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EUPHEMISM AND POLITICAL CORRECTNESS IN GERMAN AND UZBEK

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Abstract. *This article presents a comparative analysis of euphemism and political correctness in the German and Uzbek languages. Based on the theoretical approaches of Allan and Burridge as well as Reinhard Schlüter, the study explores the pragmatic functions of euphemisms in reducing stigmatization, maintaining communicative harmony, and softening social evaluation. The analysis demonstrates that in German, political correctness has evolved into an institutionalized and norm-governed principle of public discourse, whereas in Uzbek it does not operate as an independent normative framework but rather manifests itself through euphemistic expressions rooted in cultural and moral conventions. The findings highlight language-specific strategies of inclusive and socially sensitive communication and contribute to contrastive research in pragmatics and discourse analysis.*

Keywords: *euphemism, political correctness, stigmatization, inclusive language, pragmatics, discourse analysis, social discourse, manipulative language, German language, Uzbek language, contrastive linguistics, speech culture, social equality.*

In contemporary linguistics, euphemism and political correctness are regarded as significant linguistic phenomena that reflect the social functions of language. With the increasing emphasis on the principles of social equality, inclusiveness, and non-discrimination, there is a growing need to avoid stigmatizing, derogatory, or socially sensitive expressions in discourse. In this context, euphemism emerges as a primary linguistic mechanism of political correctness. An analysis based on data from the German and Uzbek languages demonstrates how this phenomenon is shaped within different cultural and pragmatic frameworks.

Allan and Burridge interpret euphemism as a “face-saving strategy that reduces social risk” in the process of communication. According to them, euphemisms serve to maintain social balance between interlocutors, mitigate conflict, and ensure communicative comfort. This theoretical approach is directly linked to political correctness and provides a basis for the normative status of euphemisms, particularly in Western languages.

The term “political correctness” (abbreviated as “PC”) was introduced to Germany in 1991 from the USA, specifically into the feuilleton sections of the German press. In German, political correctness has developed as a clearly institutionalized and discursive principle. This is especially evident in domains such as disability, migration, the labor market, and political discourse. Today, it has become a real buzzword for denoting behavior that conforms to norms, especially in terms of language use. Hilfsschulen





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(auxiliary schools) are referred to as Sonderschulen (special schools) from a PC perspective; Verbrecher (criminals) are Straftäter (persons who have committed a crime); Gefängniswärter (prison guards) are Vollzugsbeamte (correctional officers); Gummiknüppel (rubber batons) are Rettungsmehrzweckstöcke (multi-purpose safety batons); and Müllmänner (garbage collectors) are Entsorger (waste management personnel). Moreover, the use of expressions such as Menschen mit Behinderung instead of Behinderte (“the disabled”), and Menschen mit Migrationshintergrund instead of Ausländer (“foreigners”), reflects an inclusive, person-first approach. Schlüter characterizes such expressions in German political and social discourse as “ideological euphemisms,” emphasizing that they serve to present real social problems in a softened and, at times, manipulative manner. In German official and corporate discourse, euphemisms related to dismissal are also widespread. Instead of Kündigung or Entlassung (“dismissal” or “termination”), expressions such as Personalabbau (“staff reduction”), Stellenabbau (“position reduction”), and betriebliche Umstrukturierung (“corporate restructuring”) are commonly used. These euphemisms serve to mitigate the social impact of economic processes and to present the employer’s responsibility in a softer, less confrontational manner.

In Uzbek, however, political correctness has not developed as an independent, normative principle comparable to that in Western languages. Nevertheless, this does not imply that Uzbek lacks the avoidance of stigmatizing expressions or the principles of inclusive language. On the contrary, the functions of political correctness in Uzbek are primarily realized through euphemisms, guided by national mentality, moral norms, and conventions of speech etiquette.

For example, the use of expressions such as nogironligi bor shaxs (a person with a disability) instead of nogiron (disabled), kam ta’minlangan (economically disadvantaged) instead of kambag‘al (poor), lavozimidan ozod etildi (released from a position) instead of ishdan bo‘shatildi (was dismissed), and vaqtincha band bo‘lmagan (temporarily unemployed) instead of ishsiz (jobless) serves to mitigate overt stigmatization. These euphemisms are not driven by legal or political requirements but rely on principles of etiquette, respect, and compromise.

In this regard, euphemisms in Uzbek can be seen as a national-cultural model of the “face-saving strategy” described by Allan and Burrige. While political correctness in German is largely regulated by institutional norms, in Uzbek it is implemented indirectly and pragmatically within the framework of traditional speech culture.

In conclusion, although the relationship between euphemism and political correctness differs in German and Uzbek, the unifying feature is the function of euphemism as a means of ensuring social compromise. In German, political correctness manifests as a clear principle and discursive norm, whereas in Uzbek it is not expressed as a separate term or principle but through euphemistic language. Therefore, interpreting Uzbek





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euphemisms as a national-pragmatic model of political correctness is academically justified.

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