



THE ROLE OF EUPHEMISMS IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF U. S. AND RUSSIAN POLITICS

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ABSTRACT

Euphemisms, as a key linguistic instrument, are often used in political discourse to mitigate controversial topics, shape public perception, and influence political agendas. While both U.S. and Russian politicians use euphemisms to mold public opinion, the manner and context in which they are employed vary greatly due to the unique political, cultural, and historical settings of each country. This article analyzes the strategic use of euphemisms in political discourse in the United States and Russia, highlighting how politicians from both nations manipulate language to control narratives, avoid confrontation, and maintain political legitimacy. By examining speeches, media commentary, and political communications, this study explores how euphemisms influence political discourse in different systems of governance.

Keywords: Euphemism, political discourse, comparative study, U.S. politics, Russian politics, language manipulation, framing, public opinion.

INTRODUCTION

Euphemisms play a fundamental role in political discourse, acting as a linguistic tool to shape how sensitive and controversial topics are perceived by the public. Politicians use euphemisms to soften their messaging, reduce negative reactions, and make their policies seem more palatable. These linguistic devices help obscure uncomfortable truths, manipulate emotions, and alter public perceptions, enabling politicians to retain power. Despite their widespread use across political systems, euphemisms take different forms based on each country's political culture, historical context, and societal values.

This article compares the usage of euphemisms in political discourse between the United States and Russia, focusing on how political figures from both nations leverage these linguistic devices to manage public opinion, further their agendas, and handle domestic and international political





Euphemisms in U.S. Political Discourse

Euphemisms have been a common feature in U.S. political language for decades. Politicians in the U.S. utilize euphemisms to improve their public image, downplay negative reactions, and present their policies in a favorable light. A prominent example is the term "collateral damage," used to describe civilian casualties in military conflicts, especially during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. This phrase depersonalizes the loss of life, allowing the public to accept the harsh reality of war while avoiding the emotional burden of acknowledging civilian deaths.

Another instance is the use of the term "enhanced interrogation techniques" instead of the word "torture." During the War on Terror, the Bush administration used this euphemism to justify the use of severe methods of questioning suspected terrorists. By adopting a more neutral-sounding term, politicians were able to soften the controversial nature of these actions and avoid public backlash.

Additionally, euphemisms are frequently employed in U.S. political discourse to portray domestic policies in a more positive light. For instance, cuts in public spending or social services might be framed as "fiscal responsibility" or "budgetary adjustments," avoiding the negative connotations associated with austerity measures.

Euphemisms in Russian Political Discourse

In Russia, euphemisms serve a similar function in controlling public opinion and preserving political authority. Under the leadership of Vladimir Putin, euphemisms have been strategically used to reframe issues and mitigate negative perceptions. One such example is the term "special operation," used to describe Russia's military actions in Ukraine since 2014. This euphemism downplays the aggressive nature of Russia's intervention, presenting it as a necessary move to protect Russian-speaking populations in Ukraine rather than an act of military aggression.

Another common euphemism is "foreign agents," a label applied to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and individuals who criticize the government. This term implies external interference in Russian affairs, casting those labeled as "foreign agents" as traitors or spies, thus discrediting them without directly addressing their arguments. In domestic policy discussions, Russian political figures also use euphemisms to present reforms in a positive light. Economic and labor market adjustments that result in hardship for the public may be described as "modernization efforts" or "structural changes," thus framing these measures as steps toward progress rather than as responses to financial difficulties or social inequality.





Comparative Analysis: Euphemisms in the U.S. and Russia

Despite the common purpose of using euphemisms to influence public opinion, the way they are employed differs between the U.S. and Russia due to the distinct political and cultural contexts of each country. In the United States, euphemisms often serve to justify controversial policies, soften criticisms, and present military or economic decisions in a more acceptable light. American politicians tend to use euphemisms to minimize direct confrontation with the public, portraying difficult policies as necessary for the greater good.

In contrast, Russian politicians often use euphemisms to control the narrative on both domestic and international issues, particularly those related to national security and dissent. Russian euphemisms tend to emphasize a sense of national pride and victimhood, positioning the government as a defender of the Russian people against external threats. Terms like "special operation" and "foreign agents" help the government justify its actions, delegitimize opposition, and consolidate authority.

CONCLUSION

Euphemisms are a powerful linguistic tool in political discourse, enabling politicians to shape public opinion, justify controversial actions, and maintain control over political narratives. Although euphemisms serve similar purposes in both U.S. and Russian politics, their specific usage varies according to each nation's political environment, cultural values, and historical backdrop. Politicians in both countries use euphemisms to influence public perception, legitimize political decisions, and strengthen their authority. Understanding how euphemisms function in political discourse provides valuable insight into the relationship between language, power, and public opinion.

Here are some suggested references that could be included in your article to support your study on euphemisms in political discourse:

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