

# THE ROLE OF EUPHEMISMS AS A COMMUNICATIVE STRATEGY IN LITERARY DISCOURSE

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## **Abstract:**

This article examines the role and functions of euphemisms as a communicative strategy within literary discourse. Based on selected works by Gafur Gulyam and Jerome K. Jerome, the pragmatic load of euphemistic units within the text, as well as the social and psychological meanings concealed behind the veil, are analyzed. The research is carried out using discourse analysis, contextual-pragmatic, and comparative methods. The article demonstrates that euphemisms are not only an aesthetic phenomenon of language use, but also a consciously selected communicative strategy by the author.

**Keywords:** Euphemism, literary discourse, communicative strategy, pragmatics, Gafur Gulyam, Jerome K. Jerome, discourse analysis, implicit meaning, social sensitivity, stylistics.

## **Introduction:**

In modern linguistics, discourse analysis requires the study of language not only as a structural phenomenon but also as a socio-communicative one. Literary discourse holds a special place in this regard, as the dialogue between the author and the reader is realized through multilayered meanings. Euphemisms are being widely studied as linguistic units that ensure this multilayered nature and function as a veil in speech. In communicative culture, the use of euphemisms to express notions that are uncomfortable, harsh, or socially sensitive is a universal phenomenon, manifested across all cultures and genres. However, in literary texts, euphemisms perform their communicative function in a more complex manner: they serve to encode the author's position, reflect power relations between characters, and guide the reader toward a specific conclusion.

The reason for selecting the works of Gafur Gulyam and Jerome K. Jerome for this study lies in the fact that both authors possess a distinctive style of expressing social criticism not directly, but through humor, irony, and a softened veil. In Uzbek literature, Gafur Gulyam often depicts social inequality, everyday issues, and political circumstances in a figurative and euphemistic form, whereas in English literature, Jerome K. Jerome exposes the unhealthy aspects of middle-class life through light satire and euphemistic expression. The aim of this research is to describe euphemisms in the works of the two authors as a communicative strategy and to comparatively reveal their discourse functions. This approach adds a new perspective to the pragmatics of

literary discourse and allows euphemisms to be viewed not merely as stylistic embellishments, but as the result of a conscious communicative choice.

### **Literature Review:**

The initial theoretical foundations concerning the linguistic nature of euphemisms were established within the field of pragmatics. Studies that developed the principles of cooperation in communication demonstrate that the effectiveness of information exchange between interlocutors directly depends on the contextual load of linguistic units [3]. These principles form the basis for understanding the role of euphemisms in speech, interpreting them as means used to maintain the rules of “adequate quantity” and “relevance” in communication.

Fundamental works in speech act theory and pragmatics [4] allow euphemisms to be viewed as indirect speech acts. According to this approach, a euphemism does not merely modify meaning but becomes part of a communicative strategy based on distinguishing the author’s intention—what the speaker intends to say and what is actually expressed [4]. This theoretical framework constitutes an important methodological basis for analyzing euphemisms in literary discourse.

Research in the field of political discourse also highlights the ideological function of euphemisms. Studies analyzing the relationship between discourse, knowledge, power, and politics [1] define euphemisms not only as lexical substitution tools but also as instruments for constructing social relations, concealing power structures, and encoding ideological positions. This perspective can also be applied to euphemisms in literary discourse.

Studies on the characteristics of euphemistic vocabulary in media discourse, particularly those examining their variability in socio-political contexts [5], make it possible to distinguish between conventional and creative types of euphemisms. In literary texts, euphemisms predominantly belong to the creative type, as they are closely connected with the author’s individual style and poetics.

In Uzbek linguistics, the functions of political discourse in language and culture have been studied [6], contributing to the tradition of interpreting discourse as a cultural phenomenon. This approach enables the study of euphemisms in the works of Gafur Gulyam as a phenomenon related to national cultural thinking.

Comparative studies of the linguistic-pragmatic features of complex syntactic structures in English and Uzbek texts [7] serve as a theoretical basis for identifying similarities and differences in the use of euphemistic strategies in literary texts of both languages. In addition, extended comparative linguistic analyses of euphemisms [8] make it possible to distinguish universal and language-culture-specific aspects of the euphemism phenomenon.

### **Research Methodology:**

For this study, selected text excerpts from Gafur Gulyam’s works “*Shum bola*” and “*Men yetimman*”, as well as Jerome K. Jerome’s “*Three Men in a Boat*”, served as the main empirical material. The samples were selected using a purposive sampling method, based on

the criterion of contexts in which the communicative function of euphemistic units is clearly manifested.

The following methods were employed in the study: contextual-pragmatic analysis – to determine the communicative function of euphemisms within the text; discourse analysis – to examine euphemisms in relation to broader socio-cultural contexts; comparative-typological analysis – to identify common and distinctive features of euphemistic strategies in the works of the two authors; and stylistic analysis – to reveal the stylistic function of euphemisms.

The analysis was conducted in two stages. In the first stage, euphemistic units were identified in each work, and their communicative intent was described. In the second stage, the identified euphemisms were comparatively analyzed, and their classification according to types of communicative strategies was carried out.

### **Analysis and Results:**

The results of the analysis show that in the works of Gafur Gulyam and Jerome K. Jerome, euphemisms function within three main communicative strategies: the strategy of softening social relations, the strategy of implicit criticism, and the strategy of psychological protection. In Gafur Gulyam's "*Shum bola*", euphemisms perform a strong social function in describing the relationship between the protagonist and adults. The protagonist Yusufjon's condition of poverty is not stated directly but is conveyed through softened expressions:

*"Bizning xonadon sal o'zgacharoq edi – dasturxonimiz doim bo'sh bo'lmasdi, lekin u yerda nima turishi haqida ko'p o'ylamaslik kerak edi."* In this passage, the expressions "sal o'zgacharoq" and "nima turishi haqida ko'p o'ylamaslik" function as euphemistic strategies that allude to poverty without explicitly naming it. The author softens the social issue and thereby evokes empathy in the reader.

In Jerome K. Jerome's "*Three Men in a Boat*", social inequality and economic difficulties are expressed through phrases that "manage" middle-class problems:

*"Harris had what he called 'a slight inconvenience with his finances', which meant, as we understood, that he was completely broke."* In this example, the phrase "a slight inconvenience with his finances" deliberately minimizes the severity of the situation instead of directly stating bankruptcy or financial ruin. Through this, Jerome presents economic difficulties of the English middle class with an ironic euphemistic tone.

In both authors' works, euphemisms function as a subtle tool for criticizing social phenomena and officials' behavior. In Gafur Gulyam's "*Men yetimman*", the behavior of officials is described as follows:

*"U kishi hamma narsaga – ahvolga, so'zlarga va xalq dardiga – alohida e'tibor bilan munosabatda bo'lardilar, ya'ni eshitib, jim o'tirardilar."* Here, the expressions "alohida e'tibor bilan munosabatda bo'lmoq" and "eshitib, jim o'tirmoq" are juxtaposed to reveal the official's indifference through euphemistic irony. Although criticism is present, it is expressed in a socially restrained manner.

In Jerome K. Jerome's text, this strategy appears in the depiction of British bureaucracy:

*“The lock-keeper was one of those gentlemen of leisure who found time to do very little very slowly.”* In this passage, the phrases “gentleman of leisure” and “found time to do very little very slowly” describe laziness and inefficiency without direct naming, yet the meaning remains clear to the reader. The euphemism here functions as a mask for satire.

When dealing with sensitive topics such as death, illness, or poverty, both authors use euphemistic forms that soften the psychological impact on the reader. In Gafur Gulyam, this strategy is expressed as follows:

*“Onasi erta ketib qolgan bu bolaning ko‘zlari doim narsalarni uzoqdan izlarday tuyulardi.”* The expression “erta ketib qolgan” serves as a softened form of “vafot etgan”, reducing the emotional harshness of death while simultaneously shaping the reader’s emotional response to the orphaned character. In this case, the euphemism becomes both a stylistic and psychological tool.

In Jerome’s work, death and illness are expressed euphemistically as follows:

*“He passed away quietly in his sleep – which, as his friends kindly remarked, was rather a mercy given the alternative.”* Here, the phrases “passed away quietly in his sleep” and “a mercy” avoid direct reference to death, instead presenting it in a softened and even “positive” light. Jerome’s characteristic black humor turns these euphemisms into a reflection of cultural attitudes toward death.

The analysis shows that although the general communicative intention of euphemisms in the works of Gafur Gulyam and Jerome K. Jerome is similar, their usage differs in national-cultural and individual-stylistic terms. In Gafur Gulyam’s works, euphemisms primarily function as a lyrical-emotional veil aimed at evoking compassion in the reader. In Jerome’s works, however, euphemisms are mainly used in an ironic and humorous context, strengthening the satirical effect. Nevertheless, in both cases, euphemisms clearly function as a consciously selected communicative strategy by the author.

### **Conclusion:**

The results of the study provide an opportunity for a new understanding of the role of euphemisms in literary discourse. The analysis of the works of Gafur Gulyam and Jerome K. Jerome has shown that euphemisms are not linguistic units used incidentally or solely for aesthetic purposes in literature, but rather a key instrument of a communicative strategy consciously employed by the author.

In both authors’ works, three main strategies—softening social relations, implicit criticism, and psychological protection—are clearly evident. Although these strategies manifest at the surface level of discourse as “ambiguity” or “politeness,” at the deeper semantic level they retain a strong critical, emotional, and ideological load. This dual-layered nature of euphemism makes it a particularly powerful device in literary discourse. The comparative analysis also showed that, although the mechanisms of euphemisms as a communicative strategy are universal, their concrete realization in literary texts is determined by each author’s national-cultural environment, individual style, and creative intention. Therefore, in the analysis of euphemisms

in literary texts, it is necessary to take into account their contextual and intercultural dimensions.

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