

Graphic Euphemisms in Slovenian CMC

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Abstract

Taboo words have been a part of human communication for as long as language has existed. Scientists are not in agreement on why taboo words emerged but it seems as if certain words have always been out-of-bounds for language users or have always caused certain negative feelings or reactions. Everyday communication (written and spoken) is filled with taboo words either expressed openly or disguised and concealed as more or less harmless. The evolution of the Internet and its many communication possibilities have led to a new (and somewhat less hidden) growth of taboo words, especially swear words and words designed to insult the recipient of the communication.

The poster presents the analysis of graphic euphemisation of chosen swear words in Slovenian CMC (on Twitter and in online news comments) and identifies different ways in which CMC users disguise taboo words, mostly in order to avoid automatic detection and deletion of their tweets or comments. The search was performed with search queries kur* and piz*. Most common graphic euphemism types are the substitution of a letter with a non-letter symbol and the insertion of a non-letter symbol (eg. kur**, piz.ijo). Repeated letters are also common (eg. pizzzzda). Substitutions of letters with visually similar symbols (eg. kur@...), other letters or letter combinations with similar pronunciation (eg. kurz, kurchiti, pyzda, pisda) are less frequent. The analysis also shows that CMC users are very innovative; juxtaposition, puns and various word formation procedures (eg. pizdaponedeljek, pizdarna (< pisarna), kurbenizon (< kombinezon)) are very common even though their primary role is language play rather than taboo word encryption.

Keywords: graphic euphemisms, CMC, taboo words, Slovenian language