

К.психолог.н. Курята Ю.В., к. психолог.н. Касаткіна-Кубишкіна О.В.

Рівненський державний гуманітарний університет

Euphemisms as Linguistic and Cultural Phenomenon in the Context of English Mentality

Mentality has many aspects reflected in modern science: it is viewed as interrelated psychological reactions by social psychologists, generalized way of perception of the world, the manner of thinking and feeling by historians, semantic matrix, predetermined meaningful reactions of cultural subject by sociolinguists.

The linguistics emphasizes the role of language in studying mentality, as its subject is shown in verbal language (verbal culture of a society) and a sign language, in behaviour, customs, traditions and beliefs [2, p. 211-214]. From the linguistic point of view mentality is reflected in the language picture of the world through its unique concepts. As A. Jioeva points it out, “understatement”, “privacy”, “stiff upper lip”, “commitment”, “challenge” and others are such concepts for Anglo-Saxon language picture of the world. She proves that concept “understatement” is notably specific to the mentality of the British and Americans yet being less reflected in the later [1, p.117-125; 4, 151 p.]. It emphasizes not so much the fact of reticence, the concealment of information, but the insufficient expression of the evaluative component in the statement. R. Fawler points it out that understatement is used “not to deceive, but to enhance the impression of the hearer, i.e. to impress by moderation” [3, 145 p.].

The English euphemisms as linguistic and cultural phenomenon can be treated as the means for this concept. A. Hornby dictionary gives the definition of euphemism as “use of other (mild, vague and indirect) words or phrases in place of what is required by truth or accuracy” [6]. It is “the substitution of an agreeable or inoffensive expression for one that may offend or suggest something unpleasant” by Merriam-Webster's dictionary [5]. Simply put, there are some words and topics which are not supposed to be mentioned directly in various cultures. To avoid the negative meanings and connotations of the words and subjects,

euphemisms are employed. Mostly, euphemisms encompass such subjects as religion, politics, sex, different social negative phenomena, death, diseases etc.

As it has been mentioned above, euphemisms are culture-specific and to some extent a euphemism is a reflection of culture. Thus, the whole idea of a euphemism as a word or phrase used to avoid saying some unpleasant or offensive word wholly corresponds to the English mentality concept of “understatement” as people tend to use this figure of speech in their interactions to show politeness and to soften definite realia considering which people may become emotionally vulnerable.

The general classification of euphemisms by subject groups can be presented in the form of a table:

Tab.1 Thematic classification of English euphemisms

English euphemisms	Euphemisms mitigating various types of discrimination: - age discrimination - property discrimination - racial and ethnic discrimination - discrimination against persons with physical or mental disabilities
	Euphemisms that reduce the superstitious fear of any phenomena
	Euphemisms that raise the prestige of a separate profession
	Euphemisms distracting from the negative phenomena of reality: - that serve as a cover for aggressive hostilities - mitigating negative consequences in the social and economic sphere
	Crime related euphemisms
	Gender related euphemisms
	Religion related euphemisms
	Death related euphemisms
	Miscellaneous

As a conclusion, we may point it out, that the linguistic picture of the world reflects the mentality of the people – the bearer of this language. The concept

“understatement” (Jioeva A.) is one of key ones reflecting the mentality of the British and Americans (yet being less reflected in the later) directly related to the use of euphemisms.

As English is constantly undergoing changes (in the manner of most living languages) undoubtedly the question of euphemisms as reflection of English people mentality requires further researches there being many unclear and questionable aspects of the phenomenon.

References:

1. Джioева А. Английский менталитет сквозь призму ключевых слов : UNDERSTATEMENT / А. Джioева // Лингвистика и межкультурная коммуникация. – Вестник МГУ. Сер. 19. – 2006. – #3 – С. 117-125.

2. Любчак В. Исследование менталитета : двухуровневая структура / В. Любчак // Молодой ученый. – 2012. – №6. – С. 211-214.

3. Fowler R. Linguistics and the Novel / R. Fowler / Uxbridge, United Kingdom : Routledge, 2017. – 145 p.

4. Jioeva A. English Mentality Viewed in the Light of the English Language / A. Jioeva / М. : Moscow University Press, 2014. – 151 p.

5. Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary (10th ed.). / Springfield, MA : Merriam-Webster Incorporated, 1999. – P. 325.

6. Oxford advanced learner's dictionary of current English / A.S. Hornby ; managing editor, Joanna Turnbull ; principal editor, Diana Lea ; senior editor, Dilys Parkinson ; editors, Patrick Phillips ... [et al.] ; phonetics editor, Michael Ashby. – 8th ed., 2010 – 1796 p.