

Rethinking *dysphemisms* and *euphemisms*: a corpus-based constructional approach to Italian *taboo language*.

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This paper focuses upon research aimed at providing a more detailed definition of *dysphemisms* and *euphemisms* in the context of a constructional approach to language (e.g. Goldberg 2006). In the last decades increasing attention has been devoted to *taboo language*, *swearing* and *impoliteness*, with a focus on so-called *swearwords* (also *dysphemisms*) and *euphemisms* - (e.g. Allan and Burridge 2006; McEnery 2006). To provide an understanding of how *taboo language* works, I propose a constructional approach centred on *dysphemisms* and *euphemisms*. Drawing from the study on “conventionalized impoliteness formulae” by Culpeper (2011), I will first analyse the two phenomena in terms of their relation to *taboo language* constructions. Then I suggest that *taboo language* can be conveyed by words in isolation and through more complex constructions. Pieces of evidence will be presented, gathered through the analysis of *dysphemisms* drawn from the itWaC corpus, a 2 billion words corpus collected from the web, designed by Baroni (2009). The corpus has been queried using SketchEngine. This allowed me to identify constructions that have a role in conveying *taboo language*. I then looked at how the status of *dysphemisms* and *euphemisms* as *taboo language* can be determined on their dependence with said constructions. I will show that it is possible to redefine these two phenomena and their relationship on the basis on said dependence. This feature provides a wider definition and a better understanding of how *taboo language* can be linguistically recognized through syntactical and lexical features.

References

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