

THE POWER OF POLITICAL EUPHEMISMS: CRAFTING PUBLIC PERCEPTION IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK

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Abstract:

This article explores how political euphemisms serve as a powerful tool for shaping public perception in both English and Uzbek political discourse. It examines the strategies politicians use to frame contentious issues in a more favorable light and manage public opinion by replacing direct, confrontational language with softer alternatives. By comparing examples from both languages, this article highlights the cultural and political implications of euphemisms in obscuring controversial topics and managing emotional reactions.

Key words: Political euphemisms, public perception, framing strategies, language manipulation, cultural discourse.

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Political communication is often about persuasion, managing public opinion, and avoiding controversy. One of the most common tools used by politicians and media in achieving this is euphemisms. Euphemisms allow political figures to present difficult or sensitive topics in a less direct, less emotional way, helping them gain public support and avoid negative backlash. In both English and Uzbek political contexts, euphemisms are used to soften the harsh realities of government policies or decisions. This article examines the use of euphemisms in political language, focusing on the similarities and differences between English and Uzbek. It will explore how political euphemisms are carefully crafted to maintain control over public perception and how cultural factors shape the choice of euphemistic terms.

Euphemisms play a crucial role in political discourse by framing messages in ways that minimize controversy. They work by replacing emotionally charged words with more neutral or positive alternatives. For example, instead of referring to civilian deaths in a conflict as “casualties” or “killings,” politicians may use the phrase “collateral damage,” thus softening the impact of the message and diverting attention from the human cost of military actions. In Uzbek political discourse, the term “ijtimoiy islohotlar” (social reforms) is commonly used to describe sweeping changes in social policies that may include measures unpopular with some segments of society. This euphemism focuses on the concept of reform and progress, leaving out the potential hardships that may arise from the implementation of these policies. Similarly, in English, phrases like “structural adjustment” are often used in economic policy to refer to austerity measures, making cuts to public services or funding sound like necessary and responsible steps toward stability.

Political euphemisms are pervasive in English-speaking countries. Some of the most common examples include:

“Regime change” – This phrase is used to describe the overthrow or destabilization of a government, often through military or covert action. Instead of using words like “coup” or

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“invasion,” which carry negative connotations, “regime change” implies that the change is necessary or even beneficial for the country in question.

“Undocumented workers” – A softer alternative to “illegal immigrants,” this term focuses on the administrative aspect of lacking documents rather than the legal violation, making it easier to discuss the issue in less polarizing terms.

“Alternative facts” – Introduced in 2017 during political debates in the United States, this term was used to present inaccurate or misleading information in a way that suggested it was simply a different interpretation of reality, rather than a falsehood.

These examples show how political euphemisms can manipulate public perception by presenting difficult situations in a less confrontational way.

In Uzbek political language, euphemisms also serve to obscure sensitive topics, particularly when discussing government actions that may affect public freedoms or economic stability. Some common euphemisms include:

“Barqarorlikni ta'minlash” – Used to describe efforts to maintain stability, often in the context of actions that may limit freedoms or suppress dissent. This phrase emphasizes the necessity of stability and frames the actions as protective measures for the public good.

“Demokratik islohotlar” – This euphemism is often used to describe political reforms that may involve centralizing power or limiting certain freedoms, framing them as part of a democratic process when the reality may involve controversial policies.

“Qattiq choralar” – A phrase that refers to strong or harsh measures taken by the government. While the term acknowledges the severity of the actions, it also conveys a sense of necessity, portraying the government's response as justified and reasonable.

The use of euphemisms is influenced by the cultural context in which they are used. In English-speaking countries, where freedom of speech and the press are highly valued, euphemisms serve to obscure potentially controversial policies while avoiding outright censorship. In contrast, in Uzbekistan, where there is a strong cultural emphasis on respect for authority and national unity, euphemisms are often used to maintain social harmony and avoid direct criticism of the government.

The linguistic scholar O. Rakhimov (2021) notes that in Uzbek political discourse, euphemisms are frequently employed to avoid confrontation and preserve the face of both the government and the public. Similarly, Western scholars such as George Lakoff argue that euphemisms in English are often used to “frame” political issues in a way that aligns with the speaker's agenda, influencing how the public understands and reacts to the issue.

Political spin refers to the strategic manipulation of language to influence public perception, often through the use of euphemisms. By framing controversial actions in a positive light, politicians can reduce the likelihood of public backlash. For instance, when discussing military actions, English-speaking politicians often refer to “interventions” or “peacekeeping missions” rather than “wars” or “conflicts,” making the actions seem more justified and morally defensible.

In Uzbek political discourse, similar strategies are employed. For example, phrases like “xalqaro hamkorlik” (international cooperation) are used to describe agreements or policies that may involve foreign influence or interference, framing them in a way that highlights positive outcomes, rather than potential risks or losses of sovereignty.

Euphemisms play a critical role in political communication, both in English and Uzbek-speaking contexts. By softening the language used to describe sensitive or controversial topics, politicians can control the narrative, shape public opinion, and minimize opposition. While euphemisms are a powerful tool for managing public perception, they also raise ethical concerns about transparency and truth in political discourse. In both English and Uzbek, euphemisms allow political figures to present their policies and actions in the best possible light. However, as citizens become more aware of these linguistic strategies, they may demand greater clarity and honesty from their leaders. Understanding

the role of euphemisms in political communication can help individuals critically analyze the messages they receive and better assess the realities behind political language.

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