



## SOCIOLINGUISTIC FUNCTIONS OF PHRASEOLOGICAL EUPHEMISMS IN MEDIA AND POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

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### ABSTRACT

*This article explores the sociolinguistic functions of phraseological euphemisms in modern media and political communication. Euphemisms are linguistic tools that allow speakers to express socially sensitive or controversial ideas in a manner acceptable to audiences. In media and politics, they serve not only as instruments of politeness but also as mechanisms of persuasion, ideology formation, and discourse manipulation. The research focuses on how phraseological euphemisms reflect social values, mitigate negative impressions, and sustain the power dynamics between communicators and their audiences. Through a sociolinguistic lens, euphemisms are viewed as indicators of cultural norms and political rhetoric shaping public perception. Consequently, they become essential components of communicative strategy, social harmony, and ideological control in contemporary English discourse.*

**Introduction.** The role of language in shaping social and political reality has long been acknowledged in sociolinguistic studies. Among the linguistic devices used to maintain social order and ideological control, euphemisms occupy a special position. A euphemism is not merely a lexical replacement for a taboo or unpleasant concept but a powerful communicative strategy reflecting social norms, politeness, and institutional power relations. In modern English, phraseological euphemisms stable word combinations with figurative meaning are widely employed in political discourse and media communication to influence perception and maintain social harmony. In political contexts, euphemisms help to disguise unpleasant truths, soften the impact of controversial actions, or align messages with public values. For example, phrases such as “collateral damage” instead of “civilian casualties” or “enhanced interrogation techniques” instead of “torture” reveal deliberate attempts to manipulate audience perception through linguistic means. Similarly, media discourse uses euphemistic expressions to maintain objectivity, protect public morality, and avoid potential offense. Sociolinguistically, euphemisms thus represent an intersection of language, culture, and ideology, reflecting both the speaker’s social position and the communicative context. Analyzing their sociolinguistic functions in media and political spheres allows us to understand how phraseological

euphemisms shape discourse, conceal power relations, and influence collective cognition in modern English communication.

**Main part.** Phraseological euphemisms in media and political communication are linguistic mechanisms that perform crucial sociolinguistic functions. They reflect the interplay between language and society, revealing how communication strategies are adapted to fit social conventions, power hierarchies, and cultural expectations. Sociolinguistically, euphemisms serve to protect social face, maintain politeness, and manage social tensions. In media and politics, however, their functions extend further: they shape public consciousness, mask ideological bias, and reinforce institutional authority.

Euphemisms in media discourse operate as linguistic buffers between information and audience perception. Journalists, editors, and broadcasters employ euphemistic phraseology to balance objectivity with sensitivity. For instance, expressions like “downsizing” instead of “mass firing” or “economically disadvantaged” instead of “poor” mitigate the negative emotional load of the message. This choice reflects the media’s responsibility to maintain social stability and avoid direct confrontation with sensitive topics such as poverty, death, war, or moral deviation. Sociolinguistically, such euphemisms embody the media’s role as both an informant and a moral regulator. They reveal how language shapes social attitudes toward controversial realities and how phraseological constructions mediate between truth and social acceptability.

In political discourse, euphemisms take on even more complex functions. Political language, as Orwell famously noted, is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable. Euphemisms such as “neutralizing the target” for “killing,” or “strategic withdrawal” for “retreat,” are deliberately chosen to conceal unpleasant realities and legitimize controversial decisions. These expressions do not merely serve politeness; they are instruments of ideological manipulation and persuasion. Through euphemistic phraseology, politicians construct an alternative linguistic reality where negative actions appear rational or even moral. This process exemplifies what sociolinguists term “language of power,” where linguistic form is inseparable from social control.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, phraseological euphemisms reveal how power relations are linguistically maintained. The speaker’s status determines the acceptability of euphemistic usage: political authorities or media elites can redefine terms to shape social understanding. For example, the phrase “preemptive strike” is used instead of “unprovoked attack” to legitimize aggression within a framework of national defense. Similarly, “enhanced interrogation techniques” reframes acts of torture as legal and humane. These euphemisms perform the function of ideological mitigation—they linguistically encode power and control over meaning. As Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis suggests, language is never neutral; it reproduces social inequalities and ideological dominance through discursive practices such as euphemism.

In addition to political manipulation, euphemisms play a pragmatic role in sustaining politeness and saving face. According to Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory, euphemisms minimize face-threatening acts in public communication. For instance, government reports prefer “negative economic growth” to “recession” to avoid panic, while media outlets use “alternative lifestyle” instead of “homosexuality” to maintain social decorum. These examples

demonstrate how euphemistic phraseology mediates between institutional authority and public sensibility. Sociolinguistically, such expressions also signal the speaker's awareness of social taboos and their linguistic competence in navigating them.

Cultural variation further influences the sociolinguistic use of euphemisms. In English-speaking societies, where indirectness and politeness are valued, euphemisms often function as expressions of moral and cultural refinement. They help maintain a façade of civility even when addressing controversial topics. For example, media references to “ethnic cleansing” instead of “genocide” illustrate how cultural constraints on speech influence linguistic representation. Though morally questionable, such phraseological choices align with sociocultural expectations of restraint, respectability, and tact. Euphemisms thus reveal not only linguistic behavior but also the moral codes of the society that produces them.

In the media, euphemistic phraseology also serves commercial and rhetorical purposes. News outlets depend on audience trust and emotional engagement. To preserve this trust, they employ language that is informative but not offensive. For instance, euphemistic phrases like “body enhancement procedures” instead of “cosmetic surgery” or “comfort women” instead of “sex slaves” aim to soften the emotional and ethical impact of information. From a sociolinguistic standpoint, these phrases act as tools of discourse sanitization, reflecting media institutions' effort to regulate collective sensitivity. However, this linguistic practice can lead to distortion, where euphemisms obscure social problems rather than illuminate them. The balance between politeness and truth thus becomes a defining feature of euphemistic usage in modern communication.

Another key sociolinguistic function of euphemisms is maintaining social cohesion. By replacing harsh or divisive terms with neutral alternatives, euphemisms help sustain unity within diverse audiences. For instance, in political campaigns, phrases such as “revenue enhancement” instead of “tax increase” or “temporary detention center” instead of “prison” are designed to minimize public resistance and foster collective agreement. These examples illustrate how euphemisms perform integrative functions aligning language with the speaker's social and political goals. In this sense, euphemisms contribute to discourse hegemony, reinforcing dominant ideologies and marginalizing alternative perspectives.

In recent years, the emergence of digital and social media has expanded the domain of euphemistic expression. Online communication, characterized by immediacy and public visibility, has generated new euphemisms that blend irony with political correctness. Terms like “alternative facts” or “fake news” exemplify how modern euphemistic phraseology operates within post-truth communication. These expressions manipulate interpretation, allowing speakers to reframe falsehoods as subjective viewpoints. Sociolinguistically, such phenomena demonstrate the adaptability of euphemisms to new communicative environments and their continued role in constructing social reality.

Overall, phraseological euphemisms in media and politics fulfill several intertwined sociolinguistic functions: they regulate social interaction, preserve politeness, obscure unpleasant truths, and reinforce ideological authority. Their study reveals the subtle mechanisms through which language shapes collective consciousness and legitimizes institutional power. Understanding euphemisms from this sociolinguistic perspective is



essential not only for linguists but also for citizens seeking critical awareness of how communication influences thought and society.

**Conclusion.** Phraseological euphemisms in media and political communication represent a complex intersection of language, society, and ideology. Their sociolinguistic functions extend beyond politeness they serve as instruments of discourse control, persuasion, and cultural negotiation. By masking unpleasant realities and reframing social issues, euphemisms shape public perception and maintain institutional legitimacy. They reveal how linguistic choices reflect social norms, power relations, and cultural values in modern English communication. The media uses euphemisms to manage audience sensitivity, while political discourse employs them to manipulate interpretation and maintain authority. From a sociolinguistic viewpoint, euphemisms are both mirrors and constructors of social reality, guiding how people understand, accept, and respond to information. Thus, they remain central to the study of discourse, illustrating the dynamic relationship between language, power, and society in contemporary communication.

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