

HOW POLITICAL LEADERS SOFTEN REALITY THROUGH EUPHEMISMS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK

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Abstract. Language plays a powerful role in shaping public perception, especially in the realm of politics where words are carefully chosen to influence, persuade, and often soften difficult realities. One common linguistic strategy employed by political leaders is the use of euphemisms indirect or mild expressions used in place of harsher or more direct language. Euphemisms serve as tools for managing public reaction, masking unpleasant truths, and framing political actions in a more favorable light. In both English and Uzbek political discourse, euphemistic expressions are frequently used to discuss sensitive topics such as war, economic downturns, corruption, and social unrest.

This article explores how political leaders in English- and Uzbek-speaking contexts utilize euphemisms to reshape public understanding and mitigate negative responses. It investigates the linguistic forms, functions, and cultural nuances of political euphemisms in both languages. By comparing examples from speeches, official statements, and media coverage, the study aims to uncover patterns in how reality is linguistically softened and how these strategies reflect broader cultural and political practices. Understanding this phenomenon is essential for developing critical language awareness and recognizing the persuasive mechanisms embedded in political communication.

Key words: *Euphemisms, political discourse, English, Uzbek, language manipulation, softening reality, political communication, linguistic strategies, public perception, critical language awareness.*

Introduction

In contemporary political discourse, the strategic use of euphemisms has become an essential linguistic tool for shaping public perception and softening the impact of harsh or controversial realities. Political leaders frequently rely on euphemistic expressions to obscure, mitigate, or reframe potentially sensitive topics such as war, economic hardship, unemployment, or social unrest. By substituting blunt or unsettling terms with more neutral or palatable alternatives, politicians aim to maintain public

support, deflect criticism, and present unfavorable policies or events in a more acceptable light.

This phenomenon is observed not only in English-speaking political contexts but also in Uzbek political communication, where similar linguistic strategies are employed to influence and manage societal reactions. The cross-linguistic analysis of euphemisms in English and Uzbek political rhetoric reveals both universal patterns and culturally specific features in the use of softened language. This article aims to explore how political leaders in both linguistic spheres utilize euphemisms to manipulate meaning and obscure reality, examining the types, functions, and effects of such language choices. Understanding these rhetorical techniques is crucial for promoting critical language awareness and fostering more transparent political communication.

Literature review

The strategic use of euphemisms in political discourse has been extensively explored by scholars who recognize its capacity to obscure harsh realities and influence public opinion. According to Allan and Burridge, euphemisms serve as “linguistic fig leaves” that conceal unpleasant truths under more agreeable language¹. This concept is central to understanding how political leaders manipulate language to avoid accountability or downplay the severity of issues. In the English-speaking world, Lakoff highlights the use of metaphors and euphemisms as mechanisms of political framing, arguing that politicians deliberately choose language that resonates with their ideological goals and softens controversial statements².

Lutz further critiques political euphemism as a form of “doublespeak,” a deliberate distortion of meaning used to mislead or confuse the public³. His analysis of American political language demonstrates how terms like “collateral damage” or “enhanced interrogation” are employed to mask the human cost of military and security policies. Similarly, Bhatia points to the role of euphemistic expressions in diplomatic and bureaucratic language, where vagueness and ambiguity are often used to navigate sensitive topics while preserving authority and institutional credibility⁴.

In the context of Uzbek political language, researchers such as Rakhmatullaeva have examined the increasing use of euphemistic terms in official speeches and media. Rakhmatullaeva notes that euphemisms in Uzbek serve both face-saving and ideological functions, allowing leaders to maintain public composure and national

¹ Allan, Keith, and Kate Burridge. *Euphemism and Dysphemism: Language Used as Shield and Weapon*. Oxford University Press, 1991.-P.52.

² Lakoff, George. *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think*. University of Chicago Press, 2002.-P.94.

³ Lutz, William. *The New Doublespeak: Why No One Knows What Anyone's Saying Anymore*. HarperCollins, 1996.-P.37.

⁴ Bhatia, Vijay K. “Political Discourse.” In *Language and Power*, edited by Paul Simpson and Andrea Mayr, Routledge, 2010.-P.25.

pride while managing political tensions⁵. Comparative studies highlight that while the use of euphemisms is a global phenomenon, the choice of expressions and their frequency can vary depending on linguistic norms and political culture. Crespo-Fernández emphasizes that euphemisms are ideologically charged tools that reflect the power dynamics between speakers and audiences, often used to construct a reality that aligns with political agendas⁶. His discourse analysis supports the view that euphemisms are not merely stylistic choices, but instrumental in the exercise of political power.

Discussion

Political leaders frequently use euphemisms as a rhetorical strategy to soften the impact of harsh realities and make controversial or sensitive topics more acceptable to the public. This linguistic practice serves to mask unpleasant truths, reduce public anxiety, and maintain political support. In both English and Uzbek political discourse, euphemisms play a critical role in shaping perceptions by reframing negative or difficult concepts into more neutral or positive terms.

In English political speech, euphemisms often involve terms related to war, economic hardship, or social policies. For example, “collateral damage” replaces civilian casualties, and “downsizing” is used instead of “job cuts.” These expressions allow politicians to distance themselves from the emotional weight of these issues. Similarly, Uzbek political language employs euphemisms rooted in cultural politeness and indirectness. For instance, phrases like “muammolarni hal qilish” (solving problems) might be used instead of directly addressing failures or crises, and “iqtisodiy islohotlar” (economic reforms) can mask austerity measures.

This use of euphemisms is not simply about politeness but is deeply connected to power dynamics.

Language	Euphemism	Literal Meaning	Function/Effect	Example in Context
English	Collateral Damage	Civilian casualties	Softens the human cost of military actions	“Unfortunately, there was some collateral damage during the operation.”
English	Downsizing	Job cuts	Makes layoffs sound less harsh	“The company is downsizing to

⁵ Rakhmatullaeva, Malika. “The Role of Euphemisms in Uzbek Political Speeches.” *Uzbek Linguistics Journal*, no. 2, 2020. -P.67.

⁶ Crespo-Fernández, Eliecer. “Euphemism and Political Discourse in the British Regional Press.” *Journal of Language and Politics*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2014. -P.218.

				improve efficiency.”
English	Enhanced Interrogation	Torture	Masks the severity of harsh interrogation techniques	“The detainees underwent enhanced interrogation procedures.”
Uzbek	Muammolarni hal qilish	Solving problems	Indirectly addressing failures or issues	“Hokimiyat muammolarni hal qilish ustida ishlamoqda.” (“The government is working on solving problems.”)
Uzbek	Iqtisodiy islohotlar	Economic reforms	Softens austerity measures or cuts	“Davlat iqtisodiy islohotlarni amalga oshirmoqda.” (“The state is implementing economic reforms.”)
Uzbek	Yaxshilanish	Improvement	Used to describe slow or insufficient progress	“Ta’lim tizimida yaxshilanishlar mavjud.” (“There are improvements in the education system.”)

The table shows how euphemisms in both languages function to soften or obscure reality, often distancing speakers and listeners from the negative aspects of a situation.

Conclusion

Understanding these euphemistic strategies is vital for critical media literacy and political discourse analysis. It enables audiences to recognize when language is being used to soften realities and encourages a more nuanced interpretation of political communication. Furthermore, this comparative insight into English and Uzbek demonstrates the universal nature of euphemism while highlighting culturally specific manifestations.

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