the author’s style. Through them, not only meaning is conveyed, but also aesthetic impact is achieved. Euphemisms enhance imagery, ensure subtlety of description, and exert a gentle psychological effect on the addressee [13]. At the same time, they play a significant role in characterizing the speech of literary characters. The use of euphemistic units in literary texts is directly related to the author’s individual style, worldview, and national-cultural values. In this regard, they can be viewed not only as a linguistic phenomenon but also as a cultural one [14]. For example: “Father, we have lost Israel” – here, instead of directly saying “he died,” the situation is conveyed more gently. Or: “He lost his way” – an instance where moral deviation is expressed euphemistically without provoking a negative reaction, thus presenting reality in a subtle manner. The conducted analysis shows that euphemistic units are an essential component of literary texts, manifesting in the unity of semantic and pragmatic aspects. From a semantic point of view, euphemisms are formed through semantic shift and ensure the softness of expression [15]. From a pragmatic perspective, they serve to maintain ethical norms of speech, ensure communicative balance, and realize the author’s aesthetic intentions. Therefore, studying euphemistic units through a comprehensive approach yields significant scholarly insights for the linguistics of literary texts.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, euphemistic units represent an essential component of literary language, functioning at both semantic and pragmatic levels. Semantically, they are formed through processes such as metaphorical and metonymic transfer, allowing speakers and writers to soften negative or sensitive meanings. Pragmatically, euphemisms ensure politeness, maintain communicative balance, and reflect cultural and ethical norms of speech. The analysis demonstrates that in literary texts euphemisms not only convey meaning indirectly but also enhance aesthetic expression, enrich imagery, and reveal the author’s stylistic intentions. Their context-dependent nature makes them a powerful tool for shaping subtle and nuanced communication. Therefore, the study of euphemistic units contributes significantly to a deeper understanding of language, discourse, and literary stylistics.

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