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CLASSIFICATION OF EUPHEMISMS IN THE POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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Аннотация

Мақалада "дискурс", "саяси дискурс", "эвфемизмдер" деген ұйғарымдері ұсынылған. Саяси дискурстың және эвфемизмдердің өзгешеліктері зерттелген. Саяси эвфемизмдердің топтастыруының түрлі тіл табулары қарастырылған.

Аннотация

В статье представлены определения понятий «дискурс», «политический дискурс», «эвфемизмы». Исследованы особенности политического дискурса и эвфемизации. Рассмотрены различные подходы классификации политических эвфемизмов.

Abstract

The article presents the definitions of notions "discourse", "political discourse", "euphemisms". The peculiarities of political discourse and euphemisation are explored. Various approaches to classify the political euphemisms are studied.

Түйінді сөздер: *дискурс, политикалық дискурс, эвфемизм.*

Ключевые слова: *дискурс, политический дискурс, эвфемизмы.*

Keywords: *discourse, political discourse, euphemisms, peculiarities of euphemisms.*

1. Introduction

The political communication is the essential part of the social life. It attracts attention of various groups of scientists, linguists, in particular. The way politicians approach the delicate or unpleasant subjects is of vital importance. It is the convention in politics to appear polite and sensitive to people's concerns, at the same time, try to win their favour or attack a political opponent. The political communication as "a transfer of messages, intended to influence the distribution and usage of authority in the society, especially if these messages arise from official government institutions [1; 57]" gives the enormous quantity of materials for the analysis. According to the view of E. Sheigal analysis of the political communication in the political linguistics is presented by "subject, addressee and any speech patterns, the content of which refers to the politics[2; 37]". Speech patterns of political discourse are of the most interest in this research. Political actors tend to avoid words or expressions that may have unpleasant associations in order not to give a negative impression to their audiences. To this end, they resort to euphemism, which provide a "safe" way to deal with certain embarrassing topics without being politically incorrect or breaking a social convention.

2. Materials and Methods

This article is based on the analysis of public speeches of B. Obama: "2004 Democratic National Convention Keynote Address", "Senate Floor Speech on the Iraq War After 4 Years" and "Democratic National Convention Presidential Nomination Acceptance" and T. Blair: "Speech to the "Islam and Muslims in the World Today" presented on conference in London in 2007, "General election victory speech" performed in 2005 and "Resignation speech" presented in 2007.

Methodological basis of political linguistics refers to the analysis of discourse which allows to reveal the mechanisms of interconnection of authority, communication and behavior of participants of political communication.

The scientific basis of the research: the linguists studied sociolinguistic and linguistic parameters of euphemisms (A.M. Katsev 1977; N.M. Berdov 1981; S. Luchtenberg 1985; E.E. Tyurina 1998; L. V. Artyushkina 2002), their functional peculiarities (T. S. Turganbaeva 1989), interrelation of euphemism and political correctness (E. N. Tiroptseva, 2000), pragmalinguistic effects of euphemism (N. Yu. Linevich 2001; M. S. McGlone, J. A. Batchelor 2003). There is a tendency to study euphemism in private (A. A. Andreeva 1999; A. S. Karpova 2001; Golovanova 2005, etc.) and social spheres (L. K. Graudina 1993; A. D. Vasiliev 1999, etc.), in various types of texts (O. V. Obvintseva 2003, E. I. Sheigal 1997, 2000, T. V. Boiko 2006; N. M. Potapova 2008). The manipulative potential of euphemistic remaining in the language of mass media is studied by such scholars as E. V. Kiprskaya 2005, Yu. S. Baskova 2006, N. V. Pryadilnikova 2007, M. L. Kovshova 2007, etc.

3. Results and Discussion

In general the notion discourse is defined in the monolingual dictionaries as:

- 1) “spoken or written communication between people, especially serious discussion of a particular subject [3;156]”
- 2) “written or spoken communication or debate [4; 135]”;
- 3) “verbal communication; talk; conversation”;
- 4) “ a formal treatment of a subject in speech or writing, such as a sermon or dissertation [4; 135.]”;
- 5) “a unit of text used by linguists for the analysis of linguistic phenomena that range over more than one sentence [5; 145]”.

Thus, according to these definitions we can see that discourse is a communication in written or spoken forms which includes more than one sentence. It can be presented in the speech, text, dialogue, and even conversation. It is considered as the process of linguistic activity, a way of speaking or writing.

In linguistics the term of «discourse» was first used in the early 1970ies, initially in the meaning close to the notion of «functional style» [6; 45] and was interpreted as the following formula «text plus situation» [7; 118].

P. Serio singles out 8 meanings for the term of «discourse»:

- 1) as an equivalent to the notion of «speech» (according to F. de Saussure), i.e. any act of speech or utterance,
- 2) as a unit which exceeds a phrase in size,
- 3) impact of an utterance on the addressee with the consideration of the situation in which the act of speech was made,
- 4) conversation as the main type of speech,
- 5) speech from the position of a speaker as compared to the narration which takes into account such position (according to Benveniste),
- 6) usage of units of language and their speech actualization,
- 7) socially or ideologically limited type of speech,
- 8) a theoretical construct designed for the study of conditions of text production [8; 26]

Debora Schiffrin distinguishes three main approaches to the definition of the term: the first approach is realized from the point of formally or structurally oriented linguistics and defines discourse as “the language which is beyond the level of sentence or word combination”[9]; the second approach deals with functional definition of discourse as any “usage of the language” in a wider sociocultural context; the third variant of definition is based on the synthesis of the above-mentioned definitions. It underlines the interaction of form and function – “discourse as speech”,

i.e. it is not a primitive set of isolated unites of the language structure but the whole system of functionally structured and contextualized unites of language.

The linguists such as N.D Arutyunova consider discourse as "a coherent text together with the extralinguistic - pragmatic, sociocultural, psychological and other factors, the text in the event-aspect, we consider it as purposeful social action, as a component involved in the interaction of people and their mechanisms of consciousness (cognitive processes). Discourse – it is – a speech immersed in life". Discourse involves paralinguistic support speech (facial expressions, gestures), the following main functions dictated by the structure of discourse: the rhythmic, referential linking words with the subject field of application of language (deictic gestures), semantic, the function of the impact on the interlocutor" [10; 567].

According to B.Z. Demyankov: "Discourse – it is an arbitrary piece of text consisting of more than one sentences or independent part of the proposal. Often, but not always, centered around a certain reference concept, creates a shared context, describing the actors, objects, events, times, actions, etc., to determine not so much a sequence of proposals as those for creating a common discourse and his interpreter's world who "built" during the deployment of the discourse. The initial structure of discourse is a sequence of elementary propositions, linked together by logical relations of conjunction, disjunction, etc.[11; 22]

Therefore, linguists observe this term from two sides. On the one hand, discourse is considered as a complex of speech actions in the sociocultural context, where the collective knowledge, way of thinking, feelings, targets, responsibilities of social groups and heterogeneous language communities are created and produced. Such understanding of the notion discourse underlines the discourse connection of special usage of language with social activity and cultural deterministic knowledge [12; 78] On the other hand, discourse can be defined as the institutionalized conventionalized manner of speech, which refers to the behavior of people and relations of domination. Moreover, the discourse is observed as a flow of text and speech in time with historical background which influences the present and defines the future. [13; 45]

As the basis of the research we take the definition of S. Vinogradov, who characterizes the discourse as “a completed communicative event which occurs in the interaction of participants with the help of verbal texts and other symbolic complexes in the particular situation and in the specific sociocultural conditions of communication” [14].

Elements of discourse consist of the events, participants, performing information and the "non-event". “Non-event” are presented by following characteristics:

- a) the circumstances surrounding the event;
- b) the background, explaining the events;
- c) assessment of participants in the events;
- d) information that relates to the events of discourse [14].

The national peculiarities of perception ways and methods of language description of political reality in various countries are different because of the specific character of ethnic mentality and historical conditions of formation of political culture. In the foundation of political discourse there is a complex of specified ideological views, which are realized in the texts, used in discourse and connected with goals and attitudes of particular ideological area.

Political discourse is one of the first discourses, explored by the linguists. It has been stated that the study of political discourse has been around for as long as politics itself. From Cicero to Aristotle it seemed that the major concern was mostly about how different methods of social and political competence managed to achieve specific objectives [15; 101]. In general lines, this approach is still continued today. In other words, political discourse can be considered as “a form of political action which exerts social control in the socio-political context and ultimately reproduces and legitimates power through language” [16]

Political discourse has been described by P. Chilton and C. Schaffner as a “complex form of human activity which is based on the recognition that politics cannot be conducted without language” [17]

Political discourse is identified by its *actors, authors, agents viz. politicians*. Indeed, the vast bulk of studies of political discourse is about the text and talk of professional politicians or political institutions, such as presidents and prime ministers and other members of government, parliament or political parties, both at the local, national and international levels.

According to O. Mihaleva political discourse is characterized by various peculiarities. The multidimensionality and complexity of this nothing show the possibility of differentiation of its genre areas according to the following characteristics of political discourse:

1. institutionalism (from conversation with friends about politics to intergovernmental talks);

2. subject- addressee relations (differentiation of genres due to variations of subjects and addressee in the frame of political hierarchy of political agents – political institution, representative of the institution, citizens in crowds, individual citizen);

3. sociocultural differentiation, connected with heterogeneity of political subjects according to the ideological orientation, which leads to the creation of political sociolects (complexes of speech characteristics of social groups, social dialects with specified word usage, methods of stylistics expressions);

4. event localization- differentiation of genres in accordance with complex communicative events of political discourse.

5. prototype level – marginality of genre in the field structure of discourse. The prototype ones refer to the primary institutional genres such as fight for the authority: parliamentary debates, public speech of politicians, slogan, decrees, talks, etc. Peripheral genres are at the turn of other types of discourse and are considered as a secondary genres - reactions on the speech actions, made by politicians in prototype genres, such as interview, memoir of politicians, analytical articles, letters of readers, conversations about politics [18; 12]

The mass media, as is well acknowledged, play a key role in disseminating politics and in occupying a middle position between politicians and the public. The topics which quality newspapers discuss in texts on their front pages, in editorials and comments are therefore considered typical examples of political texts. The term politics represents a rather wide and flexible notion, but seen from a functional perspective, it could be said, as P. Muntigl puts it, that any topic can become political or politicized as it depends on the participants in the communicative context [19; 112].

From the perspective of the position of the analyst Marga includes the following aspects of political discourse:

A) The role that language plays in politics;

B) The relation between language and ideology;

C) The relation between language and power [19; 146]

As regards a possible categorization of political text as a distinct type of text, Coseriu underlines that the collocation “political language” may have at least three different understandings:

A) Political lexicon: terminology referring to the designation of political notions and institutions (particular to each and every country);

B) Appliance method: the linguistic use determined by the political ideologies and attitudes; covering all the ways in which language is used, subjective ways orientated towards extra linguistic facts, ways determined by the adopted attitudes of the speakers, through the use of words towards the designated objects;

C) The use of language in political “discursive chunks”/ “texts”, observing the specific linguistic traits of such a type of text [20].

The last category proposed by Coseriu in his article, implies the study of political texts from three different perspectives:

C1) as any type of texts, within the philological area, texts being regarded as documents in this case;

C2) as typical examples of “efficient” discourses, orientated towards “the practical values of efficiency”; in this context, a political text is determined through its own finality and the functions corresponding to this finality (the final finality of such a text is its practical efficiency and the function that corresponds to such a type of finality is that of “appealing”, orientated towards the listener (receiver), whom it has to determine to act or to adopt a specific attitude;

C3) individually, within the area of speech stylistics and text linguistics as the hermeneutics of meaning.[20]

The language as a strong tool of influence possesses the wide range of devices, used by politicians to reach the particular goals: to create the positive or negative impression of the individual politician, political party or another political institution; to acquit the deeds and decisions; to attract attention of electorate; discredit the activity of another politician, etc. Thus, creation of the text is based on selection of language forms, which express the aim of the speech in the most adequate way and are suitable to the character of recipient, who receives the communicative message. [30] The most important role in this process belongs to the euphemisms.

In linguistics euphemisms were first studied in the nineteenth century. At the same time a German linguist G. Paul categorized euphemisms into a well-known scheme of semantic changes. The problems of euphemisation became popular in 60-80 ies of the twentieth century. This period saw the emergence of works by S. Widlak, J. Lawrence. The problems of euphemistic renaming were also studied by I. Galperin, L. Krysin, V. Moskv, O. Reunova, V. Telia, J. Wiliam and others.

Alongside with increase in the number of works on this issue there appeared some disagreements in interpretation of euphemisms and their aspects. In some modern courses on stylistics euphemisms are interpreted as a stylistic means. In some other works, on the contrary, “they cannot be regarded as a stylistic means because they directly denote an object” [31].

A. N. Shmelyov defines euphemisms as “the words or expressions serving in certain conditions for replacement of such designations which are represented to the speaker as undesirable, not quite polite or too sharp” [32;123].

N. S. Arapova gives the following definition to euphemisms: “Emotionally neutral words or expressions used instead of the synonymous words or expressions which are represented to the speaker as indecent, rough or tactless” [2. Page 24].

From both definitions it is possible to draw a conclusion that euphemism is a special part of lexicon in any language which serves as a substitute to the rough undesirable designations.

Euphemisms serve to meet the requirements of a “good speech” which determine its appropriateness. These two requirements are as follows:

1. Words and phrases must be appropriate as related to the theme (contents) of the speech. According to the ancient theory, high style must be used when we speak about sublime things, medium style is used when we speak about ordinary and everyday things while low style is recommended to use when the topics of our communication is not significant, rude or miserable.

2. Words and phrases must be appropriate as regards the addressee of the speech as well as other members of communication process, i.e. they must meet the requirements of the situation which the communication takes place. Euphemisms are one of the means of realization of situational appropriateness of speech.

L. P. Krysin allocates the following main aims of aneuphemization:

1. Aspiration to avoid the communicative conflicts and failures, not to create a feeling of communicative discomfort. In euphemisms of this sort the object, action and characteristic are called differently, in more polite form, in comparison with others in the ways of the nomination;

2. Veiling, camouflage of merits of case. The euphemism means used for this purpose are very various and specified for our language reality. The reason of it is in the general falsity of system and the ideological institution serving it, in fear of publicity of anti-humane activity.

3. Aspiration to tell something to the addressee so that it was clear only for him or her. Certainly, such encoding of messages is controversial, and soon it may become imaginary, if such messages are used not in private correspondence but published in press and if such material are available for interpretations of common people reading newspapers or watching TV. [33;129].

Euphemisms can be classified according to different criteria, rules, or principles.

In “Stylistics” (1977), Galperin [31] gives a definition of euphemism and also divides them into several groups according to their spheres of application:

- 1) religious,
- 2) moral,
- 3) medical,
- 4) parliamentary.

Another linguist H.A. Rawson give another approach of classifying the types of euphemisms. See Table 1.

Table 1

The classification of Euphemisms in the political discourse by H. A. Rawson

Euphemisms		
Negative	Unconscious	Profession
Positive	Conscious	Disease
		Death
		Sex
		Crime
		Political

H. A. Rawson divides euphemisms into two general types: positive and negative which are distinguished according to the evaluative aspect. [34]. Positive euphemisms can also be called stylistic euphemisms or exaggerating euphemisms.

The positive ones inflate and magnify, making the euphemized items seem altogether grander and more important than they really are. In order to avoid thrill, to be polite or to achieve cooperation, British and American people, especially contemporary Americans, prefer using the technique of exaggeration to euphemize something unpleasant and embarrassing. The positive euphemisms include the many fancy occupational titles, which save the egos of workers by elevating their job status. For example, ‘*exterminating engineers*’ is used for *rat catchers* while ‘*beauticians*’ stand for *hairdressers*. It might be said that quite a few positive euphemisms are doublespeak and cosmetic words. They usually appear in the political, military and commercial vocabulary. Other kinds of positive euphemisms include personal honorifics such as *the colonel*, *the honorable*, *the major*, and the many institutional euphemisms which convert *madhouses* into *mental hospitals*, *colleges* into *universities*, and *small business establishments* into *emporiums*, *parlors*, and *salons*. The desire to improve one’s surroundings also is evident in geographical place names, most prominently in the case of the distinctly nongreen *Greenland*, but also in the designation of many *small burgs* as *cities*.

The negative euphemisms deflate and diminish. They are defensive in nature, offsetting the power of tabooed terms and otherwise eradicating from the language everything that people prefer not to deal with directly. The negative euphemisms can be called traditional euphemisms or

narrowing euphemism. They are extremely ancient, and closely connected with the taboos. An euphemism and its corresponding taboo are in fact two faces of the same coin. They refer to the same thing though they have different looks, the euphemism having a much more pleasant face than the taboo.

Euphemisms, whether positive or negative, can be also divided into unconscious euphemisms and conscious euphemisms. The criterion for classification is the euphemistic meaning whether correlative with the original meaning or not. Unconscious euphemisms, as its name implies, were developed long ago, and are used unconsciously, without any intent to deceive or evade. For example, now standard term as 'cemetery' has been a replacement for the more deathly 'graveyard' since the fourteenth century. 'Indisposition' has been a substitute for 'disease' for a long period; people seldom realize that its original meaning is incapacity for dealing with something. Take 'dieter' for another example, the original meaning taking food by a rule or regulation has been substituted by the euphemistic meaning 'the one moderate in eating and dining for losing weight'. From the above we can conclude that unconscious euphemisms were developed so long ago that few can remember their original motivations. Conscious euphemisms are widely employed, which involves more complex categories. When people communicate with each other, speakers are conscious to say tactfully, and the listeners understand their implied meanings. For example, when a lady stands up and says that she wants to 'powder her nose' or 'make a phone call' at a dinner party, the people present realize the euphemism means 'something else', that is, 'going to the ladies' room'[35]

Besides the divisions mentioned above, euphemisms of political discourse can be divided into six semantic categories:

1) Profession euphemisms. In western countries, mental work is considered to be the high job whereas physical labor is recognized as humble work, besides there is a great difference in the remuneration. Thus, most of the people hold that people with different occupations have different status in society. Some lowly paid or indecent jobs are often used in English culture just for saving face and expressing politeness. Therefore there are fewer occupations called jobs, many have become professions. Some words and forms like engineer are more popular among people in the communication. English euphemisms are used to express some fancy occupational titles, which can elevate the people's status. Many previously unwelcome professions have now taken more appealing names. For example, in profession euphemisms, people always use cleaning operative for *road sweeper* or *dustman*, sanitation engineer for *garbage man*, meat technologist for *butcher*, and hairdresser has turned into *beautician*, etc.

2) Disease euphemisms. In the disease euphemisms, people always use long illness replaces for cancer, social disease replaces for syphilis and AIDS, also they use lung trouble substitutes for tuberculosis and so on. And if *someone with a mental illness*, we cannot say psychosis directly, we should say *he or she is a little confused*, meanwhile, we should use hard of hearing in stand of deaf.

3) Death euphemisms. In many societies, because death is feared, so people tend to avoid mentioning death directly and talk about it in a euphemistic way. They try to employ pleasant terms to express the ideas. So death has hundreds of soft, decent, and better-sounding names, such as 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, or he worked until he breathed his last, etc.

4) Sex euphemisms. Euphemisms concerning sex: the great divide, willing woman, gay boy, lost girl can be used to replace divorce, loose woman, male homosexual, etc.

5) Crime euphemisms. In the field of crime euphemism: five-fingers, gentleman of the road, hero of the underground, the candy man are often used to substitute for pickpocket, robber, heroin, and drug pusher.

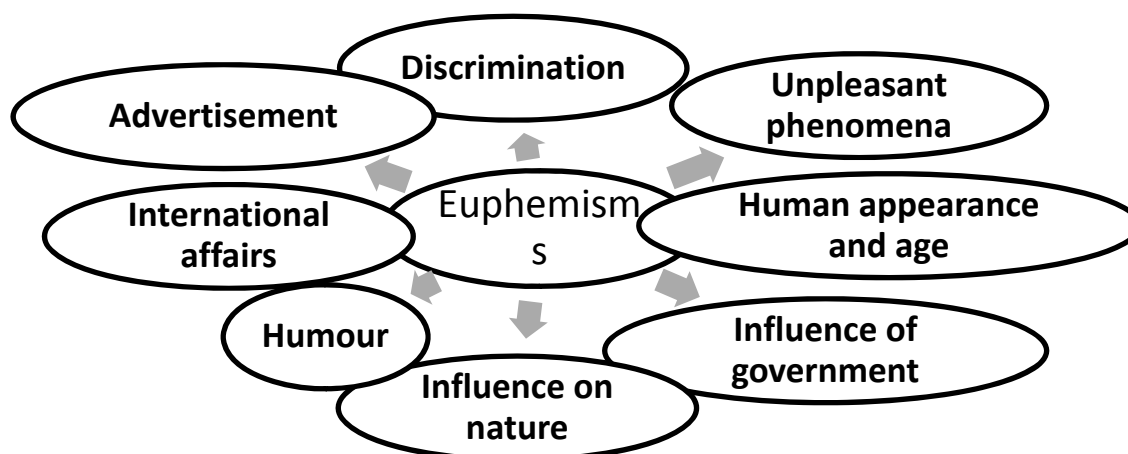
6) Political euphemisms. Since the function of euphemism can reduce the unpleasantness of a term or notion, it is natural that announcements of governments will often resort them to understate the facts: student unrest can be used to replace student strike; police action, search and clear, war games are used to substitute for aggression, massacre and war exercise.[36]

Krysin present another classification of euphemisms:

1. Euphemisms related to discrimination: a) racism, cultural discrimination, religious discrimination; b) gender discrimination; c) discrimination of sexual minorities; d) other
2. Euphemisms denoting horrible and unpleasant phenomena: a) death; b) illness; c) natural needs; d) physical defects; e) mental and psychological disorders.
3. Euphemisms related to the influence of government on lives of people: a) wars; b) social deviations (alcohol abuse, drug abuse, prostitution, crimes, lies, etc.); b) poverty; c) non-prestigious professions; d) family; e) national supervision authorities; f) dismissal; g) poor progress.
4. Euphemisms related to human appearance and age: a) weight; b) age; c) appearance; d) height.
5. Euphemisms denoting the influence of human beings on nature.
6. Humour euphemisms.
7. Euphemisms used in international affairs.
8. Euphemisms in advertisement. [33] See Table 2.

Table 2

Classification of Euphemisms in the political discourse given by Krysin

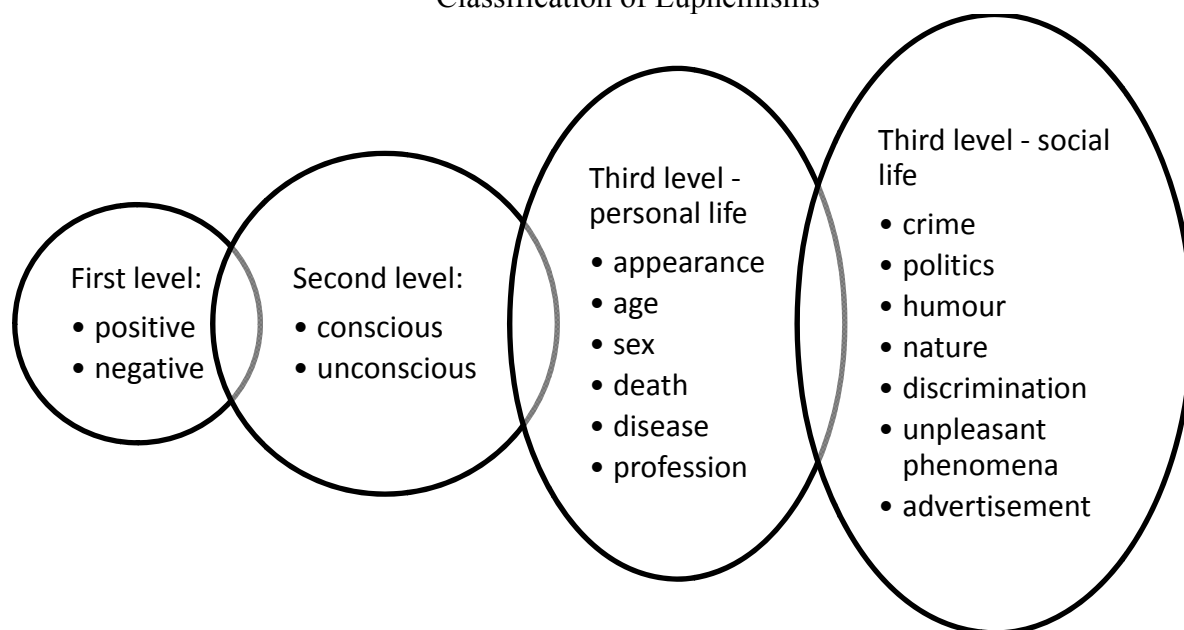


4. Conclusion

In our analysis of euphemisms we combine these two classifications and try to produce our own variant, based on classifications of H.A. Rawson and Krysin. Some groups are consolidated. At the first level all euphemisms are included in two main groups: positive and negative, they also can be observed at the second level as conscious and unconscious. Eventually, at the third level they are divided according to context in different semantic groups. We allocate two main groups at the semantic level for the convenience. The first group is connected with personal life of a person and includes the following subdivisions: appearance, age, sex, death, disease, profession. Social life contains the topics connected with events in society, in communication, in everyday life: crime, politics, humour, nature, discrimination, unpleasant phenomena, and advertisement. We underline that this classification is elaborated conditionally, that is why it can be fulfilled and corrected. See Table 3.

Table 3

Classification of Euphemisms



Thus, the main task of euphemisms is to avoid communicative conflict, i.e. not to create the feeling of communicative discomfort for the interlocutor. The euphemistic vocabulary is very active. It is constantly under the influence of external factors. It always changes and enriches and presents itself a significant lexical layer, which arouses interest in all those who are interested in learning English and reading English literature. In linguistics euphemisms are analyzed in accordance with their functions. Euphemisms must be studied not only by philologists and linguists but by professionals from other related areas because at present we have more and more people with aggressive behavior. It is highly advisable to stick to rules and meet the requirements of polite behavior, be decent and attentive toward those who are around common people. However, the usage of euphemisms must be at least accompanied by good knowledge of a foreign language and self-control so as to avoid conflict situations.

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