

POLITICAL EUPHEMISMS: SOFTENING THE EDGES OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE

G. Karimova ¹, F. Valiyeva ²*Abstract:*

This article explores the significance of political euphemisms in softening politically sensitive language, focusing on both English and Uzbek contexts. It examines how politicians, government officials, and the media use euphemisms to obscure controversial topics, manage public perception, and present policies in a more favorable light. The paper includes examples from both Western and Uzbek political discourse to demonstrate how euphemisms serve as a linguistic tool to mitigate negative reactions and control the narrative in political communication.

Key words: Political euphemisms, softening language, political discourse, public perception, Uzbek political language.

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Political language plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and managing controversial topics. In political discourse, euphemisms are often used to downplay sensitive issues, presenting them in a less confrontational way. In both English and Uzbek contexts, politicians use euphemisms to obscure the harsh realities of policies or actions, presenting them in a more favorable light to the public. This paper explores the role of euphemisms in political discourse, comparing their use in English-speaking and Uzbek-speaking contexts.

Euphemisms in political discourse serve as a means of deflecting negative attention. They allow political figures to avoid direct, potentially harmful language when addressing sensitive issues. This linguistic tool can be traced back to the use of indirect speech in traditional cultures, where face-saving and politeness are valued, as noted in the works of Uzbek linguist M. Tojiyev (2019), who discusses how euphemisms are rooted in cultural values.

In both English and Uzbek political language, euphemisms neutralize negative connotations. For example, in English, terms like "collateral damage" obscure the harsh reality of civilian casualties during military operations. In Uzbek political discourse, phrases like "barqarorlikni ta'minlash choralari" (measures to ensure stability) are often used to describe actions that may involve restricting civil liberties, framing them as necessary steps for national security.

Political euphemisms can be found in various languages, reflecting the cultural and political environments in which they are used. In English, euphemisms such as "enhanced interrogation techniques" and "right-sizing" soften the implications of torture and job cuts, respectively. Uzbek political language, on the other hand, often frames economic and political issues using phrases that emphasize unity, stability, and progress. For instance, the term "bozor islohotlari" (market reforms) is used in Uzbekistan to describe significant economic changes that could lead to unemployment or hardship for some sectors. By framing these policies as "reforms," the language suggests progress and improvement, rather than focusing on potential negative consequences. This mirrors the way English-speaking politicians might use the term "economic adjustment" to downplay the severity of a recession.

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Political spin, or the strategic presentation of information to influence public perception, is closely tied to the use of euphemisms. By framing policies or actions in positive or neutral terms, politicians can shape how these issues are perceived. In Uzbekistan, terms like "milliy tiklanish" (national revival) are often used to describe significant government initiatives that may involve controversial changes. This parallels the use of phrases like "patriotic duty" in Western political language to justify military actions.

In English-speaking contexts, political spin might involve referring to war as "peacekeeping" or "preemptive defense" to make aggressive military actions appear defensive. In Uzbek political language, terms like "siyosiy barqarorlikni saqlash" (maintaining political stability) can similarly be used to justify governmental crackdowns on dissent, presenting them as necessary for national security.

Euphemisms reflect not only linguistic practices but also cultural values. In both English and Uzbek-speaking countries, euphemisms are used to soften language that might otherwise provoke strong reactions. In Uzbekistan, where respect for authority and national unity are culturally emphasized, euphemisms help maintain a positive public image of government actions. This is supported by linguistic scholar R. Xudoyberdiyev (2020), who argues that euphemisms in Uzbek are often employed to align with cultural expectations of politeness and respect for authority.

In English-speaking countries, euphemisms are often used in the context of freedom of speech, where language is carefully crafted to maintain public support without outright censorship. This creates a form of linguistic manipulation that can obscure the true nature of political decisions. Uzbek political discourse, while also using euphemisms, is influenced by a desire to maintain national unity and avoid direct confrontation with authority, as highlighted by M. Xudoyqulov (2022).

Euphemisms play a crucial role in political communication, both in English and Uzbek contexts. By softening the language used to describe sensitive issues, politicians and governments can mitigate negative reactions and present their actions in a more favorable light. While euphemisms are an important part of managing public perception, they also raise ethical concerns about transparency and truth in political discourse. As citizens become more aware of the euphemisms used in political language, they may demand clearer and more honest communication from their leaders. This applies to both Western democracies and countries like Uzbekistan, where political language is carefully crafted to align with cultural values and political goals.

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