A SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL EUPHEMISMS IN "THE KITE RUNNER" BY KHALED HUSSEIN

Usmonova Zarina Habibovna
Senior teacher of Enlish Linguistics Department
Email: z.h.usmonova@buxdu.uz
Qudratova Kamola
1st year student of Master degree

Abstract. *This study examines the function and meaning of political euphemisms within Khaled Hosseini's novel, "The Kite Runner". By applying a semantic framework, the research explores how language is used to mask the harsh realities of war, ethnic conflict, and shifting political regimes in Afghanistan. The analysis focuses on identifying specific instances where euphemistic expressions replace blunt or taboo terms to shape public perception and justify systemic violence. The investigation reveals that euphemisms in the text serve as more than simple linguistic substitutions; they function as tools of ideological control used by various factions, including the Taliban. By analyzing the relationship between the signifier and the signified, the paper demonstrates how these terms create a distance between the perpetrator and the act, thereby normalizing oppression. Findings suggest that political language in the novel reflects the broader instability of the Afghan state, where the manipulation of meaning becomes a survival strategy. Ultimately, the study highlights the power of naming and misnaming in the construction of historical and political narratives.*

Keywords: *Political euphemisms, semantic analysis, The Kite Runner, Khaled Hosseini, linguistic manipulation, Afghan literature, ideological discourse, power dynamics, language and conflict, narrative strategy.*

Introduction. The relationship between language and politics is often observed in literature, especially when writers describe societies undergoing deep trauma. In the novel "The Kite Runner" by Khaled Hosseini, this connection is explored through the eyes of characters living in a changing Afghanistan. It is noticed that during times of war and political shifts, words are often used to hide painful truths rather than explain them. These linguistic choices, known as euphemisms, are employed to make disturbing events seem more acceptable to the public.

In many novels, ethnic conflicts are described not just through physical violence, but through the way different groups are named or ignored. In this story, the long history of tension between the Pashtun and Hazara communities is presented through specific labels. It is shown that the dominant groups often use language to make the minority

appear less human. When ethnic cleansing or systematic exclusion occurs, it is frequently renamed as "cleansing" or "taking out the garbage" to remove the moral weight from the act. By using a semantic analysis, the way these words function in the text can be better understood. It is argued that euphemisms are not just polite alternatives; they are powerful tools used to control the narrative of a nation. In the following sections, the specific political terms used by regimes like the Taliban are analyzed. It is through this study that the gap between official political language and the actual human suffering of the characters is revealed.

Main part. In the pages of "The Kite Runner", the shift in political power is often marked by a shift in how life and death are described. It is observed that when the Taliban takes control of Kabul, the language used to describe their actions becomes cold and detached. For example, the massacre of the Hazara people in Mazar-i-Sharif is not called a war crime by those in power. Instead, it is described as a necessary act of "cleansing". As Assef explains in the novel, "Afghanistan is like a beautiful mansion littered with garbage, and someone has to take out the garbage" (p. 284). By looking at this from a semantic perspective, it is clear that the word "garbage" is used as a substitute for human beings. This choice of words is meant to strip the victims of their humanity. When people are talked about as if they are inanimate objects or waste, the guilt of harming them is removed. In this way, the political euphemism serves to justify ethnic violence.

The conflict between the Pashtun and Hazara ethnic groups is also hidden behind terms related to tradition and social order. Early in the book, the discrimination against Hassan is framed through the idea of "heritage" or "history". It is mentioned that "the history books are glossed over" (p. 9), and the schoolbooks hardly mention the Hazara people except as outsiders. This silence is its own kind of euphemism; by not naming a group, their right to exist in the national story is erased.

Another significant instance is found when the Taliban describes their public executions. These acts of violence are often presented as "acts of God" or "divine justice". During the scene at the stadium, it is declared that "Every sinner must be punished" (p. 270). By using religious language to label political murder, the regime makes it difficult for anyone to argue against them. The word "punishment" replaces the word "murder", which changes the way the audience is expected to feel about the event. Through these examples, it is seen that euphemisms in the novel are used to:

– make ethnic violence seem like a cleaning process;
– present political murder as religious duty;
– ignore the history of minority groups by leaving them out of official records.
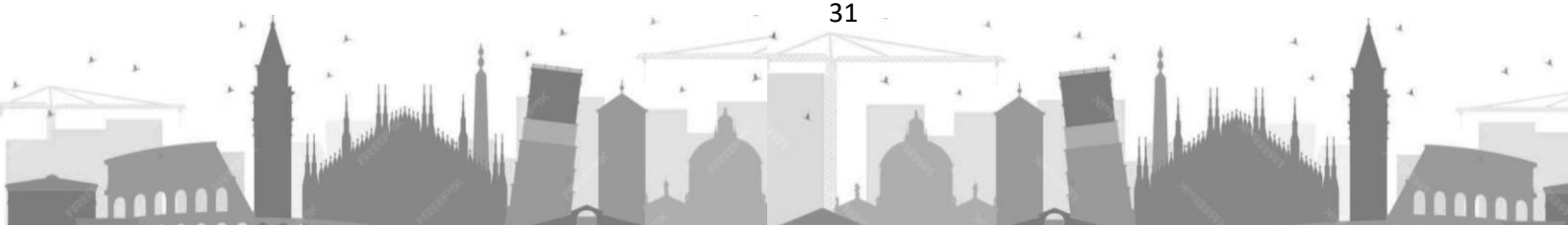
By analyzing these extracts, it is understood that the characters live in a world where the truth is constantly buried under soft words. The tragedy of the story is not just in the actions themselves, but in the way language is used to pretend those actions are right.

Conclusion. The study of political euphemisms in "The Kite Runner" shows how language is used to hide the reality of suffering. It is concluded that through the use of soft words, the most violent acts are made to seem necessary or even moral. By replacing human beings with metaphors like "garbage", the characters in power are able to carry out ethnic persecution without the burden of guilt. This semantic shift allows for a world where "cleansing" replaces "murder" and "divine justice" replaces "political execution". It is also observed that these linguistic tools do more than just hide the truth; they shape the way a society remembers its history. The exclusion of Hazara identity from official records and the renaming of violence serve to silence those who are oppressed. Through this analysis, it is made clear that the struggle in Afghanistan is not only a physical war but also a war over the meaning of words. Ultimately, the novel suggests that honesty in language is the first step toward true healing and justice.

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