

# Cognitive Mechanisms Of Economic Euphemisms In English And Uzbek Media

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**Abstract:** Economic euphemisms serve as linguistic tools that mitigate the harshness of unpleasant economic realities and maintain communicative harmony. This paper explores the cognitive mechanisms underlying the creation and use of economic euphemisms in English and Uzbek media discourse. The study identifies metaphorical and metonymic transfers that shape euphemistic expressions such as economic downturn, financial adjustment, or price balance. Through comparative analysis, it reveals how cognitive frames and cultural perceptions influence euphemistic conceptualization, reflecting both linguistic creativity and socio-economic sensitivity.

**Keywords:** Economic euphemisms, cognitive linguistics, metaphor, media discourse, conceptualization, mitigation, linguistic creativity, cross-linguistic analysis.

**Introduction:** In the modern global economy, linguistic strategies play a crucial role in shaping how societies perceive and respond to economic realities. Among these strategies, euphemisms occupy a unique position, allowing speakers to soften unpleasant economic facts such as inflation, unemployment, or financial instability. Economic euphemisms are not merely lexical substitutions; they function as cognitive and cultural instruments that reflect collective attitudes toward sensitive issues. The increasing use of euphemistic language in media discourse demonstrates how language adapts to preserve social harmony and public optimism even during crises.

From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, euphemisms are created through conceptual mechanisms such as metaphor, metonymy, and categorization. These mechanisms allow speakers to reframe negative economic phenomena within more acceptable or less threatening conceptual structures. For instance, the English expression economic downturn substitutes the harsher term recession, while the Uzbek equivalent *iqtisodiy pasayish davri* serves a similar cognitive and communicative purpose. Such examples illustrate that euphemisms are not arbitrary but systematically structured within a shared conceptual framework.

Previous studies by scholars such as Allan and Burridge (1991), Lakoff and Johnson (1980), and Rawson (1981) have explored the general mechanisms of euphemistic meaning and conceptual metaphor. However, little attention has been paid to how these mechanisms operate specifically within the field of economic communication, especially in the Uzbek linguistic context. Uzbek linguists such as Qodirova (2020) and Ismatullayev (2019) have analyzed euphemisms from pragmatic and socio-linguistic perspectives, yet the cognitive dimension remains underexplored. Therefore, a comparative study focusing on English and Uzbek media can reveal important cross-cultural patterns of economic discourse.

The purpose of this research is to identify and analyze the main cognitive mechanisms that contribute to the formation of economic euphemisms in English and Uzbek media. By examining metaphorical and metonymic structures, the study seeks to uncover how speakers of both languages conceptualize economic hardship through creative linguistic expression. The findings are expected to provide insights into the relationship between cognition, culture, and linguistic economy in the representation of socio-economic reality.

## MAIN PART

## Cognitive Mechanisms of Economic Euphemisms

Language reflects human cognition, and euphemisms serve as mental filters through which speakers reinterpret uncomfortable realities. From the standpoint of cognitive linguistics, the formation of euphemisms relies on conceptual mechanisms that allow individuals to restructure negative experiences into cognitively tolerable forms. In the economic domain, this process is particularly visible, as financial crises, unemployment, and poverty are among the most threatening topics in public discourse.

### 1. Metaphor as a Cognitive Tool

Metaphor is one of the most productive sources of euphemistic meaning. According to the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), abstract concepts are often understood through more concrete experiences. Economic realities, therefore, are frequently described through metaphors of health, motion, or nature.

For example, in English media, phrases such as economic recovery, financial health, and market fever conceptualize the economy as a living organism. Instead of saying “the economy is weak,” journalists prefer the economy is showing signs of recovery, which cognitively re-frames a negative condition into a hopeful process. Similarly, inflation is cooling down metaphorically likens the economy to a patient whose temperature has decreased — a comforting image that mitigates fear.

Uzbek media employs similar strategies. Expressions like *iqtisodiyot tiklanmoqda* (“the economy is recovering”) or *bozor muvozanatga kelmoqda* (“the market is stabilizing”) are frequently used instead of direct phrases such as *iqtisodiyot inqirozda* (“the economy is in crisis”). This suggests that the metaphor *ECONOMY IS A LIVING ORGANISM* operates across both languages, providing a universal cognitive framework for softening negative information.

Another powerful metaphor is *ECONOMY IS A JOURNEY*. English expressions such as *on the path to growth*, *economic slowdown*, and *financial crossroads* illustrate movement through space, implying that setbacks are temporary stops rather than failures. The Uzbek equivalents — *rivojlanish yo'lida*, *iqtisodiy sekinlashuv*, *moliyaviy burilish nuqtasi* — perform the same cognitive function, turning crisis into a stage of progress rather than a collapse.

### 2. Metonymy and Conceptual Reduction

Metonymy also plays a crucial role in euphemistic construction. It allows speakers to refer to unpleasant realities indirectly by naming a related concept. In English, for instance, *downsizing* replaces *mass*

*dismissal*, and *restructuring* substitutes *closing departments* or *firing employees*. Such terms conceal the human cost of economic measures behind abstract institutional processes.

In Uzbek, similar metonymic transfers are observed. Instead of saying *xodimlarni ishdan bo'shatish* (“to dismiss workers”), newspapers often write *ish joylarini optimallashtirish* (“to optimize workplaces”) or *kadrlar sonini qisqartirish* (“to reduce staff numbers”). Here, the human-centered concept *personnel* is replaced by the more neutral structure or optimization, which lessens the emotional impact.

These metonymic euphemisms function through the conceptual mechanism *PROCESS FOR CONSEQUENCE* — that is, describing the process rather than the painful result. The same can be seen in English phrases like *cost-cutting measures* instead of *salary reductions*. Both languages show a preference for impersonal, technical vocabulary that maintains institutional authority and hides individual suffering.

### 3. Conceptual Blending and Reframing

Some economic euphemisms result from conceptual blending, where two different mental spaces combine to form a new, softened expression. For example, the English phrase *quantitative easing* blends economic and mechanical imagery to describe the large-scale injection of money into the economy. The phrase sounds neutral, even positive, although it refers to the risky process of increasing money supply.

In Uzbek, expressions such as *moliyaviy qo'llab-quvvatlash dasturi* (“financial support program”) often refer to state interventions during crises. Although these policies may imply large debts or inflation risks, the euphemistic framing presents them as caring, protective actions. Thus, the conceptual blend merges the economic and humanitarian frames to create a positive mental image.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analysis of English and Uzbek media materials reveals that economic euphemisms are deeply embedded in the cognitive structure of both languages. Despite cultural and historical differences, both linguistic communities rely on similar mental mechanisms—metaphor, metonymy, and conceptual blending—to frame economic challenges in a socially acceptable way. However, the nuances of their usage reflect distinct socio-cultural orientations and communicative traditions.

One of the main findings is that both English and Uzbek employ metaphors of health and movement to conceptualize economic stability or decline. English newspapers frequently use phrases such as the

economy is recovering, the market has caught a cold, or the currency is gaining strength. Uzbek equivalents like *iqtisodiyot tiklanmoqda*, *bozor jonlanmoqda*, and *milliy valyuta mustahkamlanmoqda* convey the same conceptual imagery. In both languages, the economy is not treated as a mechanical system but as a living, breathing organism capable of healing, weakening, or growing. This cognitive pattern humanizes abstract economic processes and helps readers emotionally connect to the national economic narrative.

Nevertheless, differences emerge in the degree of directness. English economic journalism, especially in the UK and US press, tends to maintain a balance between euphemism and transparency. Terms like economic slowdown or fiscal adjustment soften the tone but still acknowledge the problem. In contrast, Uzbek media discourse often prefers stronger euphemization, reflecting a cultural tendency toward collective optimism and avoidance of negativity. For instance, instead of stating *narxlar oshmoqda* ("prices are rising"), articles may use *bozor sharoitlari o'zgarib bormoqda* ("market conditions are changing"), which removes the emotional burden from the statement. This strategy aligns with politeness principles in Uzbek communication, where indirectness serves as a sign of respect and social harmony.

Another significant result concerns metonymic abstraction. In both languages, negative human actions or consequences are often replaced with technical or institutional terminology. In English, budget consolidation, workforce reduction, or corporate restructuring conceal the harsh realities of layoffs or austerity measures. Similarly, Uzbek media uses *iqtisodiy samaradorlikni oshirish* ("enhancing efficiency") and *tashkiliy o'zgarishlar* ("organizational changes") instead of *ishdan bo'shatish* ("dismissal"). This reflects a universal cognitive strategy to depersonalize the unpleasant, but in the Uzbek context, it also reinforces an image of government control and care rather than failure.

Conceptual blending also shows interesting parallels. Both languages mix economic terminology with emotional or moral domains to create persuasive euphemisms. The English rescue package combines financial and humanitarian imagery, portraying bailout programs as moral obligations rather than economic tactics. Uzbek expressions such as *xalq farovonligi uchun iqtisodiy islohotlar* ("economic reforms for people's well-being") perform a similar blending, framing state policies as benevolent acts. These examples illustrate that euphemisms are not only cognitive but also ideological tools — they sustain trust and preserve positive public perception.

Finally, the results demonstrate that euphemisms in both languages function as cognitive defense mechanisms against collective anxiety. During economic crises, linguistic reframing serves to maintain national morale and protect social identity. The media thus becomes an active agent in constructing an optimistic cognitive model of reality, where challenges are temporary and the future remains under control. This phenomenon aligns with Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness and Goffman's (1967) concept of face-saving, confirming that euphemism is both a linguistic and social necessity.

## **CONCLUSION**

The present study has demonstrated that economic euphemisms in English and Uzbek media are not random linguistic choices but cognitively motivated phenomena that reflect shared human strategies for managing negative realities. Through the mechanisms of metaphor, metonymy, and conceptual blending, unpleasant economic situations are reframed into socially acceptable, even hopeful narratives. These linguistic processes reveal how people conceptualize the economy not as an abstract system of numbers but as a living, evolving entity shaped by collective experience and emotion.

The comparative analysis has shown both universality and specificity in euphemistic usage. English and Uzbek share similar conceptual patterns — such as viewing the economy as a living organism or a journey — which help to mitigate anxiety and sustain optimism. However, Uzbek media discourse tends to employ euphemisms with a stronger socio-emotional tone, emphasizing stability, unity, and moral legitimacy. This reflects cultural preferences for indirectness, politeness, and face-saving communication strategies.

From a broader perspective, the cognitive approach provides valuable insight into how linguistic framing shapes public understanding of economic issues. Euphemisms serve not only to soften harsh truths but also to maintain social harmony and ideological coherence. Therefore, studying their cognitive mechanisms contributes to both linguistic theory and practical communication, offering a deeper understanding of how language and thought interact in shaping socio-economic perception.

Future research may expand this analysis by incorporating corpus-based data or examining the reception of euphemistic expressions among media audiences, which would further enrich our understanding of cognitive and cultural dimensions of economic discourse.

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