

Pragmatic Functions of Euphemisms in English, Uzbek, and Russian Political Speeches: A Comparative Corpus-Based Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Political euphemism is often described simply as the replacement of an unpleasant expression with a milder one. In presidential discourse, however, its role is considerably broader. Euphemistic language can influence how responsibility, violence, political decisions, and sensitive social issues are presented to the public. This article examines these pragmatic functions in six original-language speeches delivered by Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Vladimir Putin, and Donald Trump between 2022 and 2026. The pilot corpus consists of two Uzbek, two Russian, and two English speeches and contains 26,505 tokens. The analysis combined quantitative corpus techniques with a close examination of each expression in context. Raw and normalized frequencies, confidence intervals, log-likelihood testing, exact tests, and concordance analysis were used.

A total of 85 high-confidence euphemistic occurrences were identified. English contained the largest raw number of examples (48). Once differences in corpus size were taken into account, however, Russian showed the highest frequency, with 71.2 occurrences per 10,000 words, compared with 32.4 in Uzbek and 24.0 in English. The difference among the three subcorpora was statistically significant, $G^2(2)=18.87$, $p < .001$. Concealment or vagueness emerged as the most common primary function, followed by strategic framing and mitigation. The relationship between language and pragmatic function was also significant in the exploratory Fisher-Freeman-Halton test, $p = .015$, Cramér's $V = .389$.

The three subcorpora displayed noticeably different tendencies. Trump's speeches frequently employed vague or idiomatic expressions when referring to violence, death, and political removal. Putin's speeches relied more heavily on abstractions and legitimating labels for military action. Mirziyoyev's speeches, by contrast, showed greater use of diplomatic de-escalation, institutional framing, and face-protective language. These findings illustrate why frequency analysis must be combined with contextual interpretation when examining political euphemism. Nevertheless, the results remain preliminary because the subcorpora are unequal in size, each language is represented by only one president, and the annotations were not independently evaluated by a second coder.

Keywords: Euphemism, political discourse, corpus linguistics, pragmatics, strategic framing, English, Uzbek, Russian

1. INTRODUCTION

Euphemism is commonly understood as the substitution of a potentially offensive, disturbing, or socially dispreferred expression with one perceived as less threatening. Such a definition, however, captures only its most visible lexical effect. Euphemism is fundamentally contextual: no word is inherently euphemistic in every situation, because its value depends on the referent, the available direct alternative, the relationship between participants, and the communicative purpose served by the substitution. Casas Gómez (2009) accordingly treats euphemism and dysphemism as discourse-dependent phenomena rather than fixed properties of individual words. Allan & Burridge (2006) similarly locate euphemism within a broader system of X-phemistic choices through which speakers negotiate taboo, offence, social evaluation, and self-presentation. This contextual perspective is particularly important in political speech, where apparently neutral expressions may simultaneously protect an audience from distress, safeguard a politician's public image, obscure an actor's responsibility, or recast a controversial policy as necessary and beneficial.

Political discourse is not simply language about government; it is discourse produced and interpreted within struggles over public authority, collective identity, policy, and social action. Van Dijk (1997) defines political discourse analysis by reference to both its participants – politicians, institutions, citizens, and other political actors – and the political activities in which text and talk function. From a critical discourse perspective, language choices are connected to unequal power relations and to the reproduction or contestation of dominant representations (Fairclough 1995). Euphemism therefore deserves analysis not only as a device of verbal politeness but also as a possible resource for ideological framing. An expression such as “collateral damage,” for instance, can reduce the emotional salience of civilian deaths; an abstract formulation such as “economic adjustment” can detach policy from its material costs; and passive constructions or nominalizations can background the actor responsible for an unpopular decision. These examples illustrate analytical possibilities rather than predetermined classifications: whether a form is euphemistic must be established from its co-text, wider political context, and contrast with a plausible direct designation. Pragmatic scholarship explains why such indirect choices can be effective. Brown & Levinson's (1987) account of politeness associates indirectness and mitigation with the protection of face, while Crespo-Fernández (2005) shows that euphemistic strategies can reduce interpersonal conflict and sustain socially appropriate relations. Burrige (2012) broadens this view by distinguishing several communicative motivations, including protective, underhand, uplifting, provocative, cohesive, and ludic uses. Her typology demonstrates that euphemisms may act as shields against discomfort, but they may also conceal, elevate, align, divide, or entertain. This dual capacity is crucial in institutional discourse, because a formulation that appears tactful can also narrow the interpretive frame available to an audience. The present study consequently treats “mitigation,” “face protection,” “responsibility avoidance,” “strategic framing,” “concealment,” and “legitimation” as related but analytically distinguishable pragmatic functions. The term “manipulation” is reserved for cases supported by strong contextual evidence, since

textual analysis can establish framing effects more securely than it can prove a speaker's private intention.

Research on English-language politics has confirmed the strategic range of euphemism. Crespo-Fernández (2014), examining British regional political discourse, found euphemistic choices at both lexical and sentential levels and argued that politicians use them to approach unpleasant subjects and criticize opponents without presenting themselves negatively. His later analysis of United States local and state politics likewise characterized euphemism as a discursive strategy for handling unsettling topics while responding to public concerns (Crespo-Fernández 2018). Political meaning is also shaped through metaphor and narrative. Charteris-Black (2011) demonstrates that metaphor contributes to persuasive political storytelling, evaluation, and myth construction. These studies show that euphemism cannot be reduced to a list of softened synonyms: it may be realized through metaphor, abstraction, understatement, technical vocabulary, periphrasis, grammatical restructuring, agent deletion, or an extended framing pattern. They also indicate the need to examine the relationship among linguistic mechanism, political topic, and pragmatic function rather than counting isolated terms alone.

The studies supplied for the present research add an essential Uzbek perspective. Jorayev (2024) describes euphemisms in Uzbek literary texts as linguocultural units that encode social norms, moral values, collective experience, and culturally specific understandings of communicative appropriateness. Although his data are literary rather than political, the study is relevant because it demonstrates that euphemistic interpretation depends on culturally embedded associations and cannot be transferred mechanically between languages. Turdimurodov's (2024) analysis of Uzbek folk proverbs develops this point by showing how figurative and proverbial forms express delicate or critical meanings indirectly while helping to regulate interpersonal relations and speech etiquette. Political speakers may draw on comparable culturally recognizable forms; consequently, a corpus annotation procedure must remain open to multiword, metaphorical, and proverbial realizations rather than restricting euphemism to single lexical replacements.

Most directly relevant is Jabborova's (2026) pragmatic and discursive-ideological analysis of four euphemisms in Islam Karimov's 2014 Independence Day speech. Using BurrIDGE's communicative categories and van Dijk's ideological square, Jabborova concludes that the expressions principally protect the audience and conceal difficult realities, while a contrast between a negatively represented past and a positively represented present contributes to the legitimation of independence and the current political course. This close reading establishes the applicability of established pragmatic and critical-discourse frameworks to authentic Uzbek political speech. Its deliberately limited case-study design, however, also exposes a broader empirical need: findings from one speech and four examples cannot establish how frequently particular functions occur, whether they recur across speakers and topics, or how Uzbek patterns compare with English and Russian political discourse.

A comparative corpus approach offers a way to address that problem. Corpus linguistics makes recurring patterns observable across collections of authentic texts and allows claims to be tested using frequencies, concordances, collocations, and contextual distributions (McEnery & Hardie 2012). Baker et al. (2008) show that corpus procedures and critical discourse analysis can be methodologically complementary: quantitative patterns direct attention to representative tendencies, while qualitative examination explains their ideological and pragmatic significance. Tool selection nevertheless affects what can be observed. The supplied comparison by Kutlimuratova (2025) reports that AntConc is transparent and accessible for concordance and keyword work, Sketch Engine provides scalable multilingual analysis and grammatical relations, LanksBox offers strong visualizations, and NoSketch Engine provides an open-source alternative. This finding supports a task-based, potentially multi-tool workflow for the present corpus. It is consistent with Anthony's (2013) argument that corpus software should be evaluated in relation to analytical requirements and with Kilgarriff et al.'s (2014) description of Sketch Engine's multilingual concordancing and word-sketch functions.

Despite these theoretical and methodological advances, three limitations remain. First, much euphemism research is monolingual or based on small sets of selected examples. Second, English, Uzbek, and Russian have rarely been examined through balanced corpora containing comparable political genres, periods, topics, and speaker roles. Third, quantitative distribution and contextual pragmatic interpretation are often separated, making it difficult to distinguish a widespread pattern from an analytically striking but exceptional example. Comparing English, Uzbek, and Russian is especially valuable because the languages differ typologically and draw on distinct, though historically interacting, rhetorical and political traditions. A carefully balanced design can reveal possible shared pragmatic motivations without treating every observed difference as automatically cultural or language-determined.

Accordingly, this study aims to identify, classify, and compare the pragmatic functions of euphemisms in comparable corpora of English, Uzbek, and Russian political speeches. It addresses four questions: 1) Which types and formation mechanisms of euphemism occur most frequently in each corpus? 2) Which pragmatic functions do the identified euphemisms perform? 3) How does the distribution of these functions differ across the three languages? and 4) How are pragmatic functions associated with political domains, linguistic mechanisms, speaker roles, and communicative contexts? It is hypothesized that mitigation and legitimation will be present across all three languages, but that their relative distributions and linguistic realizations will vary. By combining normalized corpus evidence with contextual pragmatic interpretation, the study seeks to move beyond isolated examples and provide a replicable account of both cross-linguistic regularities and language-specific tendencies in political euphemization.

2. METHODS

The study was designed as a comparative mixed-method corpus analysis of euphemism in the political discourse of Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Vladimir Putin, and Donald Trump. The quantitative

component measures the raw and normalized frequencies of euphemistic expressions and compares their distribution by language, political domain, formation mechanism, and pragmatic function. The qualitative component examines each candidate in its sentence, surrounding paragraph, speech event, and wider political context to determine how the expression mitigates, obscures, legitimizes, or reframes its referent. Combining the components was necessary because frequency alone cannot establish euphemistic meaning: a frequent formal or technical term may be neutral in one context and euphemistic in another. Conversely, close analysis of a few striking examples cannot demonstrate how representative they are of the corpus. Quantitative patterns therefore guided the selection of examples, while contextual interpretation explained the functions behind those patterns.

The pilot corpus construction comprised six political texts, two associated with each president and two in each original language. The files supplied for the study were checked against their stated institutional sources. The Mirziyoyev subcorpus consisted of his address to the 80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly and his address at the High-Level International Anti-Corruption Award ceremony. The attached anti-corruption file was a presidential press-service report rather than a verbatim transcript; consequently, it was used to identify the event, while the complete first-person address published by the Government of Uzbekistan constituted the analytic text. The Putin subcorpus contained the televised address of 24 February 2022 and remarks at the second stage of the 23rd United Russia Party Congress. The Trump subcorpus included the 2026 State of the Union address and his presidential turns during a Cabinet meeting and subsequent exchange with reporters.

Table 1. *Composition of the pilot corpus after cleaning*

Speaker/ language	Speech event and date	Genre and principal domains	Tokens
Mirziyoyev/ Uzbek	UN General Assembly, 23 September 2025	International address; diplomacy, security, development, migration	1,371

Mirziyoyev/ Uzbek	Anti-Corruption Award ceremony, 19 December 2023	Ceremonial-policy address; corruption, reform, diplomacy	1,096
Putin/Russian	Address to Russian citizens, 24 February 2022	Televised national address; war, security, sovereignty	3,028
Putin/Russian	United Russia Party Congress, 22 August 2026	Party-congress address; elections, war, national unity	1,044
Trump/English	State of the Union, 24 February 2026	Legislative address; economy, migration, security, foreign policy	10,809
Trump/English	Cabinet meeting remarks, 27 May 2026	Mixed remarks and press exchange; economy, migration, war, diplomacy	9,157
Total	Six texts, 2022-2026	Five shared domain groups	26,505

The corpus was purposive rather than statistically representative. It offered equal numbers of documents but unequal token totals: Uzbek contained 2,467 tokens, Russian 4,072, and English 19,966. All frequency comparisons were therefore normalized, and conclusions were limited to the selected speeches rather than generalized to the three languages or national political traditions. Because each language was represented by only one politician, speaker and language effects could not be separated.

Texts were eligible when they were publicly verifiable, attributable to a named president, dated, available in the language of delivery, and concerned at least one shared political domain: war/security, economic or institutional reform, migration, corruption, or diplomacy. Translations, duplicate versions, incomplete extracts, and unattributed journalistic summaries were excluded from the analytic corpus. Where a transcript contained interaction, only turns explicitly attributed to the president were retained. The corpus intentionally included domestic and international settings, but these were recorded as metadata and considered when interpreting differences. Comparability was strengthened through shared domains and identical annotation procedures; nevertheless, differences in date, genre, interaction, and corpus size remained potential confounders. Given the small Uzbek subcorpus, no down-

sampled robustness test was conducted; instead, raw counts, normalized rates, exact tests, confidence intervals, and document-level rates were reported together.

Dara preparation was made by converting DOCX files to UTF-8 plain text with Pandoc 3.1.3, and PDF text was extracted with Poppler pdftotext 24.02.0. Titles, website navigation, page numbers, editorial notes, reporter questions, contributions by other officials, applause markers, and repeated material were removed. In the Cabinet transcript, speaker labels were used to retain Trump's turns only. Text was normalized to Unicode NFC; repeated spaces and non-breaking spaces were standardized, while original spelling, morphology, and punctuation were otherwise preserved. Uzbek text was maintained in Latin script and was not translated for identification. Russian and Uzbek examples selected for publication were subsequently supplied with literal English translations, but all coding decisions were made from the original-language context. A token was defined as a sequence of Unicode letters or numerals allowing an internal apostrophe or hyphen. Each record received a document identifier, speaker, language, date, genre, audience, source, political domain, and token count.

Identification proceeded in four stages. First, candidate lists were compiled from euphemism dictionaries, earlier classifications, and domain-specific vocabulary relating to military action, casualties, economic difficulty, migration, corruption, repression, and diplomacy. Second, candidates and morphological variants were searched in concordance lines. Third, the complete sentence and surrounding paragraph were read manually. Fourth, a candidate was accepted only when it referred to a sensitive or negatively evaluated reality, a more direct alternative could reasonably be supplied, the selected form softened, obscured, generalized, or positively reframed that reality, and the interpretation was supported by context. This procedure prevented every abstract policy term from being labelled euphemistic automatically. The unit of analysis could be a word, multiword expression, clause, passive construction, nominalization, agent deletion, metaphor, understatement, periphrasis, or abbreviation.

Each accepted occurrence was entered as a separate row in an annotation sheet. One primary function was compulsory; one secondary function was permitted when supported independently by the context.

Table 2. *Core annotation variables*

Variable	Values or coding decision
Expression/context	Original form, sentence, paragraph, and direct alternative
Political domain	War/security, economy, migration, corruption, diplomacy/other
Formation	Metaphor, abstraction, generalization, understatement, periphrasis, technicalization, abbreviation, or grammatical restructuring
Primary/secondary function	Mitigation, responsibility avoidance, strategic framing, face protection, legitimation, concealment/vagueness, or diplomatic de-escalation
Target/confidence	Referenced actor, action, event, group, or policy; high, medium, or low confidence

Mitigation reduced perceived severity; responsibility avoidance backgrounded the accountable actor; strategic framing recast a negative matter in neutral or positive terms; face protection prevented offence or protected public image; legitimation represented an action as necessary, lawful, or beneficial; concealment reduced specificity; and diplomatic de-escalation reduced confrontation. The label “manipulation” was not treated as an annotation category because discourse evidence can demonstrate framing more reliably than private intention.

Reliability and validity of the annotation manual was piloted on examples from all three languages before the complete dataset was coded. Candidate expressions were then rechecked against the original transcript, the extended context, and the stated direct alternative. Borderline items were excluded from the reported counts, so the analysis retained only high-confidence cases. A decision log was used to apply the same contextual questions and functional definitions across the subcorpora. Source triangulation was also used: metadata and wording were checked against the supplied files and publicly verifiable versions of the speeches. The principal limitation is that the pilot corpus was coded by one

analyst; an independent second annotation was not available. Cohen's kappa was therefore not calculated, and the results are reported as preliminary. For a confirmatory extension, two trained annotators should independently code a stratified 10–20% sample, revise the manual after pilot disagreements, calculate kappa for euphemism status and primary function, and resolve residual disagreements by documented adjudication.

Data analysis

Raw counts, percentages, and occurrences per 10,000 tokens were reported:

$$NF = (\text{number of euphemistic occurrences} / \text{tokens in the relevant subcorpus}) \times 10,000$$

Cross-tabulations compared language, formation, and primary function. Overall rates were compared with a log-likelihood ratio test, and pairwise rate differences were examined with Fisher's exact tests followed by Holm correction. Poisson 95% confidence intervals were calculated for language-level rates. Because several function cells were sparse, the association between language and primary function was tested with the Fisher-Freeman-Halton exact test using 200,000 fixed-margin Monte Carlo samples. Cramér's V and adjusted residuals were used to assess effect size and identify the cells contributing most to the association. The significance threshold was $p < .05$. Analyses were performed in Python 3.12.13 with SciPy 1.17.0. Given the small number of texts and the confounding of politician with language, inferential findings were treated as exploratory, and regression was not applied. Concordance-based qualitative analysis examined representative high-confidence examples and exceptions to the dominant quantitative patterns.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Overall frequency of euphemistic expressions

The contextual identification criteria yielded 85 high-confidence euphemistic tokens in the 26,505-word pilot corpus. Repeated

uses were counted separately, while a multiword expression referring to one sensitive reality was one unit. Contextually ambiguous uses of words such as “reform,” “problem,” “crisis,” and “operation” were excluded. Table 3 presents the six-speech results.

Table 3. *Speech-level frequency of euphemistic expressions*

Corpus ID and speech	Tokens	Euphemisms	Per 10,000 words
MI-UN: Mirziyoyev, UN General Assembly speech	1,371	6	43.8
MI-COR: Mirziyoyev, anti-corruption speech	1,096	2	18.2
PU-INV: Putin, address preceding the invasion of Ukraine	3,028	21	69.4
PU-PARTY: Putin, United Russia congress speech	1,044	8	76.6
TR-SOTU: Trump, State of the Union address	10,809	16	14.8
TR-CAB: Trump, Cabinet meeting remarks	9,157	32	34.9
Total	26,505	85	32.1

The English subcorpus contained the largest raw number, with 48 tokens, followed by Russian with 29 and Uzbek with 8. Normalization changed this ranking. Russian had 71.2 occurrences per 10,000 words (95% Poisson CI [47.7, 102.3]), Uzbek 32.4 (95% CI [14.0, 63.9]), and English 24.0 (95% CI [17.7, 31.9]). The complete-corpus rate was 32.1 (95% CI [25.6, 39.7]). The two Russian speeches had similar rates, whereas the English Cabinet remarks had more than twice the rate of the State of the Union address. The Uzbek UN address likewise had more than twice the rate of the anti-corruption speech.

A three-language log-likelihood comparison showed non-uniform overall rates, $G^2(2) = 18.87$, $p < .001$, with a small word-level effect, Cramér's $V = .027$. Holm-corrected pairwise Fisher tests showed a Russian rate 2.96 times the English rate, adjusted $p < .001$. Uzbek–English was not significant, adjusted $p = .393$. Russian–Uzbek reached $p = .043$ before correction but not afterward, adjusted $p = .085$. The wide Uzbek interval reflects its low count.

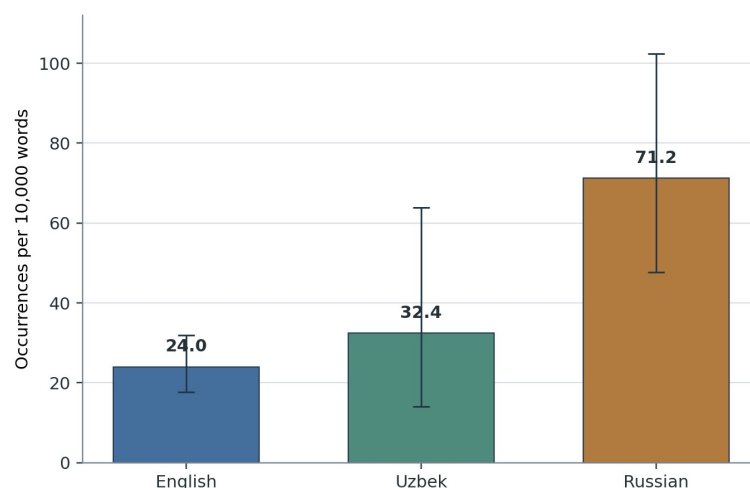


Figure 1. *Normalized euphemism frequency by language.*
Error bars show 95% Poisson confidence intervals

Concealment or vagueness was the largest functional category in the combined data, accounting for 23 of the 85 tokens (27.1%). Strategic framing was nearly as frequent, with 21 tokens (24.7%), followed by mitigation with 18 (21.2%). Legitimation accounted for 10 tokens (11.8%), face protection for 8 (9.4%), diplomatic de-escalation for 3 (3.5%), and responsibility avoidance for 2 (2.4%). The language-specific distribution is shown in Table 4. Percentages are calculated within each language.

Table 4. *Distribution of primary pragmatic functions by language*

Primary function	English, n (%)	Uzbek, n (%)	Russian, n (%)	Total
Mitigation	11 (22.9)	1 (12.5)	6 (20.7)	18
Responsibility avoidance	2 (4.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2
Strategic framing	10 (20.8)	2 (25.0)	9 (31.0)	21
Face protection	7 (14.6)	1 (12.5)	0 (0.0)	8
Legitimation	3 (6.3)	0 (0.0)	7 (24.1)	10
Concealment/vagueness	15 (31.3)	2 (25.0)	6 (20.7)	23
Diplomatic de-escalation	0 (0.0)	2 (25.0)	1 (3.4)	3
Total	48 (100)	8 (100)	29 (100)	85

English was dominated by concealment or vagueness, representing almost one-third of its examples. Mitigation and strategic framing each accounted for about one-fifth. Both responsibility-avoidance instances occurred in the English State of the Union address, where “removal” referred to state-directed deportation without naming the responsible institution. Seven English tokens protected face in references to death, including “lost 13 souls,” “people that were lost,” and dead hostages who had been “returned home.”

Strategic framing and legitimization jointly accounted for 16 of the 29 Russian tokens (55.2%). The eight Uzbek examples spanned six functions; diplomatic de-escalation represented two tokens. A Fisher-Freeman-Halton test based on 200,000 fixed-margin Monte-Carlo samples indicated an association between language and function, $p = .015$, Cramér's $V = .389$. The clearest adjusted residuals were Uzbek diplomatic de-escalation (3.46), Russian legitimization (2.55), Russian face protection (−2.14), and absent English diplomatic de-escalation (−2.01). The sparse cells make these comparisons exploratory.

Abstraction or nominalization was the most frequent formation mechanism, with 24 tokens (28.2%). Metaphorical or idiomatic substitution accounted for 18 (21.2%), periphrasis for 15 (17.6%), understatement and agent suppression for 9 each (10.6%), and renaming or positive relabeling for 10 (11.8%). English supplied 16 of the 18 idiomatic tokens, Russian 11 of the 24 abstractions, and Uzbek four abstractions.

The English Cabinet remarks supplied the clearest metalinguistic example: “I don’t call it a war. I call it a conflict.” The three uses of “conflict” in this passage were coded as mitigation. References to military destruction or the removal of political leaders were frequently expressed through “gone,” “finish the job,” “finish it,” “close that out,” and “take care of business.” Because “gone” did not specify whether the referent had been killed, captured, dismissed, or displaced, these occurrences were coded primarily as concealment or vagueness. Four occurrences of “regime change,” together with *Operation Epic Fury* and the playful relabeling of ICE as *NICE*, were classified as strategic framing. In the State of the Union

address, *Operation Midnight Hammer* and “new military campaign” similarly packaged attacks as bounded institutional actions, while “took out Soleimani” and “eliminate the threat” were classified as mitigation.

The Russian data concentrated on the lexical representation of military action. Three inflectional occurrences of *специальная военная операция* (“special military operation”) appeared across the two texts: the initial announcement, a later statement that the operation was continuing, and a reference to its veterans. *Демилитаризация, денацификация, самозащита, and защита людей* were coded as strategic framing or legitimation because the expressions replaced a more direct description of invasion and its military objectives. The later speech used *освобождённые города и посёлки* (“liberated cities and settlements”) for territorially captured locations and *линия боевого соприкосновения* (“line of combat contact”) for the front line. General nouns such as *события* (“events”), *действия* (“actions”), and *решения* (“decisions”) accounted for most Russian concealment or vagueness tokens.

In Uzbek, the strongest euphemistic concentration occurred in international-diplomatic reference. *Ukraina atrofidagi vaziyat* (“the situation around Ukraine”) and the following anaphoric phrase *bu muammo* (“this problem”) referred to the Russia–Ukraine war without naming either war or the responsible actors; the former was coded as diplomatic de-escalation and the latter as concealment or vagueness. *Muammoli hududlardan qaytarilgan shaxslar* (“persons returned from problematic areas”) protected the face of returnees from conflict zones, while *tinch hayotga moslashtirish* (“adaptation to peaceful life”) strategically framed their rehabilitation and reintegration. In the anti-corruption text, *dastlabki o‘rganish* (“preliminary review”) understated a corruption investigation, and *davlat xizmatlarini soddalashtirish* (“simplifying public services”) positively framed administrative restructuring.

The reported figures represent only high-confidence contextual decisions. No Cohen’s kappa is reported because the present pilot corpus was not independently double-coded by a second trained annotator. Consequently, the frequency and

association statistics describe this coded dataset and should be treated as preliminary until the planned reliability sample has been completed.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that euphemism was recurrent but unevenly distributed in the six speeches. English produced the largest raw total because its subcorpus was substantially larger; after normalization, Russian had the highest rate. This reversal confirms the need to report occurrences per 10,000 words. The significant log-likelihood result indicates that the frequency differences were not attributable to corpus size alone. Nevertheless, the small word-level effect shows that euphemisms were relatively infrequent among all corpus words. Their importance lies in their placement around military intervention, death, territorial control, migration, corruption, and institutional restructuring.

The Russian subcorpus had the highest normalized frequency and was characterized especially by strategic framing and legitimation. Expressions such as *специальная военная операция* (“special military operation”), *демилитаризация* (“demilitarization”), *денацификация* (“denazification”), *самозащита* (“self-defence”), and *защита людей* (“protection of people”) organized military action within institutional, defensive, and morally justified frames. This is consistent with Chilton’s (2004) account of political representations of threat and legitimacy and van Dijk’s (1997) argument that discourse foregrounds favourable in-group characteristics. Military agency was backgrounded while protection, necessity, and security were foregrounded.

Russian nominalization and abstraction compressed contested actions into bounded policy concepts. “Special military operation” presented war as a limited undertaking, while “demilitarization” and “denazification” encoded the speaker’s interpretation of the action and its target. Similarly, *освобождённые города и посёлки* (“liberated cities and settlements”) presupposed that territorial control constituted

liberation. This illustrates Fairclough's (1995) observation that linguistic choices can naturalize particular political representations. Although the evidence cannot prove consciously manipulative intention, it demonstrates reduced visibility of invasion, occupation, coercion, and agency alongside increased emphasis on defence and legitimacy.

The English subcorpus displayed a different profile. Concealment or vagueness was its most frequent function, and idiomatic substitutions were prominent. "Gone," "finish the job," "close that out," "take care of business," and "took out" replaced explicit descriptions of killing, destruction, escalation, or political removal. Their concentration in Trump's Cabinet remarks, which had more than twice the State of the Union rate, suggests an effect of setting and preparation. The interactive Cabinet event allowed repetition, spontaneous reformulation, humour, and colloquial language, while the prepared address relied more on institutional and ceremonial expressions.

The clearest English example, "I don't call it a war. I call it a conflict," explicitly revealed renaming by contrasting a direct term with a less severe alternative. It shows how lexical selection can regulate perceived scale. The repeated use of *gone* was less explicit because leaders or military resources might have been killed, removed, captured, dismissed, or destroyed. This ambiguity reflects Grice's (1975) account of inferred meaning: audiences can infer a violent outcome even when it is not precisely encoded.

Face-protection examples confirm that political euphemism cannot be reduced to deception. "Lost 13 souls," "people that were lost," and "returned home" for deceased hostages softened death and displayed respect toward victims and relatives. This corresponds to Allan & Burridge's (1991) treatment of euphemism and Brown and Levinson's (1987) concept of face protection. The same subcorpus therefore contained audience-sensitive language and strategically vague descriptions of violence. This distinction prevents all indirect expressions from being labelled manipulation.

The Uzbek findings were fewer but functionally diverse. Diplomatic de-escalation in *Ukraina atrofidagi vaziyat* ("the

situation around Ukraine”) avoided direct attribution of responsibility, while *bu muammo* (“this problem”) further abstracted the war. In a United Nations address, these choices maintained a non-confrontational position toward different audiences. This accords with the discourse-historical approach described by Reisigl & Wodak (2009), which relates linguistic choices to institutional setting, purpose, and audience.

Other Uzbek examples extended beyond international conflict. *Muammoli hududlardan qaytarilgan shaxslar* (“persons returned from problematic areas”) avoided stigmatizing labels for returnees from conflict zones, while *tinch hayotga moslashtirish* (“adaptation to peaceful life”) positively represented reintegration. In the anti-corruption speech, *dastlabki o‘rganish* (“preliminary review”) softened a corruption investigation, while *davlat xizmatlarini soddalashtirish* (“simplifying public services”) framed restructuring through its anticipated benefit. These examples combined diplomatic caution, face protection, and institutional framing, although their low frequency prevents broader generalization.

Across the three languages, the results support shared pragmatic motivations alongside discourse-specific realizations. Each subcorpus reduced explicitness, reframed sensitive realities, or protected face. English favoured conversational idiom, Russian relied on abstraction and legitimating labels, and Uzbek used institutional periphrasis and diplomatic generalization. These are patterns in the selected speeches, not fixed typological properties. Because one president represented each language, speaker style, context, topic, and language remain inseparable.

The association between language and pragmatic function shows that frequency alone cannot describe political euphemism. The moderate Cramér’s V for function was larger than the word-level frequency effect: the subcorpora differed more in what euphemisms accomplished than in whether they occurred. Russian legitimation and Uzbek diplomatic de-escalation contributed most strongly. Sparse counts and the non-significant corrected Russian–Uzbek contrast nevertheless require caution; the tests identify pilot-corpus patterns, not population-wide differences.

The combined functional ranking is also significant. Concealment or vagueness and strategic framing together represented more than half of all annotated tokens, whereas responsibility avoidance and diplomatic de-escalation were comparatively rare. Political euphemism in this corpus was therefore used principally to manage the representation of events rather than merely to observe social etiquette. This extends the traditional association of euphemism with politeness and taboo avoidance. In political speech, an expression may protect face while also controlling how an institution, policy, or military action is evaluated. Charteris-Black's (2011) account of persuasive political language is relevant here: favourable labels and familiar figurative expressions can make an interpretation appear coherent and acceptable without requiring speakers to state every evaluative premise directly.

A further contribution concerns the relationship between euphemism and ideology. The ideological force of the examples did not depend only on hiding information. Some expressions supplied additional evaluation: "liberated cities" presented territorial control positively, "self-defence" assigned a legitimate motive, and "bright new beginning" emphasized an anticipated benefit after political removal. Euphemization can consequently operate through substitution, omission, presupposition, and positive redescription. This broader approach is preferable to treating euphemisms only as mild synonyms for offensive vocabulary. It also explains why contextual annotation was necessary: the same lexical item could be euphemistic in one passage and literal in another. The findings thus connect lexical euphemism research with critical discourse analysis by showing how small linguistic choices participate in wider representations of actors, actions, responsibility, and legitimacy.

Methodologically, the study demonstrates the value of combining corpus measurement with contextual analysis. Searches can locate "operation," "removal," "events," "situation," and their equivalents, but these words are not inherently euphemistic. Their status depends on the referent, direct alternative, and surrounding discourse. Excluding neutral instances reduced false positives, while primary-function

annotation enabled comparison. However, one primary label simplified multifunctional cases: “special military operation” can mitigate war, obscure agency, frame policy, and legitimate action simultaneously.

Several limitations constrain the conclusions. The corpus contained six speeches, unequal subcorpora, and imperfectly balanced topics and genres. Each language represented a different communicative context. The annotation was not independently repeated by a second trained coder, so Cohen’s kappa could not be calculated. Direct alternatives for contested expressions may also depend on analytical perspective. The findings are therefore provisional rather than representative of entire languages or political traditions.

Future research should expand each subcorpus to 30–50 speeches, include several speakers, and balance texts by date, genre, audience, and topic. Independent annotation of 10–20% should establish agreement and refine borderline categories. A larger dataset would permit regression analysis separating language, speaker, topic, genre, and audience. Despite its pilot scale, the study demonstrates that political euphemism is a measurable set of contextual strategies regulating explicitness, responsibility, evaluation, interpersonal sensitivity, and legitimacy.

5. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the pragmatic functions of euphemisms in selected English, Uzbek, and Russian presidential speeches through a comparative mixed-method corpus approach. By combining normalized frequency analysis with contextual interpretation, it demonstrated that euphemisms are not merely polite lexical alternatives. They function as discourse strategies through which political speakers regulate explicitness, evaluation, responsibility, interpersonal sensitivity, and the perceived legitimacy of contested actions.

The six-speech pilot corpus contained 85 high-confidence euphemistic tokens. Although English had the highest raw total, Russian showed the highest normalized frequency. In the Russian

texts, euphemisms primarily framed and legitimized military actions through abstraction and institutional terminology. The English texts relied more heavily on vague and colloquial expressions that softened or obscured violence, political removal, and death. The Uzbek texts displayed diplomatic de-escalation, face protection, and positive institutional framing. These functional distributions proved more informative than raw frequencies alone.

Across the three subcorpora, the shared tendencies were to reduce explicitness, encourage favorable interpretations, protect face, and manage the attribution of responsibility. Their linguistic realization nevertheless varied with speaker, topic, genre, audience, and political context. The observed patterns must therefore not be treated as fixed characteristics of English, Uzbek, or Russian.

The study is limited by its six speeches, unequal subcorpus sizes, single president per language, and absence of independent double coding. Future research should construct larger balanced corpora, include multiple speakers and genres, and report inter-annotator agreement. Despite these limitations, the study provides a transparent, reproducible framework for identifying and comparing political euphemisms. It shows that combining corpus measurement with pragmatic analysis offers a productive basis for explaining how indirect political language shapes the public representation of sensitive realities.

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