CULTURAL AND SOCIAL FACTORS INFLUENCING THE USE OF PHRASEOLOGICAL EUPHEMISMS IN CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH

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Annotation. This article explores the cultural and social factors influencing the use of phraseological euphemisms in contemporary English. Phraseological euphemisms are fixed expressions, idioms, or set phrases used to replace direct or harsh words with more polite, socially acceptable alternatives. The study focuses on how cultural norms, social values, and community expectations shape the choice and use of these expressions in everyday communication.The relationship between society and language, showing how social hierarchy, gender, age, and professional context affect euphemistic choices. It also highlights how cultural attitudes toward taboo topics such as death, illness, bodily functions, and sensitive social issues influence which euphemisms are preferred in different settings.

Key words: phraseological euphemisms, cultural factors, social factors, contemporary english, politeness, idiomatic expressions, social norms, taboo topics, pragmatic functions, interpersonal communication.

INTRODUCTION

Language is a powerful tool that not only allows people to communicate but also reflects social values, cultural norms, and interpersonal relationships. In contemporary English, speakers often use phraseological euphemisms to express ideas that may otherwise be uncomfortable, sensitive, or socially taboo. Phraseological euphemisms are fixed expressions, idiomatic phrases, or conventionalized word combinations that replace direct, harsh, or potentially offensive words with softer, socially acceptable alternatives. Such expressions are widely used in everyday conversation, professional communication, media, and digital platforms.The use of phraseological euphemisms is strongly influenced by cultural and social factors. Cultural norms, traditions, and values dictate which topics are considered sensitive or taboo in a particular society. For instance, discussions about death, illness, bodily functions, sexuality, or age are often softened through euphemisms to maintain social decorum. Social hierarchies, gender roles, professional expectations, and interpersonal relationships also affect the choice of euphemistic expressions.

MAIN PART

Phraseological euphemisms are fixed expressions, idiomatic phrases, or conventional word combinations used to replace direct, harsh, or potentially offensive words with more polite or socially acceptable alternatives. In contemporary English, these expressions are widely used in everyday conversations, professional communication, media, and online platforms. They perform important pragmatic, cultural, and social functions, helping speakers convey delicate or sensitive information in ways that are acceptable to their audience. This section examines the main cultural and social factors influencing the use of phraseological euphemisms and explores their role in communication.Culture is one of the most significant

factors that determine which topics are considered sensitive or taboo and how they should be discussed. In English-speaking societies, topics such as death, illness, bodily functions, age, gender, and sexuality are often approached indirectly. Phraseological euphemisms allow speakers to address these topics in a polite and socially acceptable way. For example, instead of saying "he died," people commonly say "he passed away" or "he departed this life." Likewise, instead of referring to someone as "old," speakers often use "the elderly." These expressions reflect cultural values, such as respect for the individual, social propriety, and the avoidance of offense.

Cultural norms also affect how euphemisms evolve and how acceptable they are in different contexts. For example, mental health issues or reproductive topics may require different euphemistic expressions depending on the cultural background of the audience. A phrase considered polite in one community might be seen as too direct or inappropriate in another. This demonstrates that understanding cultural differences is essential for using euphemisms effectively, particularly in intercultural communication.

Social context plays a crucial role in shaping euphemistic language. Factors such as social hierarchy, professional roles, gender, and interpersonal relationships influence the choice of phraseological euphemisms. Speakers adjust their language depending on the formality of the setting, the social status of the listener, and the relationship between interlocutors. For instance, in a professional setting, instead of saying "he was fired," a manager might use "he was let go" or "his contract was terminated." In media or political discourse, euphemisms such as "collateral damage" instead of "civilian deaths" are often used to maintain diplomacy and avoid public backlash.Gender can also influence euphemistic language. Men and women may employ different expressions based on conversational style and social expectations. For example, in social interactions, women are often more likely to use softer or indirect expressions to maintain politeness and avoid conflict. The choice of euphemisms therefore reflects both social norms and the speaker's awareness of interpersonal relationships.Phraseological euphemisms perform several important pragmatic functions. First, they maintain politeness and social harmony by softening negative or sensitive messages. For instance, instead of saying "she is unemployed," speakers often say "she is between jobs," which sounds less harsh. Similarly, "he is terminally ill" is preferred over "he is dying," as it communicates the same reality in a socially acceptable way. Euphemisms also help protect the listener's feelings and reduce emotional distress when delivering bad news or discussing uncomfortable topics.Euphemisms are widely used in professional communication, media, and online interactions. In workplaces, managers and colleagues use euphemisms to address sensitive issues diplomatically. In the media, journalists choose euphemistic expressions to present controversial news in a neutral or less confrontational way.On social media platforms, users employ euphemisms to avoid offending others or creating conflict, especially when discussing politically or culturally sensitive topics.

The use of phraseological euphemisms demonstrates the speaker's understanding of cultural norms and social expectations. They reflect societal values and help individuals navigate interpersonal relationships more effectively. Euphemisms allow people to discuss delicate or potentially embarrassing topics without causing offense, showing empathy, sensitivity, and social intelligence. In this way, they are not merely linguistic tools but also instruments for managing social interactions and maintaining positive communication.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, phraseological euphemisms play a crucial role in contemporary English communication by allowing speakers to express sensitive, uncomfortable, or socially taboo ideas in a polite and socially acceptable way. These fixed expressions and idiomatic phrases help maintain politeness, protect the listener's feelings, reduce conflict, and create a respectful and friendly atmosphere in conversations. Their use reflects not only the speaker's linguistic ability but also cultural awareness and social intelligence.Cultural factors, such as societal norms, traditions, and attitudes toward taboo topics, strongly influence which euphemisms are used and how they are interpreted. Social factors, including hierarchy, professional roles, gender, and interpersonal relationships, also shape the choice of euphemistic expressions. Together, these factors determine how phraseological euphemisms function in real communication. Understanding phraseological euphemisms is essential for learners, educators, and professionals who wish to communicate effectively in English. They are more than just polite words-they are tools that help navigate complex social interactions, demonstrate cultural sensitivity, and maintain positive relationships. As society and communication practices evolve, euphemisms will continue to play an important role in shaping respectful, considerate, and culturally aware English language use.

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