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COMBINATORY WAYS OF COINING EUPHEMISMS

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Abstract: The article analyses the most productive combinatory ways of coining euphemisms in the English language. The provided models are illustrated with numerous examples, and the findings suggest that combinatory ways of word formation are characteristic of 20.5% of all euphemisms.

Keywords: coining, euphemism, combinatory, metaphor, idiomatic way, generalization, metonymy, irony, phonemic substitution.

1. INTRODUCTION

Though the coinage of euphemisms has already been discussed by some linguists (A. Katsev, N. Boschaeva, B. Warren), the suggested classifications of ways of forming euphemisms are not comprehensive. A. Katsev's research dealt primarily with semantic shifts (generalization, metaphor, metonymy, irony), ways of form changes (sound analogy, negative prefixation, and shortening), and borrowings [3, p. 35–37], disregarding an idiomatic way, elevation, back slang and rhyming slang, combinatory ways etc. N. Boschaeva [1] researched into the ways of forming contextual euphemisms, and B. Warren [4] analysed this issue on the material of euphemisms of sex in fiction.

The universal classification of ways of forming euphemisms in English proves that these units of secondary nomination primarily spring into existence by means of semantic processes, word-building processes, phonetic processes, and borrowings from other languages [2]. However, one, two or more techniques of nomination can overlap, and in such cases we are to speak of combinatory ways of forming euphemisms.

2. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After analysing 4,199 euphemisms in the English language we consider it possible to state that the most productive models of combinatory ways of forming euphemisms are the following:

- idiomatic way + metaphor + irony: *stuffing the five-fingered turkey, teasing the tortoise (masturbation), colonel's come to stay (menstruating), having a bun in the oven (pregnant)*;
- idiomatic way + irony + propriation: *boxing Gandhi, hiding Saddam in the bunker, massaging Ronald Reagan (masturbation)*;
- idiomatic way + irony + compounding: *cold-meat party (funeral)*;
- idiomatic way + generalisation: *calendar time, that time of the month (menstruation)*;

– idiomatic way + metaphor: *last voyage, last journey, pale horse (death), narrow bed, cold storage (grave), to fall asleep, to go home (to die)*;

“Tear up the shrieking mandrakes from the earth and bid them make us music, and tell the mole to dig deep down thy cold and **narrow bed**, for I shall lie within thine arms to-night”.

(Oscar Wilde, “The Duchess of Padua”);

“If the extent of solemn wood could thus safeguard a tall stag from the hunter’s hounds and houses, might not you also play hide-and-peek, in these groves, with all the pangs and trepidations of man’s life, and elude Death, the mighty hunter, for more than the span of human years? Here, also, crash his arrows; here, in the farthest glade, sounds the gallop of **the pale horse**”.

(Robert Louis Stevenson, “Essays of Travel”);

– idiomatic way + irony: *the road is up for repairs (menstruating), playing pocket pool (masturbating), to have one’s 80-column card punched (to die)*;

– idiomatic way + propriation: *living Harry (devil), torch of Hymen (sex)*;

“I cannot allow my friend Feeder to be married – especially to Mrs Feeder –without proposing their – their – Toasts; and may,’ said Mr Toots, fixing his eyes on his wife, as if for inspiration in a high flight, ‘may **the torch of Hymen** be the beacon of joy, and may the flowers we have this day strewn in their path, be the – the banishers of – of gloom!’”

(Charles Dickens, “Dombey and Son”);

– idiomatic way + elevation: *grief therapist, bereavement counselor (undertaker)*;

– metaphor + abbreviation + phonemic substitution: *taters – potatoes (testicles)*;

– metaphor + irony: *planted (buried), torpedoes (breast)*;

– metaphor + compounding: *cat-house, bird-cage (brothel), bar-fly, dog-hound (drunkard); bone-house (coffin)*;

– irony + elevation: *cultural treasure-houses (unpopular books, delivered by post)*;

– propriation + phonemic substitution: *John, Jim, Jerry (Jesus)*;

– compounding + phonemic substitution: *Jeepers-creepers (Jesus Christ)*;

– abbreviation + blending: *beno – there will be no fun (menstruation)*;

– abbreviation + phonemic substitution: *Ods bodkins (God’s body); gee, geez (Jesus)*;

– abbreviation + rhyming slang: *ginger (ginger beer = queer = homosexual)*;

– blending + phonemic substitution: *Gadzooks (God’s hooks); Lawkamussy (Lord, have mercy); bejabers (by God)*;

– blending + rhyming slang: *porkies (pork pies=lies)*;

– phonemic substitution + reduplication: *ding-dong, ding-a-ling (penis)*;

“Lines such as ‘I like to play with my ding-a-ling’ ... are intended as deliberate stimulation to self and mutual masturbation”.

(Daily Telegraph, 11/17/1972).

The euphemism *bachelor’s wife* is the only euphemism found that has characteristics of oxymoron, therefore, its formation is also combinatory: idiomatic way + irony + oxymoron.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The discussed models of combinatory ways of forming euphemisms are characteristic of 862 nominations, i.e. 20.5% of the total number analysed. The research proves the diversity of the classification mentioned in the “Introduction” and presupposes further discussion and findings.

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У статті аналізуються найпродуктивніші моделі комбінаторних способів творення евфемізмів в англійській мові. Виділені моделі ілюструються прикладами, аналіз дозволяє зробити висновок, що спосіб творення 20,5% евфемізмів вибірки можна вважати комбінаторним.

Ключові слова: словотворення, евфемізм, комбінаторний, метафора, фразеологізація, генералізація, метонімія, іронія, фонемна заміна.