

A COMPARATIVE SEMIOTIC AND SOCIO-PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF EUPHEMISTIC DEVICES AND THEIR IMPACT ON PUBLIC PERCEPTION IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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INTRODUCTION

In contemporary Uzbek political discourse, euphemistic language is frequently employed in official decrees and executive orders to convey sensitive information in a socially acceptable manner. Euphemisms in these documents serve not only as stylistic tools but also as strategic devices that influence public perception, reduce resistance, and maintain social and political stability. The careful wording of policy documents illustrates the importance of indirect expression in managing politically sensitive issues.

For instance, the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PP-4947 “On Measures to Improve Public Administration and Optimize the Work of Executive Authorities” uses phrasing such as “improve public administration efficiency” instead of directly stating “reduce staff or restructure offices,” thereby softening the potential public impact of administrative reforms [1]. Similarly, the Decree of the President No. PP-5094 “On Strengthening Measures for Social Support of Vulnerable Groups” employs expressions like “enhance social assistance” rather than explicitly discussing budget reductions or redistribution of resources, demonstrating the use of euphemistic strategies to frame policy decisions positively[2].

Such examples indicate that euphemisms function as semiotic and socio-pragmatic tools, enabling authorities to communicate complex or potentially contentious policies while minimizing public anxiety. These strategies are particularly significant on social media platforms, where posts and official statements are rapidly disseminated and subject to public scrutiny. Euphemistic devices in this context allow policymakers and communicators to maintain authority and legitimacy while ensuring messages are received in a constructive manner.

The present study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of euphemistic devices in English and Uzbek political discourse on social media, focusing on their semiotic and socio-pragmatic functions and their impact on public perception. By examining the forms, frequency, and strategies of euphemisms in both languages, the research highlights how cultural and linguistic conventions shape political communication and audience interpretation.

In English political discourse on social media, euphemistic devices are widely used to soften sensitive, controversial, or potentially offensive political statements. Euphemisms help communicators reduce the perceived negativity of messages while still conveying important

political content. One common strategy is lexical substitution, where direct or harsh words are replaced with milder equivalents. For example, instead of saying “mass layoffs,” English political posts often use “workforce realignment,” or instead of “civilian deaths,” they may employ the term “collateral damage” [3]. These lexical choices mitigate emotional reactions and frame political actions more acceptably.

Metaphorical euphemisms are also employed to influence how audiences conceptualize political developments. Phrases such as “strategic pivot” or “policy recalibration” are used instead of more direct terms like “policy shift.” Metaphorical expressions allow politicians to disguise abrupt or controversial decisions as rational and deliberate, serving the pragmatic goal of maintaining political legitimacy [4].

Social media examples illustrate these strategies. An English-language Twitter post commenting on government budget adjustments might state, “The administration is undertaking careful fiscal recalibration to enhance public services,” rather than “cutting funds,” thereby softening the negative perception. Similarly, military actions may be described as “defensive measures” instead of “attacks,” subtly influencing public interpretation. These euphemistic devices play a central role in shaping audience perception and engagement.

Uzbek political discourse on social media frequently employs euphemisms that reflect cultural norms of indirectness, respect for authority, and social harmony. Circumlocution is a common strategy, where sensitive topics are described indirectly. For instance, economic challenges may be referred to as “vaqtinchalik qiyinchiliklar” (temporary difficulties), downplaying the severity and softening public perception [4].

Politeness and deference also appear as euphemistic strategies. Rather than criticizing government decisions directly, Uzbek social media posts often use expressions like “uzluksiz ishlar davom etmoqda” (continuous efforts are ongoing), acknowledging challenges while respecting authority [5]. Cultural metaphors and idioms further enhance indirectness; for example, describing regulatory measures as “tartibga solish” (putting in order) avoids harsher terms such as “restriction” or “control,” demonstrating a culturally sensitive framing.

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Euphemistic Devices in English and Uzbek Political Discourse on Social Media

Euphemistic Strategy	English Political Discourse (Examples)	Uzbek Political Discourse (Examples)	Function / Purpose
Lexical Substitution	"Workforce realignment" instead of "mass layoffs"	"Uzluksiz ishlar davom etmoqda" (continuous efforts ongoing)	Softens the perception of negative actions; reduces public resistance
Metaphorical Expressions	"Policy recalibration" instead of "policy shift"	"Tartibga solish" (putting in order)	Reframes actions positively; maintains authority and social harmony

Circumlocution	"Situations requiring attention" instead of "policy failure"	"Vaqtinchalik qiyinchiliklar" (temporary difficulties)	Indirectly conveys sensitive content; minimizes confrontation
Politeness / Honorific Forms	"Enhanced engagement" instead of "military escalation"	"Murakkab vaziyatlar yuzaga keldi" (complex situations arose)	Shows respect; aligns with cultural norms; preserves social cohesion
Idiomatic / Cultural Metaphor	"Strategic pivot"	"Qush qanoti ostida" (under the bird’s wing)	Uses culturally specific imagery to communicate sensitive topics

Comparative analysis reveals both similarities and differences. Both English and Uzbek political discourse use euphemisms to soften sensitive content and manage audience reaction. However, English discourse relies heavily on lexical substitution and metaphorical language, reflecting cultural preferences for concise and clear expression. Uzbek discourse emphasizes circumlocution, idiomatic expressions, and politeness forms, aligning with cultural norms of indirectness and respect [5], [6].

Despite differences, both strategies serve the common purpose of shaping public perception. English euphemisms often make contentious decisions appear rational and acceptable, enhancing compliance or reducing opposition. Uzbek euphemisms maintain social respect and cohesion, limiting direct criticism and fostering stable political communication.

Euphemistic devices influence how audiences interpret political events. By softening the presentation of controversial issues, they can reduce public resistance and frame actions positively. In English discourse, phrases such as “policy recalibration” make abrupt policy changes appear deliberate and considered, increasing public acceptance. In Uzbek discourse, circumlocution and idiomatic expressions mitigate negative interpretations, preserving social harmony and supporting authority [6], [7].

However, excessive euphemistic framing can obscure reality. When harsh or controversial measures are consistently softened, audiences may underestimate their severity. Understanding euphemistic strategies is therefore crucial for media literacy, critical discourse analysis, and informed civic engagement.

CONCLUSION

This study examined euphemistic devices in English and Uzbek political discourse on social media, focusing on their semiotic and socio-pragmatic functions and their impact on public perception. The analysis revealed that English political discourse predominantly uses lexical substitution and metaphorical expressions, such as “workforce realignment” or “policy recalibration,” to soften potentially negative content while maintaining clarity and brevity. These strategies allow political communicators to frame contentious issues in a manner that minimizes public backlash and enhances audience engagement.

In contrast, Uzbek political discourse employs circumlocution, idiomatic expressions, and politeness forms, reflecting cultural norms of indirectness, respect for authority, and social cohesion. For example, economic or regulatory issues are often described in terms such as “vaqtinchalik qiyinchiliklar” (temporary difficulties) or “tartibga solish” (putting in order), which mitigate the perceived harshness of the situation while maintaining culturally appropriate communication.

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