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ELTWeekly

India's first weekly ELT eNewsletter

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Try Macmillan's 'Global' course

In issue#41, we posted a video about Macmillan's 'Global' course. Currently Macmillan is giving away a free chapter from the course.

Macmillan Newsletter team says, "We're currently running a of our new adult course Global. Simply enter your details for the chance to win a Flip Camcorder or an antique-style globe. The prize draw will take place on 15th January 2010."

Get 'Global' at <http://www.macmillanglobal.com>

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Video-1: TEFL Online Tutorial: Teaching English With Games

The present video features three examples of how to incorporate games into your ESL and EFL classes.

To watch the video, please visit: <http://eltweekly.com/more/2009/12/43-video-1-tefl-online-tutorial-teaching-english-with-games/>

Research Paper: Intellectual Fashion in India: The Role of Euphemism, Neologism and Slang in Indian English

By **Dr. Asma Rizwan**, Asst. Professor, People's Institute of Management & Research, Bhopal

English like all language is not static. It is ever changing and adopting new words and style or let's call it fashion. Global English has led to a crisis of terminology. The distinctions between 'native speaker', second-language speaker', and 'foreign-language user' have become blurred. English already finds itself in a different mix – nowhere does it enjoy complete hegemony. It is growing as an Asian lingua franca. The British Empire may have been responsible for the global colonisation of the English language, but much to the surprise of traditionalists the globalising forces of commerce, technology, Hollywood and Bollywood mean that the 'purity' of the language has been invaded. This has not been largely by 'Americanisms', but also by local appropriations and reworking Robert Birchfield once said that "Our language is changing slowly and America is leading the way now, not Britain". If he was present now he would have added "Asia" to his quote. Here in India we discover fascinating words each day used mostly by the Intelligentsia, politicians, media and the generation next. Even though we find reasonably poor command on the spoken form of English,(only 3% Indians speak proper English) the use of euphemism and slang are quiet prevalent among the common man or the aam admi,(a Hindi term for common man) a very popular term used even by the elite English speaking class in India.

A euphemism is a word or phrase used to mask a rude or offensive concept. These figures of speech provide a technique to avoid taboos by being polite. It is a kind of linguistic dishonesty. Many euphemisms are so common, that we don't even recognize them as such. Perhaps the best way to learn about euphemisms and their growth is to investigate some example like the toilet room (the word toilet was itself originally a euphemism).

Toilet room ?

bath room?

powder room ?

wash room ?

rest room?

This example depicts the rate of vocabulary change in English. Words grow out of fashion like any other consumer products. It is rather strange that euphemism is that part of English which is largely untaught but still very popular. This is rather incongruous, for as speakers of English we use euphemisms to express any number of everyday realities, and as passive listeners and readers we decode them daily to properly understand discourse in the workplace, the business world, the mass media, etc. We find new terminology every where from the discussions on the rising Agflation, (A term of Meryll Lynch for the phenomenon of rising food prizes fueling the rate of inflation) of the Nomophobic generation.

(Nomophobia fear of being out of mobile phone contact like running out of battery, network or credit) to the debates of the Dink couples (double income no child) arguing for abortion rights in terms of pro-life (opposed to abortion) or pro-choice (in favor of abortion) lobby. Vegetarians and non-vegetarians are quiet common but added to the list are Fishitarians(vegetarians who eat only fish) , Eggitarians(vegetarians who eat only eggs) and recently vegans [Coined by Donald Watson (1910-2005) to describe a "non-dairy vegetarian"; formed from the first three and last two letters of the word vegetarian.]

This paper explores the question of why, in Garner's (1998) words, Euphemisms "thrive as much today as ever." (p. 266). It presents a brief background on the use of euphemism and slang in English (especially in India) along with a short glossary of common words and some of their current, popular euphemisms. It also explores its advantages and disadvantages.

Role of Euphemisms and Slang

Euphemisms are words we use to soften the reality of what we are communicating to a given listener or reader. They are a universal feature of language usage; all cultures typically use them to talk about things they find terrifying. (e.g., war, sickness, death) Similarly, we use euphemisms to express taboos, as we feel that they keep us at safe distance from the taboo itself. In English, the word "die" is usually replaced with euphemistic expressions to show the commemoration and respect to the dead and the sympathy for his or her relatives and friends. There are dozens of euphemistic expressions with the implication of "die", such as the words pass away, pass out, close one's days, full sleep, join the great majority, pay the

debt of nature, depart to god and so on. The place for the dead to sleep forever can be referred to with the common words like “mortuary” and “cemetery”. But most people do not like to use them, for it sounds too grieving and indifferent to discard the body of their beloved in such cold and damp place. Recently, more and more people began to use such euphemisms as “funeral home” and “memorial park” since the words “home” and “park” are more humane with some warm and tranquil implications. Another use of euphemisms is to elevate the status of something (e.g., using educator for teacher, attorney for lawyer); but in general, we use euphemisms to express what is socially difficult to express in direct terms or to simply show off our command over fashionable language. Their role is slowly changing from expressing taboos to being fashionable. They are the favourites of speakers of other language. In India the 24×7 media bombardment has resulted into a discovery of new words almost every day. This is called Neologism. They are simply new words. They are created every day in this fast moving world. For example: “outsourcing”. Successful communication requires both ease of expression and ease of understanding. In the case of the creation and acceptance of a neologism like “outsourcing” speakers of English satisfied the criterion of ease of expression, for there is no simple existing way of communicating the notion “acquiring goods or services from an outside source” and we certainly did not want to use a long phrase like this every time we referred to the phenomenon of outsourcing. We all have heard of doping (Enhancing performance through drugs) in sports. But what is technical doping? It came into being very recently after the invention of newly designed swim suits for the swimmers in the Beijing Olympics which helps them to enhance their speed by a few micro seconds.

Slang is the use of informal words and expressions to describe an object or condition. Slang is vocabulary that is meant to be interpreted quickly but not necessarily literally, as slang words or terms are often a metaphor or an allegory. One use of slang is to circumvent social taboos, as mainstream language tends to shy away from evoking certain realities. For this reason, slang vocabularies are also particularly rich in certain domains, such as, violence, crime and drugs and sex. Slang very often involves the creation of novel meanings for existing words. It is very common for such novel meanings to diverge significantly from the standard meaning. Thus, “cool” and “hot” can both mean “very good”, “impressive” or “good looking”. The use of Slang is more popular among the younger generation.

The Euphemism Wave

It is often seen that Euphemisms evolve over time into taboo words themselves. They are considered offensive and get a face lift by a new word in place. This is called as “euphemism treadmill”. Words originally intended as euphemisms may lose their euphemistic value, acquiring the negative connotations of their referents. In some cases, they may be used mockingly and become dysphemisms. Like the term abnormal. It was generally used for all children with physical or mental disability in the late 60’s. The example given below shows how the euphemism themselves became taboo with the passage of time. This euphemism changed almost every decade.

Abnormal(60’s)? mentally /physically retarded(70’s) ? handicapped(80’s) ? physically challenged(90’s) ? disabled ? differently abled (00)?developmentally disabled(05) ? intellectually/physically challenged(07)

One of the many areas in which euphemism has become rampant as a form of deception and obfuscation is education. Students are not failures but “underachievers”; they don’t disrespect teachers but are “challenged by authority figures.” Euphemistic language permits the child to escape all personal responsibility for his or her actions, often by suggesting that blame lies with someone or something else – or with something beyond the child’s control. Junior doesn’t fail to get along with other kids; he’s “socially challenged.” In fact, the “challenged” concept has gone to extremes. Sara is not a poor student but “academically challenged”. John is not a poor athlete; he is “athletically challenged”. To make fun of this trend a shorter person is “vertically-challenged” and a thin one is “gravitationally-challenged”. Another new word created out of an old euphemism is “Mouse potato” one that is always on the internet from “Couch potato”. (One who is always in front of TV)

The field of English language teaching (ELT) is experiencing a similar struggle over terminology; we have not yet reached a consensus on what we should call our learners of English. We started with ESL (English as a second language).Some people are unhappy with the term ESL students because this implies that English is the first foreign language that non-native speakers should learn. And in any case, they say, English might be the learner’s third or fourth language. These people prefer to use the term EAL learners – i.e. English as additional language learners. In America over the past few years the term LEP (limited English proficient) students has become popular. However there is now a backlash from people who feel that this term is too negative, and they suggest calling such students PEPs (potentially English proficient). The latest acronym, however, seems to be ELL (English language learner) or recently added acronym by the Cambridge University, ESOL (English

for the speakers of other language). No doubt this will remain popular till a new term is found! Some other terms of English language teaching are-

- L1 = “Language 1” = the student’s native (primary or first acquired) language.
- L2 = “Language 2” = the language being learned or studied
- TEFL = Teaching English as a Foreign Language
- TESL = Teaching English as a Second Language
- TESOL = Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (It is also the name of an association, Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc.)

Typical of many recently-coined euphemisms are the words and expressions that try to avoid giving offence to various minority groups or unfortunate individuals. Poor people are called needy, under-privileged; disadvantaged or economically deprived. Poor countries have in turn been called underdeveloped, developing, emergent, Third World – all in an effort to retain the meaning without causing offence or being patronising. The struggle over the past 10-20 years to find an acceptable way to refer to black Americans is further evidence of the increased sensitivity that we now have to the power of language. This sensitivity is often referred to as political correctness (PC).

Euphemism in politics

Politics and matters related to politics, however, are the areas in which euphemism has become so common that we almost never hear “straight talk.” Politicians beat everyone when it comes to the use of the veiled language. For them it is the language of political correctness (PC). For politicians a euphemism is a word used out of fear or delicacy to avoid giving offence, because giving offence is dangerous, It could mean losing precious votes. We do not have wars anymore; we have “military actions”. It doesn’t matter that the amount of death and destruction are the same in a war as in a “military action”; the latter sounds somehow less extreme. Civilian casualties in war are “collateral damage”. It is unintended damage, casualties and deaths caused by the dropping of bombs in civilian areas in the course of a military operation. The term is of US origin and was first used to describe deaths in the Vietnam War, then in the Gulf War, then in the action (euphemism!) in Serbia at the end of the 1990s and most recently in Afghanistan. “Concentration camp,” describes camps used to house civilian prisoners in close quarters, this was used by the British during

the Second Boer War, primarily because it sounded bland and inoffensive. However, after the Nazi's used the expression to describe its death camps for the Jews, the term gained huge negative connotation. Since then, new terms have been invented as euphemisms for them, such as "internment camp," "resettlement camp," "filtration camp" in the Chechen war, to "filter out terrorist". The more recent euphemism added to the political dictionary is ethnic cleansing (to describe the attempt to clear parts of the former Yugoslavia of a particular national group by terrorising and killing them). Often euphemisms can undermine appropriate attitudes towards serious issues such as the evolving terms describing the medical problem of the cumulative mental trauma of soldiers in high stress situations:

Shell shock (World War I) ? battle fatigue (World War II)? Operational exhaustion (Korean War) ? Post-traumatic stress disorder (Vietnam War)

Politics is almost wall-to-wall euphemisms. 'Appropriate' is one of the politicians' favorites. When a politician calls some course of action 'appropriate', what he actually means is: 'This is what I have decided to do and I refuse to discuss it any further', but no politician can say that; it would cause an uproar. There are literally hundreds of others: a paid liar becomes 'a spin doctor', a fundamental failure to agree on anything becomes a 'frank discussion', and countries which comply with American foreign policy are dubbed 'the free world'. "Tax" is a dirty three-letter word, so we sometimes hear it called a "surcharge." Furthermore, it's astounding how adept politicians are at converting a bribe to a "campaign contribution". Can they be called influentially abled?

Hindi-influenced terms and expressions in Indian English

India is a country of a billion people, and two official languages. Hindi and English are designated as the country's national languages. This situation has led to the spontaneous creation of "Hinglish," a hybrid language combining elements of Hindi and English.

According to Professor David Crystal: Hinglish, spoken by 300 million Indians across the globe, is set to become more popular than English. There is a constant rise in Hindi words and expression used in Indian English. When Indians use English, it is often a mixture of English, Hindi, and other languages. Even in "pure" Indian English, many Indian terms slip in frequently. It became popular after the entry of satellite TV in India. The phrases like Yeh Dil Maange More and We are like that only, ushered in the rise of Hinglish by the advertising industry. Bollywood the Indian film Industry also plays a big role in the rise of Hinglish. Musicals, is euphemism for Bollywood films. The phrase "bold scenes" substitutes as a description of risqué scenes in movies. "Rash driving" is a euphemism for hell-on-wheels

motorists. Take a Chill pill stands for relaxing, Supari for contract killing and perhaps the most famous Don for an underworld boss and Desi for a local stuff or person are some of the terms coined by Bollywood. Perhaps the biggest euphemism given by this industry is the term Gandhigiri (following the principals of Mahatma Gandhi) for Gandhism. The usage of such lingo is often termed as Gutka (Indian Mouth fresher) accent by the English press in India. Here are some more Hindi terms which are generously used in Indian english-

Achcha – good

Array – hey

Bus – enough

ek – one (as a number)

masala – risqué; spicy; hot (like a film)

pakka – sure

yaar – buddy; pal

Neta – leader

Junglee – wild, savage

Bandh – general strike

Curry – a spicy dish that signifies Indian cuisine to foreigners

Angrez/ firang – a fair foreigner

Conclusion

Euphemisms expand the excitement of verbal and written language. They have their advantages and disadvantages. They allow people to convey multiple messages with a single statement and it is up to the listener to think outside the box to find the true, intended meaning. Good words, doublespeak, or euphemisms are the spice of our language; they embody the evolution of our language. On the other hand it is also the language of deception, pretension, evasion, and obfuscation. Many argue against their use as they mask the badness of an act – or can just as easily paint neutral ideas in much darker shades. Hence they carry risks. Unscrupulous pitchmen can use the emotive meanings of words to mask

their true intentions. When a politician frames an argument in excessively patriotic terms, an unwary reader might be led to support that position without examining the details. People are often not consciously aware of the impact that certain words have on them. Media and politicians too play with them. They can cast a spell on people through them. We begin to think in their terms, and so we begin to think what they want us to think. By framing the terms of discourse, they largely frame the discourse itself. The power of language is such that we believe that giving something a different label will change the nature of the thing. However, to paraphrase Shakespeare, manure by any other name still stinks.

But keeping these arguments aside euphemisms, neologism and slang communicate an attitude. Jobs ranging from politics, broadcasting, preaching, selling, and even teaching utilize the evolution of the English language to strengthen the impact of arguments, and lighten the blow to our emotions. Increasing amounts of humor surge from the play on words, and kids are allowed to retain a bit of innocence. It is incredible that a simple set of words and phrase can ease pain, and help people deal with the harsh realities of life. They are unpleasant truths wearing diplomatic cologne. It is good for the growth of the language that they are considered fashionable and used with ease by the speakers of other languages. Furthermore, euphemisms build regional identity. No wonder Indians prefer the term *aam admi* more than the common man. It was rightly said by Robert Burchfield, former editor, The Oxford English Dictionary that “A language without euphemisms would be a defective instrument of communication.”

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ELT Resource: HotChalk's LessonPlansPage.com

HotChalk's *LessonPlansPage.com* is a collection of over 4,000 lesson plans from Preschool through High School and beyond, that were developed by Kyle Yamnitz, students and faculty at The University of Missouri, and more recently by the users of this website.

Launched in October of 1996, *The Lesson Plans Page* was developed to assist educators of all types.

Elementary school teachers get lesson plans that are ready to use in their classrooms.

College students get great example lesson plans or ideas to base their own lesson plans on.

Home schoolers can get lesson plans to use at home and parents can get ideas for educational activities to use with their children.

Follow [this link](#) for more information about the site's author. They have worked hard to develop a good extensive resource for educators.

Visit [HotChalk's www.LessonPlansPage.com](http://www.LessonPlansPage.com)

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Video-2: English for Progress: Interview with Nandan Nilekani

Watch Dr. Nandan Nilekani being interviewed on “English for Progress”.

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Download Webinar: Pronunciation in Communication: An Aviation Perspective

Pronunciation is an essential ingredient in the ability to communicate effectively. This is illustrated in the new requirements for pilots and air traffic controllers to be able to pass their message successfully. Perfection is not the goal but mutual intelligibility is. In this webinar I'll look at the background to the requirements and question whether the traditional method of pronunciation teaching is relevant for the modern International English world.

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eBook: Language Teaching Projects for the Third World

This Document, from 1983, offers a selection of project case studies and commentaries from various African contexts. Most of the projects were British Council-run. The authors reflect the preoccupations of expatriate project workers of the day, and the lack of African contributors strikes the modern reader immediately. Nevertheless, this is a valuable resource for those interested in the history of English for development and the role of donor agencies.

Download 'Language Teaching Projects for the Third World' ebook by visiting <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/transform>

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GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

- 1. Papers / Articles:** All articles should be computerized using double-spacing, including tables, references and footnotes. Submission of manuscripts should be done in electronic form only. Electronic version of the article/research paper should be e-mailed to the Editor, ELTWeekly at info@eltweekly.com.
- 2. Abstracts:** An abstract in approximately 200 words should assist the article.
- 3. Abbreviations:** No stops are needed between capitals e.g. ELT, IELTS.
- 4. Figures and Tables:** Tables should be numbered sequentially with Arabic numerals.
- 5. Notes:** Notes should be consecutively numbered and presented at the foot of the page.
- 6. References:** References in the text should follow the author-date system. The complete reference list should be given at the end of the article. They should be in alphabetical order.
- 7. Book Reviews:** Book reviews must contain the name of the author and title / subtitle of the book reviewed, place of publication and publisher and date of publication.
- 8. For Event Submissions:** Please submit your event details at least 30 days prior to the event.
- 9.** For a **more detailed stylesheet**, please write to The Editor, ELTWeekly at info@eltweekly.com.

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This is what our readers say:

Hello, Mr. Tarun patel, I have received ur recent work which is praiseworthy and utilitarian .Thanks a lot !All issues r very much interesting for language learners and teachers .God bless U and ur team ! – **neeharika rawat**

Its really a wonderful vision. Its very useful to the teachers' community. Thnkn you very much. – **G. NAGESWARARAO**

Dear Tarun and the team

thank you for being so prompt in sending us the new issues. It is great to learn about teachit & english Next.

regards - **Dr. Ravi Bhushan**

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