

The Concept of Taboo in French Linguistics

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Annotation: *Taboos and euphemisms remain underexplored in French linguistics, with the terminology still undeveloped. While many articles on this topic have been published in France, and Western linguists are engaging in detailed studies, there are still numerous explanations, terms, and terminological issues in addressing linguistic challenges related to taboos and euphemisms. This article discusses the concepts of “euphemism” and “taboo” their significance, and their role in linguistics, especially within French linguistics.*

Key words: *euphemisms, taboo, ephemeral group, religious dogmas, superstition, notion, term.*

Introduction: In global linguistics, significant emphasis is placed on the practical use of linguistic resources, including the use of euphemisms in speech and the exploration of their unique features and creative power. Euphemisms play a crucial role in addressing aspects of social life such as speech etiquette, language culture, and communication effectiveness. However, taboos and euphemisms remain underexplored in French linguistics, with an underdeveloped terminology. Despite numerous articles on the topic in France and ongoing in-depth research by Western linguists, many explanations, terms, and terminological issues persist in addressing linguistic problems related to taboos and euphemisms. As in other languages, French features numerous “taboo” or “forbidden” terms and euphemisms.

Results and Discussion: According to the report, explicit, obscene words and phrases that violate certain ethical norms and beliefs are called taboos. Originating in Polynesian languages, “taboo” refers to forbidden things, actions, or words and is used broadly in the humanities to mean “generally forbidden”. When there is a need to communicate more civilly, taboo words and phrases are replaced by more appropriate terms that conceal their meaning. These softer, more civilized alternatives are known as “euphemisms” derived from an ancient Greek term meaning “I speak well” [1: 483, 570]. Throughout different stages of development, particularly early in human society, certain actions and things were prohibited, a practice known as taboo. The concept of “forbidden” words varies with different social periods and reflects the stratification of society, distinguishing between primitive and developed societies. The emergence of taboo words and phrases is closely linked to the evolution of human thought and the role of language as a key criterion for social phenomena and societal existence. Linguists have long struggled to study the nature of taboos and euphemisms and to differentiate between them.

It should be noted that taboos, unlike euphemisms, encompass entire events, including actions, behaviors, attitudes, customs, and other societal or individual characteristics. Euphemism, by contrast, is purely a linguistic phenomenon. Early humans often kept certain words, actions, and deeds secret depending on the context. Early societies had strong beliefs in demons and ghosts, believing that avoiding the mention of certain names could prevent harm. It was forbidden to touch or name the

belongings of tribal leaders after their deaths, as it was believed that doing so would provoke the spirits. Similarly, naming certain wild or poisonous animals was forbidden, as it was thought to bring harm.

Taboos persist in various forms today, affecting more than just language but all aspects of life [2: 932-945]. In linguistics, the concept of taboo often overlaps with euphemism, where euphemisms reflect taboos. Taboos are typically religious, magical, or superstitious, representing primitive prohibitions rooted in superstition.

Historically, euphemisms are considered linguistic phenomena emerging from developed societies, with numerous theories discussed in linguistic literature. E. Tyurina defines euphemism as “a veiled, soft reflection in other words and expressions” [3: 127].

Scholar I. Zabodkina states that “euphemism combines many positive qualities: politeness, courtesy, gentleness, decency, etc” [4: 137].

N.S. Arapova describes euphemism as “a soft or figurative expression of a harsh, unpleasant truth” [5: 231]. Galperin notes that “euphemism is a word or phrase used to replace an unpleasant word, expressing it in an alternative way” [6:29].

L. Chrisin writes that “euphemistic exchange is used to avoid communicative conflicts and failures, preventing communicative inconveniences with the interlocutor” [7:65]. Vasilyevich describes euphemism as avoiding unpleasant words and expressions in social relations [8: 242].

It is important to note that completely eliminating forbidden words and phrases in linguistics is impossible, as the concept of taboo is as prevalent in modern society as in primitive society. Its appearance and formation may change based on social changes. The semantic scope of “taboo” expands from superstitions to general prohibitions, encompassing notions of “divine”, “holy” and “sacred” to “inappropriate, inconvenient” [9: 12-13].

The concept of taboo remains significant in linguistics, referring to forbidden words and concepts in modern linguistics. “Taboo” and “euphemism” have coexisted and complemented each other since the earliest stages of social and material culture development. Analysis of primitive taboos indicates a shift in direction: taboo words are no longer strictly related to religion or superstition but now encompass words that should be euphemized in linguistics.

Conclusion: “Taboo” and “euphemism” have distinct historical epochs and development histories, varying in different social contexts. This discussion also examines examples of how these concepts emerge in relevant fields. Theoretical perspectives on euphemisms and taboos are articulated and generalized by scholars.

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