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THE CONCEPT OF DYSPHEMISM IN FRENCH

Nilufar Juraeva

Teacher of the Department of French Philology, Bukhara State University, Uzbekistan

ABSTRACT

This article reviews the definitions given to dysphemism in French linguistics, the contrast of dysphemism to euphemism as a stylistic tool, and the opposite of its function. It is emphasized that the concept of dysphemism is close to the concept of dysphemism by the limitation of “slang” and “vulgarism”, and the fact that slang and vulgarisms are used to express anger, negative evaluation and attitude. The five most common lexical-semantic categories of dysphemism are also discussed.

KEYWORDS: *dysphemism, euphemism, dysphemism, cacophenism, pure dysphemism, contextual dysphemism, slang, vulgarism.*

1. INTRODUCTION

According to investigations of sociologists and linguists, the beginning of the 21st century is characterized by an intensification of negative meaning in speech communication [1, pp. 352-357]. It seems naturally, that negative and offensive words are used in disagreements and conflicts between social and ethnic groups in society, between authority and people. The phenomenon of dysphemism has not been researched as deep as the phenomenon of euphemism. The reason for this, is that dysphemism includes some linguistic elements forbidden by the moral principles of society. Often dysphemism understood inversely to euphemism and is defined with euphemism [2, pp. 240].

The first definition of a dysphemism in linguistics was given by I.R. Halperin in his monograph, on stylistics of the English language says: “Dysphemisms or cacophenisms are stylistic techniques contradicting euphemism and overturning its function. They express a concept in an unliterary form, harshly and crudely”. [3, pp. 166].

T.V. Boiko understands a dysphemism as a rougher lexical unit. The scientist defines a dysphemism as: “A coarser lexical unit than the initial nomination, which the speaker prefers in order to express his negative attitude and pejoratively influence the recipient” [4, pp. 21].

The linguist also says that the concepts of “dysphemism”, “slang” and “vulgarism” should be distinguished and stresses that “slangisms” and “vulgarisms” are close to the concept of “dysphemism” due to the fact that they are used to express anger, negative evaluation and attitude [5, pp. 29].

A number of scholars who have studied dysphemisms pragmatically have come to the conclusion that “in dysphemisms a negative meaning is added to the denotatism without changing its characteristics”. [6, pp. 352-357].

The views on dysphemism are also found in the studies of some Russian scholars. In these scientific works, a dysphemism is defined as a socially marked unit [7, p. 320], rude, common, broken speech [8, pp. 240], stylistically marked, defective, non-normative vocabulary or expression beyond manners [9, pp. 73-79].

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

The phenomenon of dysphemism has not been studied as deep as euphemisms, and in French linguistics this concept has not been a separate object of study. When we turned to the etymology of the concept of “dysphemism” in French, we got acquainted with this information:

(XXe siècle) Construit sur le modèle de euphémisme par substitution du préfixe dys- au préfixe eu-. Mot de formation savante forgé à partir du grec ancien δυσφημισμός, dysphêmos (« emploi d'un mot défavorable »), composé de δυσ, dys (« difficile, mauvais, négatif ») et de φήμη, phêma (« parole ») [site]

It is a 20th century term made up of two ancient Greek compound words – “dys” – “difficult, bad, negative” and “phêmi” – “speak”. The opposite of euphemism means “bad speech”.



The Spanish linguist Da Silva Correa calls the concept of dysphemism “cacofemismo”, “contra-eufemismo”, “anti-eufemismo”. [10, pp. 445-787]. Linguist Grant describes dysphemism as “mot fort” – “strong words” or “malphemism” – “speaking badly”, which includes all bad vices, including rudeness, hatred, mockery, blasphemy, etc. [11, pp. 246-253].

Studies on the nature of dysphemism have shown that the question of the classification of dysphemism remains open. Nevertheless, we will consider a number of existing classifications of dysphemisms.

The linguistic scientist A.N. Rezanova classifies dysphemisms according to lexico-semantic categories. Herewith, she singles out five lexical-semantic categories reflecting attitudes in modern society, where dysphemisms are more widespread [12, pp. 278-280]:

Category 1: dysphemisms denoting the concepts of death, disease, physical and mental disabilities.

This category is extensive and is reflected in the synonymic row of dysphemisms, which is constantly updated. Historical and cultural preconditions determine the tendency of further growth of dysphemisms of this lexico-semantic category. Among these prerequisites, the most clear ones are:

- due to certain social and political events in the world, increased feelings of anger and hatred, which are emotional states in society;

- a lack of spirituality in the general public in the masses.

1. Clamser v.i. (mourir) (*die, commit suicide*):

La déprime se rabat sur moi, j'en ai ras le cul de vivre en ce moment, j'ai trop envie de clamser. (Depression is falling on me, I'm fed up with living at the moment, I want to kill myself).

2. Chtarbé-e, adj. et n. (Fou, dingue) (*crazy*):

Il y a beaucoup de cinéastes que j'aime bien. Sauf que je ne retiens même pas leur nom. Bon, si, il y a Tarantino, qui est un peu chtarbé. (There are a lot of filmmakers that I like. Except that I don't even remember their name. Well, yes, there is Tarantino, who is a bit crazy).

Category 2: Dysphemisms in the region of criminal

Signs of such dysphemisms are associated with various areas of criminal activity: murder, prostitution, money laundering, drugs, etc.

Such problems have always been stigmatised in society, so they are expressed through euphemistic exchanges. But now there is a growing tendency to “call things by their proper names”. Consequently, this category is prolific and is constantly recruited with new slangisms and vulgarisms.

Category 3: Dysphemisms denoting human flaws and lacks.

The linguist scientist connects the emergence of this category of dysphemisms to the fact that private life is increasingly becoming a public object, many people reveal “dark” sides of their nature and, as a consequence, become the subject of discussion in society. This lexical group can be considered the most numerous in terms of the quantity of dysphemisms.

1. Bourré-e, adj. (ivre) (*drunk*):

Tu ne mets pas le A, tu roules avec ta voiture de boîte, en plus t(u) es bourré voilà c'est ça, ton histoire en gros. (You don't put the A, you drive with your box car, in addition you are drunk, that's it, your story basically).

2. Beurré-e, adj. (ivre) (*drunk, buttered*): *Il est revenu complètement beurré du bistrot.* (He came back completely buttered from the bistro).

3. Soûlard, n. (personne qui a l'habitude de s'enivrer) (person who is used to getting drunk) (*soûl, soûle*) (*drunk*): *Il était soûl comme un cochon.* (He was drunk as a pig).

Je reviens dans une heure, occupe-toi bien de ton ami le soûlard. Il me dégoûte. (I'll be back in an hour, take good care of your drunk friend. He disgusts me).

Category 4: Dysphemisms denoting nationality.

Dysphemisms of this category are very frequent. In the modern political environment the mentioning of “abnormality” peculiar to this or that nation causes a sharp protest of the members of the society. Units of this lexical group, regardless of the speaker, are always considered as dysphemisms, as such taboo words are spread to all members of society.

1. Chintoque, n. (Terme injurieux, voire raciste, désignant un Chinois ; par extension, toute personne asiatique) (*Abusive, even racist term, designating a Chinese; by extension, any Asian person*).

Purée les chintoques sont tellement plates, je suis jalouse. (*Mashed potatoes are so flat, I'm jealous*).

2. Espingouin, adj. et n. (Péjoratif: Espagnol. Étym. Déformation du mot espagnol combiné avec le mot pingouin).

Moi, je me fight toujours avec la prof d'espingouin, elle me saoule. (Me, I always fight with the penguin teacher, she pisses me off).

Category 5: Dysphemisms denoting God, devil, and words and swearwords related to various religious rituals.

The use of words and phrases related to religion is very common. However, it is very difficult to determine whether these words or phrases are dysphemisms. During her research, the author shows two reasons for the use of dysphemisms in religious semantics. Firstly, their use is related to the emotional state of the speaker conditioned with frustration, rage, anger and other



negative experiences. Secondly, dysphemisms linked with theology are used when the speaker opposes religion, rebukes it, mocks it or deliberately blasphemes it by denying the existence of God.

3. RESULT

In the final part of the study, the author stresses that the above classification has no end, that speech norms are ordered in the process of social development, as well as the expansion of the taboo sphere and dysphemic vocabulary [13, pp. 280]. Moreover, A.N. Rezanova divides dysphemisms into pure and conditional (depending on the context) dysphemisms [14, pp. 10].

To pure dysphemisms attributed words with a pejorative character regardless of the context.

– *Mais qu'est-ce que tu vas faire? Tu vas le rejoindre? Tu vas être la putaine d'un rat d'égout?*

– *Je préfère être sa putaine que ta femme!* (Film “Titanic”, La conversation entre Rose et Carl)

- But what are you going to do? Are you going to join him? You gonna be fucking a sewer rat?

- I'd rather be his whore than your wife! (Movie “Titanic”, The conversation between Rose and Carl)

Conditional (depending on the context) dysphemisms include any lexical units with a pejorative character (jargonisms, slangisms, proverbs, etc.), which are considered as dysphemisms only under certain contextual conditions.

1. – *Et voyez maintenant comme elle aime les bêtes!*

– And now see how she loves animals! [Alphonse de Lamartine, 1790-1869]

2. *Elle n'est pas bête, elle est loin d'être bête.* – She's not dumb, she's far from dumb.

3. *“Quelle bête es-tu?”* – “How you are stupid?”

4. *Cette femme est sa bête noire!* – This woman is his pet peeve!

In addition, there is also a semantic-pragmatic classification of dysphemisms by linguists A.A. Gaeva and A.H. Nikitina, in which dysphemisms are divided into lexical and phraseological, and each of these groups is divided into three more subgroups: contextual, semantically derivatives and original dysphemisms [15, pp. 15].

Contextual dysphemisms include neutral lexical, meliorative phraseological expressions related to some context and expressing such feelings as displeasure, disgust, contempt. In other words, the lexemes or idioms have a certain negative meaning, while their basic meaning does not change.

The group of semantically derivative dysphemisms includes lexemes and phrases. However, in their direct meaning they are not lexical resources expressing negative thoughts such as humiliation, discredit, irony, but in a figurative sense they express emotional and expressive coloring, which is characteristic of dysphemisms, and convey the meanings listed above.

The third type is real dysphemisms, which regardless of the context have a characteristic semantics in the main meaning of the word. This group includes conversational words, as well as swear words and obscene words (lexicons).

4. CONCLUSION

Consequently, these classifications are mainly based on the semantics of dysphemisms. We can say that the semantic-pragmatic classification of dysphemisms (phraseological and lexical dysphemisms) by linguists A.A. Gaeva and A.H. Nikitina complements the classification of pure and conditional (depending on the context) dysphemisms by scientist A.N. Rezanova.

The newest research of the phenomenon of dysphemisms made it clear that the group of dysphemisms includes not only crude or vulgar units, but also neutral words used in a particular speech situation to perform a communicative task, as well as the improved vocabulary.

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