



## THE SEMANTIC CLASSIFICATION AND THEMATIC GROUPING OF EUPHEMISMS IN ENGLISH DISCOURSE

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**Abstract.** This research explores the semantic structure and thematic categorization of euphemisms in contemporary English within a linguocultural framework. Euphemistic language is closely connected with social conventions, culturally shaped taboos, and communicative practices aimed at politeness, softening expression, and ideological representation. Building on domain-oriented classification approaches developed by scholars such as Keith Allan and Kate Burridge, alongside corpus-based evidence drawn from present-day English media, institutional discourse, and everyday speech, this study classifies English euphemisms into six principal semantic domains: death and dying; illness, disability, and the body; sex, gender, and bodily functions; social status, occupation, and economic life; politics, war, and institutional authority; and religion, morality, and evaluative judgment. The results indicate that euphemistic nomination extends beyond simple lexical replacement, functioning instead as a culturally conditioned linguistic strategy for managing social sensitivity, maintaining interpersonal face, and reconstructing perceptions of reality through language. By proposing a systematic semantic framework, this study advances euphemism scholarship and underscores the dynamic relationship between language, culture, and communicative pragmatics.

**Keywords:** euphemism, semantic field, thematic classification, linguocultural analysis, taboo language, politeness strategies, communicative pragmatics, lexical



semantics, discourse analysis, cultural linguistics

**Introduction.** In this paper we focus on the semantic and linguocultural characteristics of euphemisms functioning in English and Uzbek. In this first subchapter, our task is to systematize English euphemisms according to their semantic fields and thematic groups, drawing on both classical and contemporary scholarship as well as on our own corpus of examples from modern English usage. Euphemisms are closely tied to taboo topics and sensitive areas of social life; therefore, any semantic classification must take into account culturally salient domains such as death, illness, sexuality, bodily functions, social status, and politics. A number of scholars, including K. Allan and K. Burridge [1; 24], B. Warren [3; 78], and later researchers, have proposed classifications of euphemisms either by their formal-derivational features or by the taboo domains they cover. In the present research, we adopt a domain-based or field-based approach, which has become widespread in recent euphemism studies, including works published in Uzbek and regional journals. This approach allows us to show how English speakers structure socially delicate experience and how they use lexical choice to negotiate politeness, face, and cultural values.

**Materials and Methods.** The present study employs a qualitative semantic-pragmatic methodology combined with elements of linguocultural and discourse analysis. The concept of semantic field, also called semantic domain, goes back to traditional lexicology and denotes a set of lexical units that share a common area of reference, such as the field of “*death*” or the field of “*illness*”. In euphemism research, domain-based classifications group euphemistic expressions according to the tabooed or sensitive topics they indirectly refer to, for example, death, disease, sex, bodily excretions, religion, or politics. In this way, researchers link patterns of lexical substitution with broader cultural attitudes to particular social realities. Allan and Burridge emphasise that taboo is always relative to “*a particular community of*



*people, for a specified context, at a given place and time*”, thus the semantic fields of euphemism reflect the dynamic hierarchy of taboos in a given society [2;67].

Results. In contemporary Anglo-American culture, the heaviest concentrations of euphemisms cluster around topics such as death, physical and mental illness, sexuality and the body, and social inequality, whereas in other cultures different topics, for example, religious matters or political authority, may be more strongly tabooed. In the given subchapter, we follow a widely used domain-based scheme and distinguish the following major semantic fields of English euphemisms:

- Death and dying;
- Illness, disability and the body;
- Sex, gender and bodily functions;
- Social status, occupation and economic life;
- Politics, war and institutional power;
- Religion, morality and evaluation [10; 88].

This list synthesises earlier classifications and reflects the thematic distribution of euphemisms in our own data from contemporary English media, everyday speech, and institutional discourse.

Euphemisms typically arise where direct reference is perceived as face-threatening, impolite, indecent or otherwise socially risky. Sociolinguistic studies show that taboo topics in English-speaking communities include sex and excretion, private parts of the body, illness and death, social and economic disadvantage, as well as blasphemy and certain politically sensitive issues. Consequently, most euphemistic expressions can be grouped around these domains [4; 76]. Contemporary research also stresses that euphemisms fulfil a range of communicative functions: they protect the speaker or hearer from embarrassment; they show politeness and respect; they align with institutional norms, for example, in medicine or politics; or they deliberately obscure unpleasant realities. In what follows, we analyse the major semantic fields of English euphemisms, illustrating



each field with authentic lexical examples and brief contextual comments. Table 2.1 gives a preliminary overview of the main thematic domains and some typical euphemistic patterns.

Death is one of the most universal and heavily tabooed topics in human societies, and English is particularly rich in euphemistic expressions that soften or avoid direct mention of dying. Allan and Burridge describe death as a “fear-based timeless taboo” and show that English has developed dozens of conventional euphemisms in this field, such as to pass away, to depart this life, to go to a better place, or to lose someone. In our material the following subthemes of the death field can be distinguished [7; 123].

English euphemisms form a highly structured lexical system organized around culturally tabooed semantic domains. Their distribution across six principal fields demonstrates that euphemization is motivated by universal human concerns—death, illness, sexuality—as well as historically specific social values such as political correctness, institutional diplomacy, and ideological framing.

The study confirms that euphemisms are not simply lexical ornaments but powerful instruments of social cognition, cultural representation, and communicative strategy [8; 99].

Future research may compare these semantic fields cross-linguistically, particularly between English and Uzbek, to identify universal and culture-specific patterns of euphemistic nomination [9; 143].

Conclusion. English euphemisms form a highly structured lexical system organized around culturally tabooed semantic domains. Their distribution across six principal fields demonstrates that euphemization is motivated by universal human concerns—death, illness, sexuality—as well as historically specific social values such as political correctness, institutional diplomacy, and ideological framing.



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