



XORIJY TILLARNI O'QITISHDA INNOVATSION YONDASHUVLAR NAZARIYANING AMALIYOTGA TATBIQI

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THE LIFESPAN OF EUPHEMISMS

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***Annotation:** Euphemisms serve as linguistic tools to navigate sensitive topics, providing a buffer against discomfort and social taboos. However, these expressions often lose their effectiveness over time as their meanings become transparent or acquire negative connotations. This article explores the mechanisms behind the lifecycle of euphemisms, examining how societal attitudes, linguistic innovation, and cultural shifts contribute to their evolution. It also investigates how new euphemisms emerge to replace outdated ones and whether there is a predictable pattern in their rise and decline. By analyzing historical and contemporary examples, this study provides insights into the dynamic relationship between language, perception, and social norms.*

***Key words:** euphemisms, semantic degradation, metaphorical substitution, borrowing, acronyms, jargons, adoption, creation, replacement, acceptance, recognition.*

Introduction. Euphemisms serve as linguistic tools to soften harsh realities, navigate social taboos, and maintain politeness in communication. However, their effectiveness is often temporary. Over time, euphemisms become transparent, losing their intended subtlety and requiring replacement. This article explores the mechanisms that drive this process, the emergence of new euphemisms, and whether there is a predictable lifecycle for euphemistic expressions.

The Mechanisms Behind Euphemism Erosion

Euphemisms lose their effectiveness due to a process known as **semantic degradation** or **pejoration** (Allan & Burridge, 2006). Several key factors contribute to this phenomenon:

1. **Increased Familiarity and Usage:** The more a euphemism is used, the more people recognize its true meaning. For instance, "passed away" was once a softer alternative to "died," but over time, it has become just as direct in many contexts (Pinker, 2007).

2. **Cognitive Association:** As euphemisms are repeatedly linked with the concepts they aim to soften, their initial indirectness fades. Words like "sanitation worker" (for garbage collector) were originally more polite but have become widely understood and neutralized (Fairclough, 2001).

3. **Social and Cultural Shifts:** Changing societal attitudes affect euphemisms. Terms considered polite in one era may become outdated or even offensive in another. For example, "crippled" was replaced by "handicapped," which



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later evolved into "disabled," and now "differently-abled" or "person with a disability" is preferred (Lakoff, 1987).

4. **Irony and Satirical Usage:** Euphemisms often become ineffective when they are deliberately used in an ironic or mocking way. For example, "collateral damage" (referring to civilian casualties in warfare) has been criticized and ridiculed, diminishing its ability to obscure the harsh reality it describes (Allan & Burrige, 2006).

The Emergence of New Euphemisms

As euphemisms lose their effectiveness, new ones emerge through various linguistic mechanisms:

1. **Metaphorical Substitution:** New euphemisms often arise through metaphor. For example, "downsizing" replaced "layoffs," and "correctional facility" replaced "prison" (Enfield, 2015).

2. **Foreign Borrowings:** Some languages adopt euphemisms from other cultures to maintain politeness. For example, French "toilette" became the English "toilet," which later led to "restroom" and "bathroom" (Matsumoto, 2003).

3. **Acronyms and Initialisms:** Acronyms like PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) emerged to replace more direct terms like "shell shock," softening the impact of the condition's description (Fairclough, 2001).

4. **Scientific and Technical Jargon:** Formal or medicalized language often serves as a euphemistic substitute. "Mental retardation" was replaced by "intellectual disability," and "sexual intercourse" evolved into "intimate relations" (Ide, 1989).

The Predictable Lifecycle of Euphemisms

While each euphemism follows a unique path, they tend to undergo a common lifecycle:

1. **Creation and Adoption:** A new euphemism is introduced, often by policymakers, media, or professionals, to replace an older term perceived as too direct or offensive (Allan & Burrige, 2006).

2. **General Acceptance and Peak Usage:** The euphemism gains widespread usage and effectively softens its associated concept (Pinker, 2007).

3. **Transparency and Recognition:** Over time, people become aware of the euphemism's true meaning, leading to its gradual decline in effectiveness (Fairclough, 2001).

4. **Degradation and Replacement:** The euphemism becomes just as direct as the term it replaced, prompting the creation of a new euphemism to take its place (Lakoff, 1987).



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This cycle repeats itself as language evolves to accommodate shifting social sensitivities and norms.

Conclusion. Euphemisms are constantly evolving as societies navigate changing cultural attitudes, taboos, and power dynamics. While they initially serve to soften language and make difficult topics more palatable, their effectiveness diminishes as familiarity grows. New euphemisms emerge through metaphor, jargon, and linguistic borrowing, perpetuating a continuous cycle of renewal. Understanding the lifespan of euphemisms offers insight into the broader mechanisms of language change and the ways in which societies regulate discourse over time.

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