

**NATIONAL-CULTURAL AND PRAGMATIC FEATURES OF EUPHEMISMS AND POLITICAL CORRECTNESS IN REPRESENTING SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED GROUPS IN UZBEK**

Jabborova Aziza Jobirovna

Doctoral Student of Namangan State University
azizajabborova14@gmail.com +998972961797**Abstract**

This study examines the national-cultural and pragmatic features of euphemisms and politically correct expressions used to represent socially disadvantaged groups in the Uzbek language. Drawing on a corpus of media texts, governmental documents, and public discourse, the research explores how lexical choices, politeness strategies, and cultural norms influence the way sensitive social categories—such as people with disabilities, low-income communities, and marginalized minorities—are described. The findings demonstrate that Uzbek employs a rich set of culturally embedded euphemisms that reflect traditional values of respect, collectivism, and social harmony. Pragmatically, the discourse reveals strong tendencies toward face-saving strategies, indirectness, and the avoidance of explicit negative labeling. These linguistic patterns not only soften socially sensitive references but also reinforce cultural ideals of dignity and inclusivity. The study concludes that euphemisms and political correctness in Uzbek are shaped by both evolving global norms and deeply rooted national-cultural frameworks, highlighting the need for greater linguistic transparency and sensitivity in public communication.

Keywords: Euphemism; political correctness; Uzbek language; socially disadvantaged groups; national-cultural features; pragmatic strategies; politeness; face-saving; discourse analysis.

Introduction

Language plays a crucial role in shaping social attitudes and reflecting cultural values. In particular, the representation of socially disadvantaged groups in communication often requires careful lexical and pragmatic choices to avoid offense and maintain social harmony. Euphemisms and political correctness (PC) are two interrelated strategies used to mitigate potentially face-threatening or stigmatizing expressions, providing socially acceptable alternatives to direct or negative terms¹.

In the context of Uzbek, a language deeply rooted in national culture and social norms, euphemisms are often influenced by traditional values, politeness conventions, and pragmatic strategies that preserve face while addressing sensitive issues. For instance, terms referring to people with disabilities, the

¹ Allan, K., & Burridge, K. 1991. Euphemism and Dysphemism: Language Used as Shield and Weapon. Oxford University Press, pp. 29, 32-33; Lakoff, G. 2010. Why it matters how we frame the environment. *Environmental Communication*, 4(1), 70-81.

economically disadvantaged, or marginalized ethnic groups are frequently modified or substituted with milder expressions, reflecting both cultural norms and modern tendencies toward inclusive language². The study of euphemisms and PC in Uzbek is particularly relevant given the increasing awareness of social equality and the need for respectful communication. While extensive research has explored these phenomena in English and other languages³, there is limited scholarship focusing on the intersection of national-cultural values, pragmatics, and political correctness in the Uzbek language.

This paper aims to fill this gap by analyzing the lexical, pragmatic, and sociocultural features of euphemisms and PC in the representation of socially disadvantaged groups in Uzbek. Specifically, it examines how language mediates respect, face-saving, and inclusivity, contributing to both theoretical understanding and practical implications for socially sensitive communication.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Euphemisms and political correctness (PC) have been widely studied as linguistic mechanisms that mitigate face-threatening acts and promote social harmony. **Allan and Burridge** highlight that euphemisms act as “linguistic shields” to soften the impact of taboo, sensitive, or socially undesirable concepts⁴. Similarly, **Lakoff** emphasizes that the framing of language shapes perceptions of social issues, influencing both interpersonal and institutional communication⁵.

The concept of **face-saving** is central to understanding pragmatic strategies in language. According to **Brown and Levinson**, politeness strategies-including positive politeness, negative politeness, and indirectness-play a significant role in minimizing social friction⁶. In the context of representing socially disadvantaged groups, these strategies are often realized through euphemistic substitutions and politically correct terminology⁷.

Cross-linguistic studies demonstrate that cultural norms strongly influence euphemism usage. For instance, **Fløttum, Dahl, and Kinn** show that cultural expectations in European languages affect the selection and acceptability of euphemistic expressions⁸. Similarly, research by **Grolleau, Mzoughi, Peterson, and Tendero** indicates that both lexical and discourse-level strategies are employed to soften sensitive topics while maintaining clarity and authority⁹. However, studies focusing specifically on **Uzbek** remain limited, particularly in analyzing how national-cultural values intersect with pragmatic and politeness strategies in representing marginalized populations.

² Nerlich, B., Koteyko, N., & Brown, B. 2010. The construction of climate change in science and the media. *Public Understanding of Science*, 19(3), 296–312; Brown, P., & Levinson, S. 1987. *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge University Press, p. 2.

³ Fløttum, K., Dahl, T., & Kinn, T. 2017. Climate change discourse in the IPCC reports: Linguistic strategies and discursive constructions. *Discourse Studies*, 19(6), 657–673; Grolleau, G., Mzoughi, M., Peterson, J. M., & Tendero, A. 2014. Changing the world with words? Euphemisms in climate change issues. *Environmental Science & Policy*, 42, Article 107307.

⁴ Allan, K., & Burridge, K. 1991. *Euphemism and Dysphemism: Language Used as Shield and Weapon*. Oxford University Press, pp. 29, 32–33.

⁵ Lakoff, G. 2010. Why it matters how we frame the environment. *Environmental Communication*, 4(1), 70–81.

⁶ Brown, P., & Levinson, S. 1987. *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge University Press, p. 2.

⁷ Nerlich, B., Koteyko, N., & Brown, B. 2010. The construction of climate change in science and the media. *Public Understanding of Science*, 19(3), 296–312.

⁸ Fløttum, K., Dahl, T., & Kinn, T. 2017. Climate change discourse in the IPCC reports: Linguistic strategies and discursive constructions. *Discourse Studies*, 19(6), 657–673.

⁹ Grolleau, G., Mzoughi, M., Peterson, J. M., & Tendero, A. 2014. Changing the world with words? Euphemisms in climate change issues. *Environmental Science & Policy*, 42, Article 107307.

In Uzbek, euphemisms often reflect both **traditional cultural respect** and modern awareness of social inclusion. For example, terms for people with disabilities, economically disadvantaged individuals, or ethnic minorities are frequently softened or replaced with neutral or positive alternatives. This underscores the importance of analyzing **lexical-semantic patterns, pragmatic functions, and cultural influences** in understanding language strategies employed to achieve political correctness and face-saving in Uzbek.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a **qualitative research design** to analyze the use of euphemisms and politically correct language in representing socially disadvantaged groups in Uzbek. The research is descriptive and analytical, focusing on the interplay between lexical, pragmatic, and cultural factors.

The data for this study consist of **authentic Uzbek texts** from multiple sources:

- Media reports and news articles addressing social issues
- Official government and institutional documents
- Online forums and public statements reflecting social discourse

A purposive sampling method was used to select texts that explicitly refer to socially disadvantaged groups, ensuring that the sample is representative of contemporary usage.

The analysis focuses on three levels:

1. **Lexical-semantic analysis:** Identification of euphemistic substitutions, softening expressions, and politically correct alternatives.
2. **Pragmatic analysis:** Examination of face-saving strategies, indirectness, politeness, and agent avoidance.
3. **Cultural analysis:** Assessment of how national values, traditions, and social norms influence euphemism selection and acceptability.

Data were analyzed using **content analysis and thematic coding**, allowing for the identification of recurring patterns and cultural-pragmatic features in the representation of socially disadvantaged groups.

RESULTS

This section presents the main findings of the study regarding the national-cultural and pragmatic features of euphemisms and politically correct expressions used to represent socially disadvantaged groups in Uzbek discourse. The results are organized around three analytical dimensions: **lexical-semantic patterns, pragmatic functions, and cultural-motivational factors**.

Lexical-Semantic Patterns of Euphemisms. The analysis revealed that Uzbek media and institutional discourse frequently substitute direct references to disabilities with softened or neutral expressions. Instead of **nogiron** (“disabled”), alternative forms such as **nogironligi bo‘lgan shaxs**, **imkoniyati cheklangan fuqarolar**, and **alohida ehtiyojli shaxslar** are widely used. These euphemisms avoid direct labeling, aligning with politeness principles described by Brown and Levinson, where negative politeness strategies reduce imposition and maintain the individual’s dignity¹⁰.

¹⁰ Brown, P., & Levinson, S. 1987. *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 58–70, 101–129, 130–170, 213–227.

Expressions such as *kam ta'minlanganlar*, *ijtimoiy yordamga muhtoj fuqarolar*, or *ehtiyojmand oilalar* were used instead of more explicit terms like *qashshoq* or *kambag'al*. This shift mirrors the euphemistic neutralization discussed by Allan and Burrige, where socially sensitive realities are reframed through more positive or neutral lexical choices¹¹.

For groups such as labor migrants, orphaned children, or elderly citizens, the discourse commonly uses relational or honorific terms:

- *yurtimiz farzandlari* (for orphans),
- *migrant fuqarolarimiz* (instead of *mehnat muhojirlari*),
- *keksalarimiz* (instead of *qarilar*).

These linguistic choices demonstrate collectivist cultural values and the tendency to strengthen group cohesion through inclusive and respectful lexical forms.

Pragmatic Functions of Euphemisms and Political Correctness. The majority of euphemistic expressions identified in the Uzbek corpus serve a face-saving purpose, minimizing social stigma attached to disability, poverty, or minority status. These patterns correspond to the universal politeness mechanisms described by Brown and Levinson, but their realization in Uzbek is distinctly collectivist and honor-oriented¹².

In discussions on state welfare, poverty, or unemployment, Uzbek institutional documents often utilize agentless constructions such as *ko'mak beriladi*, *yordam ko'rsatiladi*, or *sharoitlar yaratilmoqda*. The absence of explicit agency aligns with what Nerlich, Koteyko, and Brown describe as strategic ambiguity, which allows institutions to address sensitive issues without assigning blame or responsibility¹³.

Euphemisms such as *moslashuv davri*, *qiyinchiliklarni yengib o'tish jarayoni*, or *ijtimoiy barqarorlikni mustahkamlash* are frequently used to soften the presentation of unemployment, inequality, or public dissatisfaction. This reflects the motivational framing strategy explained by Lakoff, where linguistic framing is used to create optimism, unity, and confidence in institutional efforts¹⁴.

Cultural-Motivational Factors. Uzbek euphemisms frequently stem from cultural norms emphasizing respect (**hurmat**), honor (**izzat**), and social cohesion. The use of plural possessive suffixes (**-imiz**, **-larimiz**) when referring to disadvantaged groups reinforces empathy and solidarity.

Directly naming disability, poverty, or misfortune is considered impolite or morally uncomfortable in many Uzbek cultural contexts. Euphemisms thus serve to preserve both **speaker morality** and **listener comfort**, consistent with cultural face concepts that extend beyond individual identity.

Government documents and media texts increasingly borrow PC terms from international discourse, such as *gender tengligi*, *inklyuziv ta'lim*, or *barqaror rivojlanish siyosati*. This indicates an emerging

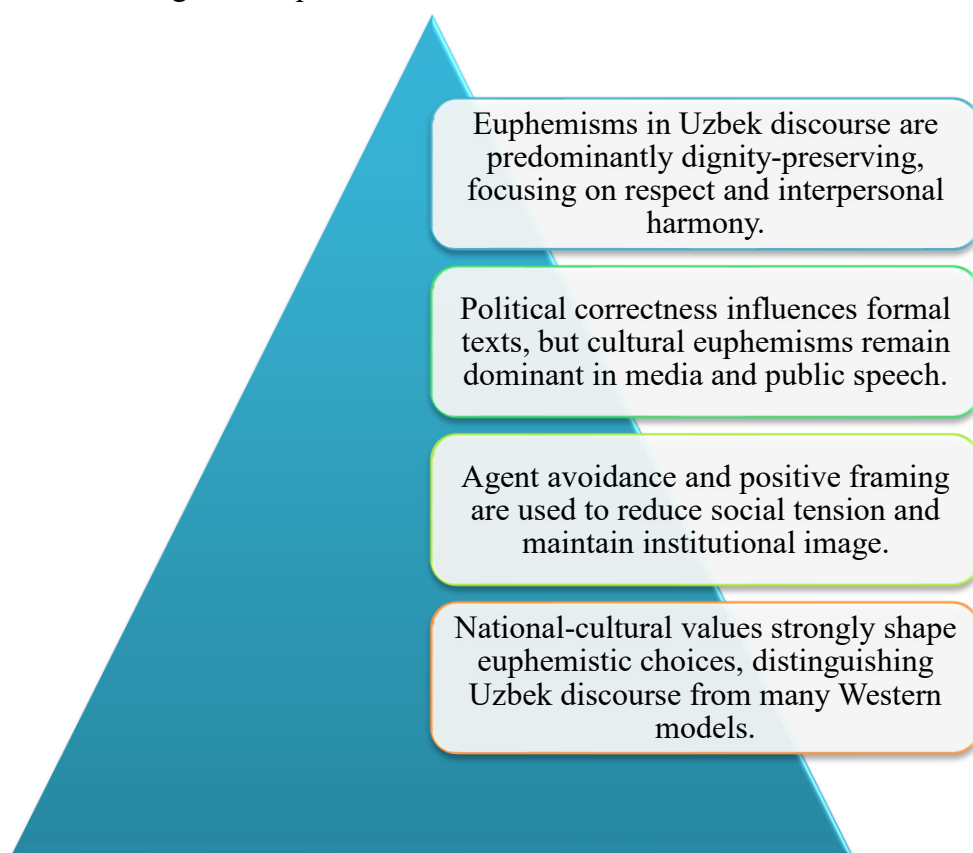
¹¹ Allan, K., & Burrige, K. 1991. *Euphemism and Dysphemism: Language Used as Shield and Weapon*. Oxford University Press, pp. 11–16, 27–31, 154–170.

¹² Brown, P., & Levinson, S. 1987. *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 58–70, 101–129, 130–170, 213–227.

¹³ Nerlich, B., Koteyko, N., & Brown, B. 2010. The construction of climate change in science and the media. *Public Understanding of Science*, 19(3), 296–312.

¹⁴ Lakoff, G. 2010. Why it matters how we frame the environment. *Environmental Communication*, 4(1), 70–81.

hybrid linguistic model combining Uzbek cultural norms with global discourse practices, echoing findings from cross-linguistic euphemism studies¹⁵.



DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that euphemisms and politically correct expressions used to represent socially disadvantaged groups in Uzbek discourse are shaped by a combination of **national-cultural norms**, **pragmatic constraints**, and **global discursive influences**. This section interprets the results in relation to established theories of euphemism, politeness, and socio-cultural linguistics.

National-Cultural Motivations Behind Euphemistic Usage. One of the principal observations from the results is that Uzbek euphemistic expressions are deeply embedded in collectivist cultural values. Terms such as **keksalarimiz**, **yurtimiz farzandlari**, and **alohida ehtiyojli shaxslar** reflect an honor-oriented and community-centered worldview. This aligns with Allan and Burridge's argument that euphemisms often arise from moral and cultural taboos surrounding socially sensitive categories¹⁶. However, unlike Western discourse-where euphemisms are frequently individual-centered-Uzbek euphemisms place emphasis on shared identity, group belonging, and collective respect.

This indicates that euphemisms in Uzbek are not merely linguistic strategies but also **cultural symbols** that reinforce positive social cohesion. They function as mechanisms for maintaining public harmony,

¹⁵ Fløttum, K., Dahl, T., & Kinn, T. 2017. Climate change discourse in the IPCC reports: Linguistic strategies and discursive constructions. *Discourse Studies*, 19(6), 657–673.

¹⁶ Allan, K., & Burridge, K. 1991. *Euphemism and Dysphemism: Language Used as Shield and Weapon*. Oxford University Press, pp. 11–16, 27–31, 154–170.

preserving interpersonal dignity, and sustaining the cultural imperative of hurmat, which plays a central role in Uzbek communication.

Pragmatic Functions: A Cross-Cultural Interpretation. The results also confirm the applicability of Brown and Levinson's politeness theory to Uzbek data, particularly regarding negative politeness strategies that soften direct references to disability, poverty, or marginalization¹⁷. Yet, the linguistic realization of these strategies differs significantly from English discourse.

For instance, the structure *nogironligi bo'lgan shaxs* mirrors the politically correct English pattern "person with a disability," highlighting a **person-first** orientation influenced by global PC norms. However, expressions like *keksalarimiz* or *ehtiyojmand oilalar* demonstrate culturally specific deference markers that emphasize respect, emotional warmth, or hierarchy - features less pronounced in English. These differences reveal that PC discourse in Uzbek is **hybrid**: it aligns with global movements toward inclusive language while maintaining culturally embedded politeness forms.

Institutional Discursive Strategies: Ambiguity and Image-Management. The identification of agentless constructions such as **yordam ko'rsatiladi**, **ko'mak beriladi**, or **sharoitlar yaratilmoqda** indicates a strategic use of ambiguity in state or media discourse. As noted by Nerlich, Koteyko, and Brown, such structures allow institutions to discuss socially sensitive issues while diffusing responsibility and minimizing public criticism¹⁸.

In the Uzbek context, this strategy is particularly prevalent in topics relating to poverty, unemployment, and disability rights. Euphemistic ambiguity serves to protect institutional face, maintain public trust, and avoid direct confrontation with politically delicate topics. This suggests that euphemisms in Uzbek official discourse are both **pragmatic tools** and **image-management devices**.

Global Political Correctness and Local Adaptation. The infiltration of global PC terminology - **gender tengligi**, **inklyuziv ta'lim**, **imkoniyati cheklangan shaxslar** - reflects an increasing alignment between Uzbek formal discourse and international linguistic standards. As Fløttum et al. argue, globalization leads to the diffusion of discursive norms, particularly within institutional and policy texts¹⁹.

However, the adoption of these terms is not uniform across all genres. Media texts and public speech maintain a stronger attachment to local euphemistic traditions. This indicates that PC discourse in Uzbekistan is undergoing **gradual localization**, in which global terms are adapted to fit national cultural expectations.

Euphemisms as Social and Ideological Instruments. The results also suggest that euphemisms in Uzbek discourse play an ideological role similar to what Fairclough identifies in critical discourse analysis²⁰s. By reframing disadvantaged groups using positive or softened expressions, institutions can shape public perception, reduce stigma, and control the social narrative surrounding sensitive issues.

For example, replacing *qashshoq* with *ehtiyojmand* not only softens the emotional tone but also implies a temporary and solvable state, thereby aligning with institutional narratives of progress and welfare.

¹⁷ Brown, P., & Levinson, S. 1987. *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 58–70, 101–129, 130–170, 213–227.

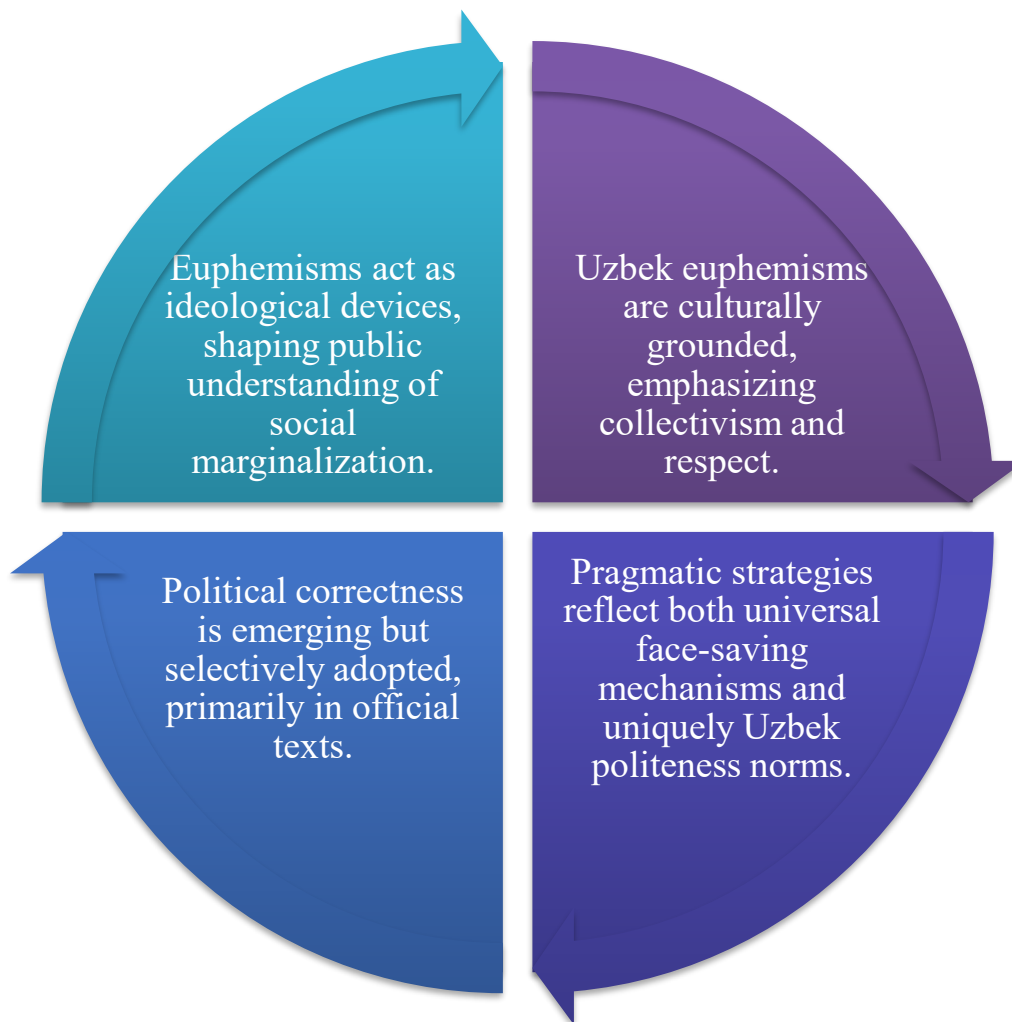
¹⁸ Nerlich, B., Koteyko, N., & Brown, B. 2010. The construction of climate change in science and the media. *Public Understanding of Science*, 19(3), 296–312.

¹⁹ Fløttum, K., Dahl, T., & Kinn, T. 2017. Climate change discourse in the IPCC reports: Linguistic strategies and discursive constructions. *Discourse Studies*, 19(6), pp. 660–666, 668–670.

²⁰ Fairclough, N. 1989. *Language and Power*. Longman, pp. 22–31, 55–58, 82–90, 112–117

Euphemisms thus function as tools for **managing social realities**, influencing public sentiment, and reinforcing institutional legitimacy.

Overall, the discussion shows that:



This indicates that the representation of socially disadvantaged groups in Uzbek discourse is a complex interplay of linguistic, cultural, and ideological forces.

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