

History of the Study of Euphemisms in Legal Texts

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Annotation: This article provides a scientific analysis of the history of the formation and development of euphemisms in legal texts. At the same time, it sheds light on the trends in the use of euphemisms in legal texts at different historical stages and their socio-political significance. The traditions of the use of euphemisms in legal literature, their cultural and ethical place in society, as well as the main functions of euphemisms in modern legal texts are indicated. At the same time, it sheds light on the trends in the use of euphemisms in legal texts at different historical stages and their socio-political significance.

Keywords and phrases: legal texts, euphemisms, history of euphemisms, legal linguistics, legal discourse, modern legal texts, linguistic analysis, development of legal language.



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INTRODUCTION.

The language of legal communication is traditionally associated with a high level of normativity, clarity of formulas and strict terminological accuracy. However, in the structure of legal speech, at first glance, there are phenomena that are not characteristic of the official business style, in particular, euphemisms. Their use in legal texts is associated with the desire for a morally neutral representation of sensitive topics, compliance with the rules of etiquette and minimizing disputes in the process of legal regulation. Despite the apparent contradiction - the use of substitute, mitigating expressions in the legal context - euphemisms turn out to be a stable and important element of legal rhetoric. The history of the study of this phenomenon shows the evolution of views on the nature and functions of euphemisms in legal speech: from limited interest in the phenomenon to the recognition of its important communicative resource.

MAIN PART.

The first attempts to describe euphemisms date back to ancient rhetoric, where they were considered a means of avoiding forbidden topics or expressing respect.

The study of euphemisms in linguistics has a long history and is based on ancient ideas about the nature of language. In antiquity, rhetoric involved the use of "speech ornaments" and the avoidance of vulgar words. However, euphemisms began to be considered as an independent object of linguistic analysis only in the late 19th - early 20th centuries.

At the initial stage (late 19th - first half of the 20th century), euphemisms were studied, first of all, in the context of ethnolinguistics and folklore.

Ye.Yu.Artemeva considered euphemisms as a manifestation of linguistic taboo. Euphemism is understood as a way of replacing "dangerous" words (for example, diseases, death, names of demons) with neutral analogues [1, p. 28].

In the second half of the 20th century, interest in euphemisms increased in the wake of the development of structuralism and pragmatics. Euphemisms began to be considered as a type of periphrasis aimed at neutralizing negative meanings within the framework of linguistic semantics. In the 1960s and 1970s, the first systematic classifications of euphemisms appeared (for example, the works of Hughes and Burak), in which they were divided into semantic areas: death, disease, gender, professions, violence, etc. the result of conceptual modeling of reality. According to the theory of conceptual metaphor, euphemism changes the perception of the referent and activates an alternative mental frame (for example, "economically inactive population" instead of "unemployed") [2, p. 49].

In the 21st century, the study of euphemisms in linguistics is increasingly being conducted in the context of discourse analysis, where special attention is paid to the functions of euphemisms in various types of texts: political, medical, educational and legal. Researchers focus on the ideological nature of euphemisms and their ability to influence the mind of the addressee.

However, systematic scientific research of euphemisms began only in the 20th century within linguistics, in particular in such areas as sociolinguistics, pragmalinguistics and discourse analysis. Euphemisms began to be considered as important signs of cultural and social norms, means of speech interaction, determined by the situation, communication goals and status of the participants.

From the point of view of legal linguistics, euphemisms have become the object of attention relatively recently. Their analysis is carried out within the framework of the study of legal speech, including from the point of view of cognitive linguistics, speech strategies and text pragmatics. The issue of the admissibility of euphemistic constructions in legal discourse remains a matter of debate: on the one hand, the law requires clarity, and on the other, legislators and law enforcement officers often resort to lexical softening.

As noted in the works of Russian and foreign researchers, euphemisms in legal texts perform the functions of moral control, image protection, and maintaining the reputation of the institutions involved in communication [3, p. 23].

The historical development of the study of euphemisms in the legal sphere can be conditionally divided into several stages:

1. The stage of empirical interest (1960-1980). At this stage, the main attention was paid to euphemisms as a reflection of taboos and cultural restrictions. The study was primarily focused on legal discourse in English, identifying examples of the use of euphemisms in the criminal, immigration, medical, and military spheres. The main emphasis was placed on pragmatic functions - avoiding rudeness, showing formal respect to the parties involved in the case.

Legal terminology has traditionally been aimed at clarity, precision, and formality. However, euphemisms also find their place in legal discourse, especially in such genres as bills, court documents, administrative documents, and public speeches of lawyers. The history of the study of euphemisms in law shows a gradual understanding of their communicative and ethical function.

At the first stage (1950-1970s), euphemisms were practically not considered in legal science. Legal language was studied as a special terminology system designed to eliminate ambiguity.

However, in the 1980s, studies began to appear that showed the need for rhetorical strategies of mitigation, veiling, and legitimization in legislation. For example, replacing the terms "criminal

punishment" with "criminal legal measures" allows you to maintain legal rigor, but reduces emotional tension [4, p. 65].

2. Systematization stage (1990–2000). During this period, research became methodologically diverse. Euphemisms began to be analyzed as elements of legal acts, court decisions, and regulatory documents. Individual works on the analysis of political and legal discourse appeared in the Russian legal space. Researchers noted the dependence of euphemistic strategies on the type of legal culture and the level of institutional pressure [5, p. 74].
3. The stage of integration of cognitive and discursive approaches (2000s - present). The modern stage is characterized by a reconsideration of the role of euphemisms: they are considered as rhetorical and cognitive tools. Special attention is paid to manipulations using soft text in legal news, draft laws, declarations, and criminal cases. For example, euphemisms are actively used in the analysis of morally sensitive situations, such as human rights violations and gender violence, to achieve a compromise between legal certainty and humanitarian ethics [6, p. 88].

In the 1990s and 2000s, legal rhetoric was institutionalized as an interdisciplinary field that combines law, linguistics, and communication rules. Euphemisms have become an object of study within legal stylistics, judicial discourse, and legal ethics. Researchers have analyzed the features of euphemization in laws, especially in texts on the restriction of rights, criminal liability, migration policy, and sensitive social topics [7, p. 22].

At the present stage, the main attention is paid to the study of euphemisms as a means of legitimization. In legal discourse, euphemisms are used to soften the negative perception of regulatory restrictions, create a “humane” version of legal reality, and even manipulate public opinion. Examples of this are the use of expressions such as “special detention regime” instead of “isolation,” and “compulsory isolation” instead of “arrest.”

Researchers identify the following main types of euphemisms in legal texts:

Lexical euphemisms are the replacement of direct terms with more neutral words: "dismissal" → "employee optimization", "deprivation of liberty" → "isolation", etc.

Periphrastic constructions are additional phrases that hide the directness of the meaning: "a person temporarily deprived of freedom of movement" instead of "arrested".

Metaphorical euphemisms are the use of metaphors that stylistically soften the message: "consequences of a violation instead of harm", "correction of legal status" instead of "restriction of rights" [7, p. 39].

Functional analysis allows us to identify the following functions of euphemisms in legal texts:

regulatory function - establishing the basis of acceptable behavior in legal communication;

ethical function - preserving the dignity of participants, victims or defendants;

manipulative function - influencing the perception of legal information, including in the interests of political or institutional entities;

masking function - hiding legally or socially unacceptable information [8, p. 106].

It should be noted that excessive use of euphemisms can reduce the level of transparency of a legal text, which contradicts the principle of legal certainty. However, the balanced use of euphemistic strategies allows you to take into account both legal norms and norms of public morality.

The history of the study of euphemisms in legal texts indicates a growing interest in this lexical and stylistic category in legal discourse. Research has moved from descriptive approaches to multidimensional discourse analysis. Euphemisms are now considered not only a reflection of

social subtlety, but also an important mechanism of legal rhetoric, facilitating the morally correct and institutionally appropriate expression of content.

Legal discourse requires a constant balance between clarity and humanity, objectivity and empathy. Euphemisms, when used responsibly, become a tool that helps achieve this balance. Modern research emphasizes the need for a deeper study of euphemisms in terms of their impact on legal consciousness, legal education and normative practice, and their role in forming citizens' trust in legal institutions.

CONCLUSION

Analysis of the history of euphemism studies shows that this phenomenon has evolved from a marginal element of speech to one of the main objects of scientific analysis in the humanities and legal sciences. In linguistics, euphemisms have transformed from a taboo into a strategic means of speech influence. From a rare stylistic device in law to a conscious component of legal rhetoric.

A historical and scientific review confirms the need for an interdisciplinary approach to the study of euphemisms. Only a combination of linguistic, legal and communicative methods allows us to adequately characterize their role in modern society. Euphemisms are indicators of cultural and legal changes, reflect the level of culturalization of legal communication, and serve as a means of moral regulation and institutional control. In the context of digitalization, legal communication of the media, and globalization of norms, research aimed at developing criteria for the admissibility of euphemistic formulas in legislation, determining their impact on the perception of legal acts, and creating models of legal rhetoric that combine clarity and humanity is becoming increasingly relevant.

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