

THE ROLE AND IMPACT OF POLITICAL EUPHEMISMS IN MEDIA DISCOURSE

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Abstract:

This article explores the role of political euphemisms in media discourse, focusing on how these linguistic strategies shape public perception and influence political debate. By analyzing both English and Uzbek media, the article demonstrates how euphemisms are used to soften controversial topics, manage public reactions, and control the flow of information. Through real-world examples, it highlights the subtle power of euphemisms in framing political events and decisions, and their broader impact on society.

Key words: Political euphemisms, media discourse, public perception, information control, framing.

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Media plays a crucial role in disseminating information and shaping public opinion. One of the tools frequently employed by both politicians and media outlets to control public perception is the use of political euphemisms. Euphemisms are carefully selected words or phrases that replace more direct language, allowing for the presentation of contentious or uncomfortable realities in a more palatable way. They obscure the true meaning behind political actions or policies, making them easier to accept and less likely to provoke outrage. In this article, we examine how euphemisms in media discourse affect political communication, focusing on both English-language and Uzbek media. We explore the strategic use of euphemisms to downplay or soften the impact of controversial political events, and how media outlets contribute to shaping the public's understanding of these issues through language manipulation.

In English-language media, euphemisms are a common tool used to navigate sensitive political topics. Whether reporting on wars, economic policies, or social reforms, the media often employs euphemisms to neutralize potentially inflammatory subjects. This process of linguistic softening helps shape public perception by framing the news in ways that align with particular political or ideological positions. For instance, when reporting on military conflicts, media outlets often replace terms like "war" or "bombings" with phrases such as "military intervention" or "airstrikes," creating a less confrontational and more justified tone. A notable example of this is the frequent use of the term "collateral damage" to refer to civilian casualties during military operations. This euphemism shifts the focus from the human cost of war to an impersonal, inevitable consequence of strategic action.

Additionally, in political debates, terms like "tax reform" are often used in place of phrases like "tax increases" to downplay the potential negative impact on citizens. Such language creates a perception of positive change or progress, even when the actual policy may involve financial burdens for certain groups.

Uzbek media, like its English counterpart, also utilizes euphemisms to manage public perception of political events. However, in Uzbekistan, where political discourse is more tightly controlled, the use of euphemisms often serves as a way to avoid direct criticism of government policies while maintaining a sense of national unity and stability. For example,

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when discussing controversial economic reforms, Uzbek media might use the term “ijtimoiy islohotlar” (social reforms) to describe policies that result in significant changes, such as cuts to public services or increases in prices. By framing these measures as part of broader social progress, the media minimizes public resistance and fosters a sense of inevitability and necessity.

Similarly, when covering political actions that limit freedoms or suppress dissent, terms like “milliy xavfsizlikni ta'minlash” (ensuring national security) are used to justify restrictive measures. This euphemistic language frames the government’s actions as protective and necessary for the greater good, making it harder for the public to criticize these policies.

As noted by Uzbek linguist Sh. Yusupov (2022), political euphemisms in Uzbek media often reflect cultural values that emphasize social harmony and respect for authority. By using softer language, the media helps maintain stability and reduces the risk of public unrest, even when reporting on potentially controversial issues.

The media’s role in shaping public perception through euphemisms cannot be understated. By selectively choosing language that softens the impact of certain political actions, media outlets influence how the public interprets and reacts to news. This process is known as “framing,” and it allows the media to present political events in a way that aligns with specific agendas or ideologies.

In English-language media, euphemisms are frequently used to frame political debates around key issues such as immigration, healthcare, and military interventions. For instance, instead of discussing the “deportation” of illegal immigrants, some media outlets prefer to use the term “removal proceedings,” which sounds less harsh and creates an impression of a more neutral, bureaucratic process. Similarly, in Uzbek media, euphemisms are often employed to manage public discourse around sensitive topics such as government crackdowns on protests or economic hardships. By using terms like “barqarorlikni ta'minlash” (ensuring stability), the media frames government actions as being in the best interest of the country, rather than as authoritarian or repressive. This framing not only affects how the public perceives political events but also shapes the broader political narrative, often limiting the scope of public debate and reducing opportunities for dissenting opinions.

While euphemisms are an effective tool for controlling public perception, their use raises important ethical concerns. By softening the language used to describe contentious or harmful political actions, euphemisms can obscure the truth and prevent the public from fully understanding the implications of certain policies. This lack of transparency can undermine democratic processes by limiting informed debate and making it difficult for citizens to hold their leaders accountable.

In both English and Uzbek media, the overuse of euphemisms risks creating a distorted view of reality, where difficult issues are downplayed or hidden behind carefully chosen words. As George Orwell famously argued in his essay *Politics and the English Language* (1946), the manipulation of language is a powerful political weapon that can be used to deceive the public and obscure the truth.

Euphemisms play a central role in political media discourse, shaping public perception and framing political events in ways that serve specific agendas. In both English and Uzbek media, euphemisms are used to soften the impact of controversial policies, manage public reactions, and maintain control over political narratives. However, the use of euphemisms also raises ethical questions about transparency and accountability in political communication. As consumers of media, it is important to critically examine the language used to report on political events and consider the ways in which euphemisms may obscure the truth. By becoming more aware of these linguistic strategies, the public can better understand the realities behind political language and make more informed decisions about the issues that affect their lives.

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