

# THE USAGE OF TABOOS AND EUPHEMISM IN EVERYDAY CONVERSATIONS

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## Abstract

The article explores the multifaceted aspects of taboo language and euphemisms within everyday English. It sheds light on how these linguistic tools are utilized, providing insight into their societal, cultural, and communicative implications. The research delves into various contexts where taboo language and euphemisms are employed, highlighting their evolution and impact on language use and social interactions.

**Keywords:** language, taboo, euphemism, euphemic layer, linguistic analysis.

## Introduction

People get into contact with euphemisms every day, with or without realizing it. One introduces oneself as sanitation engineer instead of ‘garbage man’. People do not buy ‘used cars’, but pre-owned cars. It happens that one rather feels queasy/unwell than ‘vomits’. What is more, animals are no longer ‘killed’ or ‘butchered’, but harvested and processed.

Euphemisms used every day are diverse and can be found in all kinds of communicative situations. Their usage is based on functions they fulfill in the given context. If anyone starts thinking about when they last used a euphemistic expression rather than a word that might cause offence or make someone feel uncomfortable, they will probably not find it difficult to remember. It may have been a few minutes ago, when talking to a colleague and excusing themselves saying “I need to wash my hands”, or “powder my nose”, or “use the restroom”. However, if the motive for using such expressions is analyzed, the answer may no longer be so simple. Unless, of course, “everybody says that” is considered a sufficient reason for this behavior. The University of Chicago linguist Joseph Williams, who said: “Euphemism is such a pervasive human phenomenon, so deeply woven into virtually every known culture, that one is tempted to claim that every human has been pre-programmed to find ways to talk about tabooed subjects.”

Ralph Keyes calls this a “euphemizing instinct” and uses medical research conducted by Valerie Curtis as evidence. Curtis claims that our need for euphemisms originates in the newer parts of our brain, where complex thoughts are created. By contrast, spontaneously uttered words emerge from the limbic brain. Keyes agrees with Curtis’s theory which suggests that creating euphemisms may have contributed to developing our ability to think, since the brain and our ability to speak have been evolving concurrently.

Examples of euphemisms used in everyday life: Euphemism is frequently used in everyday life. Let us look at some common euphemism examples:

- You are becoming a little thin on top [bald]. *Sochingiz ancha siyraklashayapti.*
- Our teacher is in the family way [pregnant]. *O'qituvchimiz bosh qorong'u bo'ldi.*
- He is always tired and emotional [drunk]. *U hamisha sarhusht.*
- We do not hire mentally challenged [stupid] people. *Biz aqli noraso odamlarni ishga yollamaymiz.*
- He is a special child [disabled or retarded]. *U maxsus e'tiborga molik bola.*

Taboo is a prescription of behavior that affects everyday life. Taboos arise out of social constraints on an individual's behavior that might cause discomfort, harm or injury. Taboo is a community's way of managing risk. These perceived risks range from metaphysical [fear of incurring the wrath or a lack of protection from the divine], to physical risk, with fears of disease and contamination. These attributions of risk often lead to taboos that constrain behavior associated with the sacred [prescribed behaviors around religious objects and rituals]. Such behaviors may become ritualized and/or become defining of belonging to or being 'other' to a community, as with the Jewish prohibition against eating pork, which defines believers as 'clean' and as belonging to the community, or being foreign and other prohibitions within a culture may also lead to other, lesser forms of taboo associated with etiquette, and conversely with social ostracism or censure. Speech behaviors are one response to taboo subjects, where language use becomes shaped by fear or distaste. There are traces of taboo deformations, avoidances and omissions of speaking of certain topics, in many languages.

Importantly for us, taboos vary from culture to culture. For example, the subject of how much you earn is taboo in the UK but not in other cultures, whereas homosexuality is a subject many British people are comfortable with, but a clear taboo in many other countries. Taboos change as societies change, so topics such as divorce and depression and illnesses such as cancer and AIDS may not be as taboo as they used to be (interestingly, almost no universal taboos have ever been identified, but many are shared by almost all cultures - incest, patricide and cannibalism are three examples).

To ask questions about one's age, weight, income, marital status, etc. is considered a taboo topic for the English. Mainly, you should not ask following questions to an Englishman or an American. How old are you? What is your income? Are you married?

Compared with English language, these are not taboo topics in Uzbek language. Age and salary should be avoided in English conversation. If they must be mentioned, they should be in a euphemistic way. But Uzbek people openly say about age and salary. Therefore it is important for a foreign language learner to acquaint himself with such knowledge.

In Uzbek language people try to avoid taboo in daily life. Taboos may occur in the family, at school or university. For instance, at table a young person must not begin eating unless an old person eats. This action is considered taboo in our country. In our family affairs, a new daughter-in-law must not speak to the family members, especially to the elderly people in a

loud voice. Some of them avoid speaking their father-in-laws. This process may even last for years. In the family the daughter-in-law should bow to the elderly people of the family. This action is the sign of respect to them. If she does not do that, then it is considered taboo. According to our culture, children must not thou their parents. But it is not taboo in other countries.

We may come across taboos at school or university life. In our country there are certain rules for pupils and students how to behave themselves in educational institutions. For instance, learners must not chew a gum during the lesson. At the beginning or at the end of the lesson they should stand up in order to show their respect to their teacher. In the classroom they should sit at desk according to the norms of conduct. However, these actions do not coincide with those of foreign countries. If the students break these rules, it is a taboo in our country. But it may be normal for other countries.

If we consider taboos and euphemisms used in every day conversation from the point of view of translation, the translator should have the knowledge about taboos and euphemisms in source and target language. The translator should introduce the reader with them in the book in order to avoid misunderstanding. For this, he/she should give a little information at the end of the book or chapter of it.

Translating the artistic terms is not such an easy task. It needs separate study and a complete knowledge and exactness on the culture of both source and target languages. Since taboo is a public phenomenon, speakers have to avoid saying unrelated speech towards “God”, prophets, or sacred things, places, people. One should not say such words in the office like “God Damn !, or Oh Jesus!”. Taboos avoid the use of plain language which means people in their daily communication and use mostly and always resort to euphemism. Taboos and euphemisms are the most important aspects of any language. The euphemism is the replacement of a taboo word by another is not coarse. euphemisms try to hide the reality that lies behind.

Words of euphemism were and still are extensively used in our daily life. For instance, instead of “old people” we use “elderly”, “senior citizens”, or “superior citizens”. Finally, euphemisms are now used in all fields of life. If euphemisms do not exist in language, our language will be terrible or spoilt.

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