Pragmatic Foundations Of Euphemisms In German And Uzbek

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Abstract: This article provides a comparative and typological analysis of the pragmatic foundations of euphemisms in the German and Uzbek languages. The study examines the role of euphemisms as communicative strategies, their dependence on socio-cultural context, their functional load in realizing communicative intentions, and their close relationship with politically correct lexis. Processes of institutional and discursive euphemization in German are compared with traditionally, culturally, and ethically motivated euphemisms in Uzbek. The findings demonstrate that euphemisms constitute not merely a semantic phenomenon but a complex pragmatic mechanism.

Keywords: Euphemism, pragmatics, politically correct language, speech strategy, social discourse, German language, Uzbek language.

Introduction: In modern linguistics, euphemisms are interpreted not merely as lexical means replacing taboo expressions, but also as pragmatic mechanisms that regulate social relations. In the process of communication, the speaker does not only convey information, but also maintains a certain social distance from the listener, reduces the potential for conflict, and adapts speech to ethical and cultural norms. From this perspective, euphemisms constitute one of the central objects of pragmatic analysis.

The formation and use of euphemisms in German and Uzbek are determined by different historical, cultural, and ideological factors. In German, the process of euphemization is often associated with institutional discourse (politics, medicine, bureaucracy, and mass media), whereas in Uzbek it has developed primarily on the basis of moral and ethical norms, religious beliefs, and rules of communicative etiquette.

Euphemism and Pragmatics: Theoretical Approaches

From a pragmatic perspective, a euphemism functions as a speech strategy, that is, a consciously chosen linguistic means employed by the speaker to achieve a specific communicative goal. According to L. P. Krysin, euphemisms represent "the lexical layer most sensitive to changes in the culture of human relations," which allows them to be regarded not as static units, but as dynamic, context-dependent elements. Pragmatically, the formation and use of euphemisms are shaped by several factors, including the social distance between the speaker and the listener, the communicative register (formal or informal), the speech situation, the ideological and cultural background, and prevailing social taboos and stereotypes.

Pragmatic Functions of Euphemisms

Euphemisms, which are central to this study, represent a linguistic phenomenon analyzed within the framework of pragmatics. Pragmatics, closely related to semiotics and linguistics, is concerned with the functional use of language signs in real communicative situations, that is, their activity within the process of communication. Investigating euphemisms from a pragmatic perspective—as devices that indirectly and attenuatedly express socially sensitive, negative, or uncomfortable realities—allows for a comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon, since euphemization is inherently not only a lexical-semantic

process but also a pragmatic one closely tied to communicative intention, social context, and speech strategies.

Masking, softening, and concealing reality. Euphemisms play a crucial role in conflict-laden communicative situations. For instance, in both Uzbek and German political discourse, the topic of war is rarely expressed openly. The aim of political and military language is often to conceal or mask the reality of events. In Uzbek, phrases such as qurolli mojaro ("armed conflict") or qurolli to'qnashuv ("armed clash") replace the word urush ("war"), while in German, terms such as die Grenzverletzung ("border violation") or die Operation ("operation") substitute for Krieg ("war"), and neutralisieren replaces töten ("to kill"). Similarly, terms like maxsus operatsiya ("special operation"), chegara zo'ravonliklari ("border violence"), aholini ko'chirish siyosati ("population relocation policy"), and demografik muvozanatni tiklash ("restoring demographic balance") are employed instead of terms like genocide.

Adaptation to moral and religious norms. Euphemisms shaped under religious worldviews often arise from the need to avoid openly mentioning the names of God, Satan, or supernatural forces. In Uzbek, Yaratuvchi ("Creator"), Parvardigor ("Sustainer"), Rabbim ("My Lord"), and Yaratgan egam serve as morally acceptable euphemistic alternatives for referring to God. In German, similar functions are performed by der Schöpfer ("Creator"), der Allmächtige ("Almighty"), der Herr ("Lord"), and der Weise ("the Wise"). The figure of Satan, associated with fear and evil, is also represented euphemistically: in Uzbek as Iblis, u (ana u), or vasvasachi; in German as der Versucher, der Böse, or der Leibhaftige. Likewise, references to death are often expressed euphemistically for ethical and religious reasons. In Uzbek, terms such as vafot etdi ("passed away"), olamdan o'tdi ("departed the world"), oxiratga ketdi ("went to the hereafter"), and jon berdi ("gave up life") are used, while in German, einschlafen ("to fall asleep"), von uns gehen ("to leave us"), and ins Jenseits gehen ("to go to the beyond") substitute for sterben ("to die").

Political correctness and euphemism. The concept of politically correct language has led to a new stage of euphemism in contemporary German. For example, Behinderte ("disabled persons") is replaced by Menschen mit Behinderung ("persons with disabilities"), and Ausländer ("foreigners") by Menschen mit Migrationshintergrund ("people with a migration background") to reduce social discrimination. In Uzbek, politically correct language has not yet reached a fully formalized normative stage, yet euphemisms such as imkoniyati cheklangan shaxs ("person with limited abilities") instead of nogiron ("disabled") and kam ta'minlangan ("low-income") instead of kambag'al ("poor") are gradually entering common usage.

Social discourse and euphemisms. In social discourse, euphemisms serve as a means to express socially sensitive, negative, or potentially stigmatizing concepts in a softer, neutral, or positive way. This is vividly illustrated in Reinhard Schlütern's "Das Schaf im Wortpelz: Lexikon der hinterhältigen Beschönigungen", which systematizes euphemisms in contemporary German according to their function in reducing social conflict, mitigating communicative tension, and preserving ethical and political sensitivity. For instance, in daily and formal speech, arbeitslos ("unemployed") is replaced by arbeitssuchend ("job-seeking"); in bureaucratic discourse, Entlassung ("dismissal") by Freisetzung ("release"); in social policy, Arme ("the poor") by sozial Schwache ("socially vulnerable"); in migration discourse, illegale Einwanderer ("illegal immigrants") by Menschen ohne Aufenthaltsstatus ("people without legal status"); in medical discourse, Krebs ("cancer") by schwere Erkrankung ("serious illness"); and in military-political discourse, töten ("to kill") by neutralisieren ("neutralize"). These examples demonstrate that euphemisms are an integral part of social lexis, fulfilling functions of softening judgment and maintaining social balance.

The study concludes that euphemisms in both German and Uzbek are multilayered and functionally complex pragmatic phenomena. Beyond concealing negative meanings, they serve to preserve social equilibrium, uphold communicative etiquette, and exert ideological influence. While German euphemisms are primarily tied to institutional and political discourse, Uzbek euphemisms are closely linked to ethical, cultural, and religious values.

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