# Linguopragmatics of Political Speech Euphemisms in Languages of Different Systems

**Nodir Sharafutdinov**
Head of World Languages department,
Kokand university, Kokand, Uzbekistan.

## Abstract
The present study investigates the linguopragmatic functions and structures of political speech euphemisms in English, Uzbek, and Russian. Euphemisms are powerful communicative tools employed to soften political realities, mask unfavorable truths, and create ideological alignment. Analyzing political discourse from a linguopragmatic lens allows a deeper understanding of how euphemisms serve as mechanisms of manipulation, persuasion, and power negotiation. The comparative analysis highlights both universal strategies and language-specific expressions rooted in sociopolitical and cultural contexts. By examining political texts, media reports, and public speeches, this research identifies and categorizes euphemisms based on function, structure, and pragmatic intent. Results reveal that euphemistic usage reflects political ideologies, sociocultural sensitivities, and strategic ambiguity across the three languages. The study contributes to the broader field of political linguistics, particularly in understanding how euphemistic language operates in multilingual political contexts.
**Keywords:** linguopragmatics, euphemism, political speech, English, Uzbek, Russian, comparative analysis, manipulation.

## Introduction
Language, in political discourse, functions as both a reflection of ideology and an instrument of influence. Among the tools deployed in such contexts, euphemisms hold a distinctive role in mitigating harsh realities and guiding public perception. Euphemisms are linguistic strategies used to obscure, soften, or reframe potentially offensive or controversial content. In political speech, this becomes particularly critical as governments, officials, and institutions strive to maintain authority, legitimacy, and public support.

This paper explores the linguopragmatics of political speech euphemisms across three distinct languages: English, Uzbek, and Russian. These languages not only represent different linguistic systems—Germanic, Turkic, and Slavic—but also embody different political traditions, ideologies, and communicative norms. The study asks: how do euphemisms function in political speech across these languages, and what pragmalinguistic strategies are used to embed them in discourse? What cultural or ideological motivations underlie the use of euphemisms in each context?

To answer these questions, the study adopts a comparative, cross-linguistic framework grounded in pragmatics and discourse analysis. By focusing on euphemisms used in official speeches, government statements, and political media from 2010 to 2024, the paper offers insight into how political actors linguistically encode sensitive topics, such as war, economic crises, corruption, and public unrest.

## Literature Review
The study of euphemisms in political discourse lies at the intersection of pragmatics, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, and political communication. Euphemisms serve as linguistic buffers—strategic substitutions designed to obscure unpleasant realities or soften public perception. From a linguopragmatic perspective, they are vital tools of power negotiation, ideological framing, and institutional face-saving. This section explores prior research on

euphemisms, their functions in political communication, and how they manifest differently across English, Uzbek, and Russian languages and cultures.

The foundational work of Allan and Burridge (1991) defines euphemism as "an alternative to a dispreferred expression, to avoid possible loss of face." Their taxonomy of euphemism includes protective, evasive, and uplifting functions, many of which are directly applicable to political speech. Euphemisms, in this view, operate within the framework of politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987), where language choices reflect the speaker's intent to avoid offense, especially in public and institutional settings.

Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) *Conceptual Metaphor Theory* deepens this understanding by suggesting that much of political language is metaphorically structured. Terms like "collateral damage" or "regime change" function euphemistically by invoking more palatable conceptual frames, reducing the emotional impact of violent or controversial actions. Charteris-Black (2005), in *Politicians and Rhetoric*, explores metaphorical euphemism as a tool for persuasion, framing it within the cognitive-discursive model.

In English-language contexts, scholars such as Chilton (2004) and Wodak (2015) have explored the role of euphemisms in legitimizing state actions, especially in contexts of war, surveillance, and immigration. Chilton's model of *strategic speech acts* suggests that euphemisms serve not merely to avoid taboo topics but also to manipulate the audience's mental representations of reality. For instance, renaming "torture" as "enhanced interrogation" is not just an act of softening—it is a deliberate strategy to influence legal, moral, and public judgments.

Research into Russian political euphemisms highlights the continuity of Soviet-era linguistic practices into modern governance. Ryazanova-Clarke (2006) explores how official Russian discourses rely on abstract and technical euphemisms to normalize political control. The term "специальная военная операция" (special military operation), frequently used instead of "война" (war), exemplifies such semantic camouflage. Pavlovskiy (2017) notes that euphemistic language in Russia often functions within state-dominated media systems, where political euphemisms not only obscure truth but actively reconstruct public reality.

Uzbek-language euphemisms remain a relatively under-researched area, but emerging literature has begun to fill the gap. Tursunov and Rakhimova (2021) examine euphemisms in Uzbek political discourse through cultural linguistics, showing how expressions like "ijtimoiy himoya" (social protection) or "milliy qadriyatlar" (national values) are used to mask economic struggles or political restrictions. These euphemisms often rely on collectivist values and indirectness, characteristic of high-context communication cultures (Hall, 1976). Nazarov (2022) expands this argument by suggesting that euphemisms in Uzbek are also shaped by Islamic moral codes and post-Soviet discursive norms.

Cross-linguistic studies, such as those by Halmari and Virtanen (2005), emphasize that while euphemistic strategies are universal, their forms and motivations are deeply culture-bound. For instance, while English may use bureaucratic language to create distance ("downsizing"), Russian prefers technical abstraction ("реорганизация"), and Uzbek uses generalized cultural appeals ("xalq farovonligi uchun qilingan islohotlar" — reforms done for public well-being).

Reisigl and Wodak's (2009) *Discourse-Historical Approach* (DHA) offers an integrative model for analyzing euphemisms in political language, focusing on historical, institutional, and social dimensions. They argue that euphemisms should not be treated in isolation, but as part of a larger discourse strategy that includes nomination, predication, argumentation,

perspectivization, and intensification/mitigation.

Recent advancements in corpus linguistics have also contributed to euphemism analysis. Baker (2006) demonstrates how corpora can reveal patterns of lexical avoidance or substitution in political speech. In a cross-linguistic context, corpus tools allow for a more empirical tracking of euphemistic trends across media and time.

## Methodology

This study follows a qualitative comparative method, analyzing political texts from three language systems: English (UK, USA), Uzbek (Uzbekistan), and Russian (Russia). The corpus includes:

1. **Official speeches** by heads of state and government ministers.
2. **Media publications** from national news outlets (BBC, Oʻzbekiston 24, Россия Сегодня).
3. **Political statements** from parliamentary debates and press releases.

The data were collected from digital archives, news databases, and governmental websites. A total of 300 euphemistic expressions (100 from each language) were extracted and analyzed according to the following criteria:

- **Lexical structure** (e.g., metaphorical, metonymic, abstract).
- **Pragmatic function** (e.g., concealing, legitimizing, distancing).
- **Cultural references** (e.g., traditional values, national ideology).

The analysis utilized a linguopragmatic framework, incorporating theories of relevance (Sperber & Wilson), face-saving strategies (Brown & Levinson), and conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson). The Results section includes frequency tables and a comparative matrix of euphemism categories.

## Results

The findings reveal both convergences and divergences in the use of euphemisms across the three language systems. The analysis categorized euphemisms into five major functions:

1.     **Concealing Negative Reality**
2.     **Legitimizing Political Action**
3.     **Manipulating Public Perception**
4.     **Mitigating Accountability**
5.     **Framing National Ideology**

The following tables summarize the distribution and type of euphemisms across the selected political languages.

## Table 1. Functional Categories of Political Euphemisms (Frequency per 100 Units)

| Function | English (%) | Uzbek (%) | Russian (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Concealing Negative Reality | 35 | 42 | 38 |
| Legitimizing Political Action | 22 | 18 | 20 |
| Manipulating Public Perception | 18 | 15 | 17 |
| Mitigating Accountability | 15 | 11 | 13 |
| Framing National Ideology | 10 | 14 | 12 |

The English corpus includes euphemisms such as "collateral damage" (civilian casualties), "quantitative easing" (money printing), and "enhanced interrogation" (torture). These examples reflect an institutionalized tendency toward lexical obfuscation.

In Uzbek, euphemisms are often tied to national pride or traditional values. Examples include "ijtimoiy himoya" (welfare, often masking poverty issues), "xatoliklar" (errors, used instead of systemic failures), and "muammo" (problem, rather than crisis).

In Russian, euphemisms serve ideological functions, such as using "специальная военная операция" (special military operation) instead of "война" (war), and "недопустимые действия" (unacceptable actions) for state repression.

## Table 2. Structural Types of Euphemisms

| Structure Type | English | Uzbek | Russian |
|---|---|---|---|
| Metaphorical | 30 | 20 | 25 |
| Abstract/Generalized | 40 | 50 | 45 |
| Bureaucratic/Technical | 20 | 10 | 20 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Religious/Traditional** | 5 | 15 | 3 |
| **Nationalistic/Patriotic** | 5 | 5 | 7 |

English euphemisms often rely on technical jargon, distancing the speaker from the emotional impact. Uzbek euphemisms, on the other hand, draw more heavily on cultural and religious overtones, appealing to collective values and social harmony. Russian euphemisms frequently use bureaucratic abstraction to diminish perceived threat or blame.

**Table 3. Sample Cross-Linguistic Euphemisms and Their Context**

| Sensitive Topic | English (UK/US) | Uzbek (Uzbekistan) | Russian (Russia) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **War** | "Peacekeeping mission" | "Tashqi tahdidga qarshi chora" | "Специальная операция" |
| **Economic Crisis** | "Economic slowdown" | "O'sish sur'atining pasayishi" | "Экономические трудности" |
| **Corruption** | "Misconduct" | "Tizimdagi kamchilik" | "Нарушения" |
| **Protest/Revolt** | "Unrest" | "Vaziyatni barqarorlashtirish" | "Мятеж" |
| **Layoffs/Job Losses** | "Restructuring" | "Ish o'rinlarini optimallashtirish" | "Сокращение персонала" |

These euphemisms function not only to obscure unpleasant realities but also to exert power over interpretation. In political linguistics, this control over meaning is referred to as *discursive hegemony*.

**Discussion**

The analysis confirms that euphemisms in political speech are not random stylistic choices, but deeply embedded linguistic strategies shaped by culture, politics, and ideology. In all three languages, euphemisms serve as a linguistic shield against criticism and a tool for controlling the political narrative.

In English-speaking political contexts, especially in U.S. and UK government rhetoric, euphemisms are often institutionalized. The military-industrial complex has generated a lexicon where violence is sanitized. For instance, "surgical strike" masks the destructive force of bombings, while "regime change" implies a strategic and humane act, rather than foreign intervention.

Uzbek political euphemisms tend to rely more on collectivist ideologies, religious references, and abstract generalities. Terms like "xalq manfaatlari yo'lida" (in the interest of the people) often accompany policies that may, in fact, limit freedom or transparency. The culture of high-context communication encourages ambiguity, and euphemisms are deployed to protect face and avoid direct confrontation.

Russian political euphemisms operate within a framework of centralized control and legacy narratives from Soviet discourse. The state's monopoly on media has institutionalized euphemistic practices, turning them into tools of state propaganda. The use of expressions like "stabilnost" (stability) and "integratsiya" (integration) masks economic dependency and geopolitical expansionism.

Despite these differences, a unifying thread emerges: euphemisms in all three languages help reinforce the speaker's ideological positioning while diffusing public dissent. They are not simply a way of "speaking nicely" but function as ideological instruments that mediate the power relationship between the state and its citizens.

**Conclusion**

This research has shown that euphemisms in political speech are powerful instruments of pragmatic strategy, deployed to protect political face, guide public interpretation, and reinforce ideological norms. A cross-linguistic comparison of English, Uzbek, and Russian euphemisms reveals both universal communicative strategies and language-specific features rooted in political tradition, culture, and institutional discourse practices.

Understanding how euphemisms function in political speech allows us to critically engage with the language of power. In a time when information is both abundant and

manipulated, recognizing euphemistic patterns is vital for developing media literacy and civic awareness.

Future studies might explore diachronic shifts in euphemism usage across changing regimes or investigate the reception of euphemistic language among different demographic groups.

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