

## EUPHEMISMS IN LATIN AND ITALIAN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

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### **Abstract**

*Just like onomastics that preserve the oldest stages of language development, euphemisms can also be used and studied from the point of view of construction, giving us a valuable material for many types and ways of word formation in the Albanian language, as well as for adverbial means. The earlier they are, the greater the value from a linguistic point of view. Not all ways of word formation can be illustrated by euphemisms."*

*Likewise, which is part of euphemisms (from old Greek eu "good" + phemi "I say", speak), are words used to name things and objects, whose names for various reasons have been avoided from use. So, we are dealing with existing lexical units that mark a new referent. Euphemisms, in essence, are the transfer of the name from one object to another, they are figurative transitions of meaning.*

*Such arguments bring quite a few research and study difficulties, referring to a foreign language, even more so when it comes to a classical language, dead for centuries, as is the case of Latin. In addition, it should be known that euphemisms do not have the same characteristics from language to language, because this linguistic phenomenon does not remain only on the linguistic level, but also extends and deepens on the ethnolinguistic level, otherwise in the entire culture of a people.*

**Keywords:** *euphemisms, Latin and Italian language, dictionaries, culture.*

### **Introduction**

At the beginning of this word, it would be enough that, before we move on to the high status of the use of Latin in Roman society and its literature of unparalleled levels in the world, we could explain that with that language - the mother and generator of some vulgar languages and so quickly modern, it is likely the phenomenon that occurred in a part of the Anglo-Saxon peoples, mainly English and German, as described by the great researcher of Popular Culture

in Europe at the beginning of the new era, Peter Burke, who pays considerable attention to upper-class attitudes to popular culture, its 'debauchery of superstition' and exoticism. This cultural scholar writes: "The separation of upper and lower class cultures can be seen most clearly in those parts of Europe where court imitation meant that the upper classes literally spoke a different language from common people...In the Highlands of Scotland, in the days of Adam Ferguson, Gaelic became a language spoken in the home, but not in the drawing-room, or at any gentleman's table... At the court of Vienna it was bitterly observed that, if any one in Bohemia was heard to speak Czech, he was thought to have tarnished his reputation, because Czech was for the peasants; in Norway in the c. XVIII educated people spoke Danish – as the language of the Copenhagen court; likewise, in Finland, educated people spoke Swedish and abandoned their language to the craftsmen and peasants; so, two languages for two cultures. Even in the Albanian folk creativity, the word falls in the "Epos of the Kreshniks", in the plane of this culture we find euphemisms, such as: N'zyft e npushkve m'a ka lye,/ In the end and in the top they gave fire ,/ When his soul came out for gasp, / He left me day and night." In these 4 verses, the expression "with my soul out of breath" is a euphemism, as it avoids the use of the verb "to die", which in our language has so many euphemistic meanings, such as: passes away, goes with many, parted with alive, passed into that life, left us, died, etc. Even in the writer Justin Rrota, in the novels "About you" there is an avoidance of expressions and synonymous names, which can be marked as euphemisms not to avoid uttering a heavy and rude statement, but to bring an innovation in this field, for example: "In him, the lady drove him with his daughters, Angelina and Madalena, the lip in gas and pour sugar, friends are waiting; - where the phraseology "you pour sugar" is equated with "you speak sweetly".

### **Euphemisms in the Latin language**

When we followed the terms expressed with euphemisms in the Dictionary of prof. Xhevat Lloshi, we did not expand to show that in Albanian linguistics, the first help in the development of this field was given by the linguist and albanologist Eqrem Çabej, already in the first years after the War of Second World War. Our author's research paper was published in the collection "Linguistic Studies IV", taken from the Bulletin of the Institute of Science, Tirana, 1949, p. 72-84. The author begins by explaining that the euphemisms used in vernacular languages are of special interest to both the linguist and the ethnographer, they are like a bridge that leads from language to folklore. He claims that the phenomenon of euphemisms is widespread in all Balkan languages; euphemisms are part of figurative speech and they consist in the fact that a spirit, thing, a concept, a figure of popular belief, a disease, etc., in some circumstances is

avoided to be called by the name it has, and this name is replaced by a name another one, which covers the first one. One of the reasons for such an action, writes our albanologist, is fear, and other factors such as shame, the fear of hurting the feelings of others or the good habits of society, and others like these are the motivations that breed euphemisms in a language. Çabej continues writing, seemingly bringing examples of euphemisms from animals (wolf - beast), as for example, in Pukë; then it passes to the Slavic peoples who use, it seems, the term medved (honey-eater) for the bear. Even in the ancient Indo-European languages, the linguist claims, there were euphemisms, such as for the bee (honey), for the fox (red fox), among the Celts, the Italians, in Brittany, etc.

As far as Roman society is concerned, which used Latin as a spoken and written language, Çabej used the term "weasel", which in that world was considered a demonic being and that is why there is no quarrel with its name. Hahni, the scholar who brings the example of the weasel, goes further, showing that the ancients believed in the transformation of a woman into a weasel and vice versa, and the ancient legends connected this with the birth act of Hercules, from his mother Alcmena. For another scholar, Eliani, the great linguist Çabej, tells us that he has documented that Lala's bride was a human, did magic, poisoned and was infertile in illicit love, and the anger of the deity Hakate turned her into a malevolent animal. The term bullari (house clock) is also treated in the same way. In popular languages, we learn from Çabej, that words and euphemistic terms are generated from diseases, from figures of popular beliefs, customs and customs.

Another linguist, of a younger generation, will line up for a certain place in our format, because, apart from the only monographic book by the authors Osmani and Pepa, related to this linguistic phenomenon, in our literature, there are also provided help to Prof. Gjovalin Shkurtaç, in the well-known work "Ethnography of Albanian speech". In the line of voices lined up by Gj.Shkurtaç, in our interest, there is also a reflection to a certain extent of euphemisms, such as names or terms for animals that, in our language and in the provinces of Albania, are called by euphemisms, such as: kuçedra - nana of the well, snake, -tox, viper-cap, bee - the blessed one, wolf - the skunk, fox - the shrew, bukula, -the beauty of the mice, the rabbit - the dress, the owl - the owl, the crow - the bird that brings mourning, the duck wild-scissors, long-eared donkey, and others for diseases and animal reproduction.

Without dwelling on the etymology of the word, after we have passed it on to the corresponding bud where some euphemisms from the Dictionary of Xh. Lloš, we have seen as terms or names of plants and animals, included in the work by our author, but in passing we are mentioning that explanations for the origin can be found in the Dictionary of the Kosovar researcher Mikel

Ndreca: *euphemism/-zmi, m. Gr. good + I speak softly: it is a word or expression that is used instead of another word or expression, which we should not or do not want to speak, a word or expression that is soft or softened; for example: "passed away", for "died"; "brinoç" for "devil" etc.*

Likewise, in a foreign dictionary, in the Etymological Dictionary of the Italian language, where we read: *Euphemism s.m. dal greco euphemismós (= di buon auspicio), da euphemizesthai (= ugare bune parole); cof. anche éu-significato in linguistica, rhetorical figure mediante la quale si sostituiscono alcune parole ad altre per convenienza o per decenza.*

Our explanation, in order to come to the phenomenon of euphemisms in the Latin language, I think should be started, first, from the fact that the Roman civilization was an embedded urban civilization and culture, not a civilization and culture of shepherds or nomadic tribes or tribes. The second, the Latin language, throughout world culture (and linguistics at the same time) is based on scientific terminology, because the terms of many fields of knowledge are built on that language. Thirdly, euphemisms for peoples and their cultures are neither the same nor close. For example, we cannot pretend to look for the euphemism "gagged" for the wolf in the Latin language, because this denominative term belongs to pastoral peoples in the period of the formation of tribes or tribes.

The Italian linguist Stefano Telve in his recent work "L'italiano: frasi e testo", when he writes about rhetorical figures, immediately switches to euphemistic expressions. He emphasizes: "A clearly allusive rhetorical means is, for example, reticence, which occurs when one deliberately leaves the expression of thought half-finished. It is a widely used resource in advertising language (winking, allusive) and involves a particular interpretative commitment on the part of the recipient, because it is equivalent to a call for co-responsibility in completing and activating the message. Other mitigating rhetorical figures are the litote (saying one thing while denying its opposite: He's not a genius. 'He's not very intelligent', I don't mind your idea at all 'I share your idea'), the periphrasis (saying one thing with several words, as happens in many euphemisms: differently able 'handicapped' (and the depersonalized use of the personal pronoun (plural of modesty: we instead of I).

According to the numerous Italian-Latin and Latin-Italian dictionaries, which we possess or with which we were acquainted during higher studies or even in the state high school program in Italy, we say with conviction that euphemisms in the Latin language are mostly found in the proverbs, maxims and historical sayings from famous people, such as philosophers, statesmen and military geniuses. We are talking here about expressions or ways of saying throughout the centuries or even to this day in the spoken discourse, but also in the written one. For example,

if there is talk during a lecture about a danger that is approaching and is so certain, the word falls, about a border attack between states or about a situation when an attack is expected from the sea, we think of the ancient Latin saying "Hannibal ante portas"; which evokes the desperate call of the Romans at the time when the leader of Carthage, Hannibal, after the battle of Cana, with a great victory over the Roman legions, reached the walls of Rome. In addition to the use of maxims or such sayings, care must be taken to put them in the right and appropriate context, otherwise they turn into a source of humor and strip the speaker of culture. If a politician today takes the word with pathos and describes the risk of a flood due to the opening of the gates of the Drin, next to the HCs on it, and uses "Hannibal ante portas", the situation becomes ridiculous and reveals the vanity his. Ali Jashari, author of the work "Dictionary with borrowed expressions in the Albanian language", has aptly given two uses of a Latin maxim known and used throughout human history, since the time when the Roman writer Vegeti created it, in the prologue of the work "De Re Militari": "Qui desiderat pacem, preparat bellum" - if one wants peace, let him prepare for war. This in the time of the Romans (but even today it means that peace is never safe without the protection of bayonets. Here is what Anton Harapi wrote in his declaration, in the years of the Second World War: *"Besides, in addition to the external world peace, we will look with the left, especially the peaceful civil peace: this will be the biggest cause, not only for those who have the reins of the state in their hands, but also for every Albanian, who love Albania, why did that old man say: Si vis pacem, para bellum."*

While the other usage, quoted according to Lenin, instead of excellent personal relations began dry working relations, based on the permanent account, according to the formula: si vis pacem, para bellum - seems out of place, since social relations between people of social groups, do not reach the war match. Or from Virgil: "Sunt lacrymae rerum" - an expression taken from the Aeneid (I, 462) Sunt lacrymae rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt - there are tears in life and human suffering grieves the mind. (These are the words of Aeneas to the faithful Acanthus). The euphemism here is not built for a concrete name, as Virgil writes, but on abstraction, which is based on the lexemes "suffering", "misery", "mind". All maxims have meaning: affairs cause tears, the way of the world is tragically inevitable; the expression is used to say that non-spiritual things seem to pity the sufferings of man; they seem to weep for misfortune.

Euphemisms are related to the field of ethnography, folklore, from the plant and animal world, from mythology, religious beliefs, diseases, birth, death, etc. But a large part of euphemisms in modern languages, in our times, certainly come from relationships in society, from people's relationships with each other, even with the appearance of the weather. Not all of these indicators appear in the composition of euphemisms in the Greek and Latin languages,

languages that have been dead for centuries. As mentioned above, the phenomenon of euphemisms in Latin is quite special and has three sources:

- A. Of the proverbs still remaining today in world culture.
- B. From the prominent sayings of prominent people in history.
- C. Of the maxims, which constitute universal sayings.

The basis of euphemisms in the Latin language are metaphors, the change of the first meaning; the word, the phrase "casus belli", which comes from the Roman expression in cases where there is or arises a "cause for war" between two states; but in other situations, for example, in the linguistic act of a fierce polemic, which goes up to heat or physical occupation; one of the protagonists can use that the raised argument should not become a "casus belli", because they were friends or partners among themselves!

It is emphasized that the role of euphemisms does not stand out when they appear separately; especially they raise the level of the lecture or oratory when they are placed in complete lecture texts. We are bringing a short passage from the books of the Italian Classical High School, written by a high school graduate who also has Greek and Latin languages in his study program. It is about the writing of a short essay, and the strong reaction of a student, who, according to him, had not received the grade he deserved: *"Sir, there is no other way to complete that "something" that is required as an Actus reus; yes, yes, let's call it that, because the essay was made Ad unguem for a student like me!!! The end, Age quod agis, Mr. Teacher, if it is not unexpected that Alea iacta est and I am sorry, because, without any kind of debate someone (some) are acting caught after an Arcades ambo! In the end, my dear teacher, for the evaluation of my essay I think that an Argumentum ad hominem is being used, without any reason or objectivity! For this I believe in Audentes fortuna juvat, because Caeca invidia est, as the historian Titus Livy said!!! However, as a student, I have to obey as the saying "Iurare in verbo magistri!"*

1. Of course, the density of these euphemisms above was made for educational and didactic purposes, in the case of our high school student, to evaluate him with the highest grade, related to the ability of this use, in a competition or methodical test.
2. Besides, what should be said in these cases, the use of euphemisms like these in the text or in oratorical speeches, has value for special and cultured audiences.

3. Also, it should be noted that Latin maxims and sayings turn into euphemisms, especially when they are used in other languages, the word comes, in today's modern languages, because their meaning does not come out directly, but softened, as it is also the definition or definition of the euphemisms we gave above. For example, if we are analyzing an action not done or well planned by someone, we can say the euphemistic maxim "Cerebrum non habet", which means that the action lacks a brain and which is an expression used by the great Greek fabulist Phaedrus, put in the mouth of the fox, who found a mask and, amazed by it, said: "Beautiful, but brainless." But it would be an insult or a serious lack of ethics, if someone uses "Cerebrum non habet" in front of a beautiful lady, when she is not successful in her work! Not infrequently, even within a phrase, which is placed in the middle or at the end of a narrative, conversation or counter-argument, the polemicist can use the euphemistic, softened maxim "In vino veritas" - in the wine is the truth or meaning "What's in the belly, the bardhak brings out" - instead of addressing someone "What's Marrina talking about!" You're drunk and you don't know what you're talking about! Shut up, drunkard." People say in such cases "Drink wine, don't drink your mind!", which is a moderately mild or moderately harsh euphemism.
4. Even in the use of some euphemistic expressions - syntagmas, care must be taken to find the right place during the course of the lecture. Again, from Ali Jashari we are approaching two cases, one of which is not hit. We are talking about "summa summarum", an expression taken from the work of Lucretius "Re rerum natura, V, 361-363), which has the meaning: the essence of the essence, the conclusion, the end of things. \* The sub-dialects of Gehrish, summa summarum, have undergone Max Muller's well-known "phonetic-decay" incomparably more markedly than the dialects of Tosh. (Selman Riza, TMA); Valentini's summa summarum work has several horizons or planes. It seems that Valentine's work is called summa summarum!!!

Some euphemistic expressions, more hit, compared to the explanations given to them:

- Cuius regio eius et religio - according to the country and faith, with the understanding that a person must submit to the customs and rules of the country where he goes and lives.
- Dente lupus, cornu taurus petit - the wolf attacks with teeth, the bull with horns (Oraci), in this world everyone defends and attacks with the weapons that nature has given him.

- De te fabula narratur – fable speaks for you, an expression used to draw attention to someone, who is being spoken of figuratively.
- Dum vivimus, vivamus – while we are alive, let us live; epicurean philosophical expression; every man lives in his own way.
- Ego sum qui sum – I am who I am, an expression that is usually used with the meaning that every person should be accepted as he is: with the good and the bad that he has.
- Eiusdem furfuris – from the same dough; it is used in a negative sense for two people (bad and vices) who look and act alike.
- Est modus in rebus – Everything has a measure (Horace); you cannot take action that exceed all limits.
- Ex cathedra - from the cathedra, podium. When a man speaks with complete competence and confidence; ironically used for people who pass themselves off as competent and confident in what they say.
- Faciamus experimentum in corpore vili – we do experiments on the plebeian body; statement that
- it was mainly dedicated to doctors who gained experience (experimented) by visiting and treating worthless people.
- Facit indignatio versum – anger makes verses burst; expression used by poets who find their inspiration as a reaction to a stifling reality.
- Favete linguis – shut up; keep calm (Horace)! In ordinary use it is used as a call to keep "a minute of silence", in honor of the dead; a minute of silence. In any language situation a the expression, in the Albanian language, comes to mind: "Rest!", "Shut up!", "Shut up!"; in Italian it is also insulting and offensive "Chiudi il becco!" - close the door! Even more serious comes in our language, in such situations of use, such as: "Close the shoe!" - where the organ of speech "mouth" is metaphorized in "shkarpe" - old shoes destroyed!
- Flama fumo est proxima – the flame comes after the smoke (Plautius); care must also be taken about things seemingly insignificant things that suddenly become important.
- Frangar, non flectar – it breaks me, but it does not defeat me; used for people with a strong character, who do not bend easily and do not give up their principles/
- Gladiator in arena consilium capit – the gladiator in the arena makes the plan (Seneca), it makes sense it's too late to make plans; on the battlefield you don't have time for plans.



- *Hodie mihi, cras tibi* - today me, tomorrow you. Epitaph that is placed in cemeteries; the expression is usually used to indicate at some point, that as I you too will make the same path and difficulties to reach one result.
- *Imperium in imperio* - a state within a state; in antiquity there were citizens and social classes who were exempted from the laws of the state they lived in. In our time, it takes the meaning of the privileges that a group of people create for themselves, to break the laws without having consequences.
- *In silvam non ligna feras insanius* – there is no point in bringing wood to the forest; with meaning do not undertake useless, meaningless things.
- *Lex mala, lex nulla* - a bad law is no law; expression by Thomas Aquinas that sought the perfection of laws in order not to leave a path for their abuse. Ignorance of the law (a crime not provided for in the law), does not excuse the guilty.
- *Medice, cura te ipsum* - doctor, cure yourself! Such a well-known expression that is used for those people who constantly talk and correct the faults of others, at a time when they have most of them for themselves. From the fabulist Fedri, we learn that "the crab constantly criticizes his daughter for walking backwards."
- *Nescit vox missa reverti* – the word once taken out of the mouth cannot be taken back; the meaning is that before we speak, we must think carefully about what we say: measure before you speak.
- *Non omnia possumus omnes* – not everyone knows how to do everything (Virgil): in the sense that not all people have all capacities in a field of assigned.
- *Oleum et operam perdidit* - I spent oil and toil; expression used when it's a waste of work, when you don't get the expected result, no matter how much you spent, first sweat.
- *Paucis temeritas est bono, multis malo* - a little courage is necessary, too much is harmful. Cicero expresses this sentence a little differently: "Courage belongs to the young and restraint to the old." So, not always courage helps you overcome situations, you also need prudence.
- *Quod fuimus lauda, si iam damnas, quod sumus* - praise for what I was, if you don't like who I am. The contribution of people should not be forgotten, but must be evaluated; we should not forget the good deeds or deeds of people that are impossible today.
- *Qui habet aures audiendi, audiat* – whoever has ears to hear, let him hear.

- Regnare nolo, liber ut non sim mihi - I would rather not reign than lose my freedom. It is the answer given by the wolf to the dog, which enjoyed all the good things in man, but remained tied up all day.

Linguists have made studies that most of these euphemisms are like this, because they are compared with their explanations, for example, in the maxim "Si vis amari, ama" - if they want, I love (Seneca); with love, understanding and kindness the hearts of others are won. The expression is used in cases where we want to warn those who only love themselves and the euphemism is used instead of the expression "You are selfish!" "You don't love anyone!"

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