

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EUPHEMISM, METAPHOR AND HEDGING IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK DIPLOMATIC TEXTS

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Abstract: This study investigates the pragmatic significance of three key linguistic devices — euphemism, metaphor, and hedging — in English and Uzbek diplomatic texts. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of speech act theory, politeness theory, and euphemization studies, the analysis demonstrates that euphemisms, metaphors, and hedges operate not merely as stylistic choices but as purposeful strategic tools employed to soften unfavorable information, project neutrality, signal cooperative intent, and maintain face in inter-state communication. The study also reviews the contributions of Russian, Uzbek, Central Asian, and international scholars to the fields of euphemism and hedging research. The findings reveal that Uzbek diplomatic texts show a slight predominance of euphemistic strategies over metaphorical ones, reflecting a cultural preference for caution and politeness over emotional expression. This research makes an original contribution by conducting, for the first time, a systematic pragmatic analysis of these devices in English and Uzbek diplomatic texts at the level of a unified textual unit.

Keywords: euphemism; metaphor; hedging; diplomatic discourse; pragmatic analysis; communicative strategy; politeness theory; English diplomatic texts; Uzbek diplomatic texts; comparative linguistics

One of the most important pragmatic features of diplomatic texts is their possession of a communicative strategy. We have established that lexical-phraseological units in diplomatic texts perform several functions from a communicative standpoint.

The use of euphemization is quite noticeable in official statements published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Uzbek diplomacy favors a gentle interpretation of its position and attitude toward certain events and situations.

The pragmatic analysis of this type of diplomatic document in English and Uzbek, and their functions within the text, is being subjected to analysis for the first time. In recent years, a number of notable scholarly dissertations have been written in Uzbekistan on the semantic meaning and classification of diplomatic terms in English and Uzbek, their cognitive, pragmatic, and linguacultural differences, and the use of phraseological units. However, semantic and pragmatic analyses in these two languages have not been studied at the level of a unified textual unit.

Euphemisms have been studied relatively widely in world linguistics. Among the scholars who have contributed to this field are I.V. Arnold, J. Vendryes, L.A. Bulakhovsky, A.N. Agayan, O.N. Trubachev, N.G. Mikhailovskaya, B.A. Larin, A.M. Katsev, N.S. Boshchaeva, L.V. Artushkina, G.G. Kuzhim; from Central Asian linguistics — V.P. Darbakova, S. Otaev, and G.G. Musaboev. The study of euphemisms in Uzbek linguistics is associated with the name of N. Ismatullayev, who, in his dissertation "Euphemisms in the Contemporary Uzbek Language," presented his scholarly views on the history of their emergence and classification. Subsequently, euphemisms were also studied by A. Omonturdiyev in his doctoral dissertation "Euphemisms of Professional Speech" in which he analyzed euphemisms that arose in the speech of livestock breeders as a result of various influencing factors.

One of the contemporary researchers who has chosen to study euphemisms in diplomatic speech and texts is Y. Bobonazarova, who, in her dissertation "Euphemistic Features of the



German Diplomatic Language” expounded her theoretical views on the relationship of this topic to related phenomena and on the categories of euphemistic meaning. While Y. Bobonazarova studied the process of euphemization in the German language, her contemporary, the Chinese researcher Y. Zhou, analyzed the use of euphemisms in English and Chinese diplomatic discourse.

According to Russian scholar Mironina, euphemisms are emotionally neutral words, as well as other expressions used in place of synonymous words or phrases that may seem impolite, indecent, or rude to the speaker [Mironina: 2012]. M.V. Belyakov, a Russian scholar who has conducted major research on diplomatic discourse, also specifically emphasized the role of euphemisms in diplomatic speech and texts. According to him, euphemism is pragmatically associated with the violation of the maxim of manner (the clarity and transparency of interpretation). Thus, euphemization can be considered one of the most effective strategies for concealing and softening unpleasant information, making it possible to hide and weaken the impact of unwanted facts. Accordingly, euphemisms are words with a neutral emotional meaning, which in many cases are used to conceal or replace phenomena or features that appear excessively unpleasant, rude, or inappropriate to the author or society [Belyakov: 2018]. British scholars K. Allan and K. Burridge, in their book “Forbidden Words: Taboo and the Censoring of Language” termed polite expressions as euphemisms, rude words as dysphemisms, and neutral ones as orthophemisms [Allan, Burridge, 2009].

The role of euphemisms in expressing caution in diplomatic oral speech and written texts is extremely important. The folk saying “to tell a bitter truth sweetly” applies precisely to euphemisms: before speaking plain truths, the speaker thinks carefully and conveys not the statement itself, but its essence in a softened form. In the course of the analysis, we also witnessed and analyzed the active participation of metaphorical units alongside euphemisms in official diplomatic statements — as a diplomatic device that enhances the impact on the public and reveals the substance of the text. In diplomatic texts, metaphors are used not merely as words, but as factors that resolve a situation in one's favor and ensure superiority in negotiations. An analysis of Uzbek diplomatic texts shows that the share of euphemisms holds a slight advantage over metaphors. This means that in Uzbek diplomatic statements, the use of a strategy of caution and politeness has a certain advantage over the expression of emotions.

The use of words and expressions with politeness and caution in written diplomatic texts requires deep knowledge and experience. An analysis of statements shows that diplomats use not only euphemisms and metaphors for this purpose, but also hedging. The use of this tactic in written speech ensures softness, politeness, extreme caution, and adequate verbal communication in a statement. To date, hedging has been studied by many linguists, who associate this concept with the strategy of using communicative means by the speaker. The term “hedging” was first introduced into linguistics by J. Lakoff, who defined it as “avoiding giving a direct, precise answer” [Lakoff, 1972]. Subsequently, P. Brown and S. Levinson, in their politeness theory, consider the pragmatic aspect of hedging in mutual oral and written communication to be of primary importance [Brown, Levinson, 1987].

Hedging in communication has been studied by Russian scholars T.V. Larina, A.P. Maryukhin, O.G. Gorina, B.Y. Khrabrova, V.V. Bogdanov, and Y.L. Yerzinkyan, who have shared their scholarly and theoretical views on the lexical-semantic significance of lexical units belonging to various parts of speech in English speech and texts, the categories of politeness, and the expression of politeness in different cultures. Among Uzbek linguists, H.Ya. Hojjeva, S. Mo'minov, Q. Rasulov, S. Rahimov, Sh. Rahmatullayev, Sh.B. Sodiqova, and Z. Xoliqova have conducted research on forms of respect in Uzbek communication, the sociolinguistic features of Uzbek communicative behavior, the social roles of communicants and their verbal communication, and the category of respect in the Uzbek language. One of the notable recent works in this field was carried out by M.B. Xolova. In her 2023 monograph entitled



“Linguocultural and Sociopragmatic Features of the Politeness Category in English and Uzbek Literary Works” she presented the strategy and linguistic interpretation of politeness, the categories of politeness and their sociopragmatic features, and a comparative analysis of the politeness category in Uzbek and English literary works.

The pragmatic analysis of diplomatic texts in English and Uzbek demonstrates that in diplomatic notes and letters in both languages, euphemisms, metaphors, and hedges serve as the primary lexical means for reminding of obligations, creating a foundation for future cooperation, expressing neutrality, and proposing a position of mediation.

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