EUPHEMISMS IN UZBEK INSTITUTIONAL DISCOURSE: BALANCING LINGUISTIC POLITENESS AND COMMUNICATIVE TRANSPARENCY

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Abstract. This article investigates the pragmatic functions of euphemistic expressions in Uzbek institutional discourse, concentrating on the relationship between linguistic politeness and communicative transparency. Administrative, educational, medical, and public-safety interactions are compared through contextual analysis of illustrative utterances. The study distinguishes ethically motivated mitigation from expressions that obscure agency, weaken factual precision, or conceal the consequences of institutional decisions. It identifies semantic adequacy, interpersonal appropriateness, and institutional transparency as interrelated criteria for evaluating indirect formulations. The findings suggest that effective professional communication requires both sensitivity to the recipient and explicit presentation of consequential information. The article also considers implications for teaching professional Uzbek and developing context-sensitive pragmatic competence.

Keywords: euphemism, Uzbek language, institutional discourse, pragmatics, linguistic politeness, transparency, professional communication, indirect expression, semantic precision.

Introduction

The development of Uzbek as a language of education, public administration, and professional interaction requires attention to the ways linguistic choices shape understanding and social relations. Institutional communication differs from everyday conversation because official messages often affect rights, obligations, professional evaluations, and public behavior. A seemingly minor change in wording can modify

how recipients evaluate responsibility, urgency, or the consequences of a decision. Euphemistic expressions are especially relevant in this setting: they may reduce unnecessary emotional discomfort, but they can also make significant information difficult to identify. For this reason, their pragmatic value cannot be established by politeness alone.

Theoretical foundations and methodology

K.Allan and K.Burridge describe euphemism and related linguistic choices as socially conditioned forms whose appropriateness depends on context, audience, and communicative expectations [1]. This approach is useful because a replacement expression is not automatically softer, more ethical, or more accurate in all circumstances. P.Brown and S.C.Levinson explain politeness in relation to the protection of participants' socially recognized self-image, providing a framework for studying criticism, refusal, and unfavorable announcements [2]. Yet institutional discourse requires an additional evaluative dimension: communication can be tactful while still withholding information that recipients need for appropriate action.

The investigation combines descriptive, contrastive, and contextual-pragmatic procedures. Illustrative Uzbek utterances were constructed to isolate functional differences between direct and indirect formulations. Each pair is interpreted according to propositional content, identification of the responsible agent, degree of certainty, projected emotional effect, and consequences for the addressee. Because the examples have not been sampled from an annotated corpus, the study does not infer population-wide patterns or frequency distributions. Its findings are analytical hypotheses and practical criteria that require testing against authentic institutional material in subsequent research.

Euphemism and administrative responsibility

Administrative language must deliver messages that are both institutionally valid and comprehensible. Consider the contrast between "Xodimlar soni qisqartiriladi"

(The number of employees will be reduced) and “Tashkiliy o‘zgarishlar amalga oshiriladi” (Organizational changes will be implemented). The latter expression can describe restructuring accurately when the final consequences are unknown. When it is used in place of a definite announcement of staff reductions, however, it suppresses information relevant to those affected. The pragmatic effect depends not on the vocabulary alone but on the relation between the statement and the factual state of affairs.

A second contrast involves the visibility of agency. “Rahbariyat qaror qabul qildi” (The management made the decision) explicitly identifies an institutional actor, while “Tegishli qaror qabul qilindi” (An appropriate decision was made) removes the decision-maker from the grammatical foreground. Passive and impersonal constructions are normal resources in formal Uzbek, and not every use is evasive. Yet their strategic deployment may shift attention from institutional responsibility toward an apparently self-executing process. Euphemistic effect can consequently emerge at the syntactic level through agent suppression rather than through replacement of a single undesirable word.

Educational discourse and constructive evaluation

Educational institutions provide a different configuration of professional authority and personal vulnerability. Feedback commonly involves a teacher evaluating a student whose academic standing or confidence may be affected by the formulation. Compare “Talaba topshiriqni bajarmadi” (The student did not complete the assignment) with “Topshiriq to‘liq yakunlanmagan” (The assignment has not been fully completed). The second expression directs attention toward the state of the work rather than toward the person. Its potential benefit lies in reducing accusatory force while leaving the incomplete task open to correction.

A context-sensitive formulation might read: “Asosiy tushuncha to‘g‘ri berilgan, ammo ikki dalil yetishmaydi; ularni qo‘shib qayta topshiring” (The main concept is

correct, but two pieces of evidence are missing; add them and resubmit). This is not simply a substitute for a harsher evaluation; it reorganizes the message by acknowledging achievement, specifying a deficiency, and establishing an action. The example shows that professional tact is not necessarily achieved through concealment. It may instead result from careful distribution of criticism, recognition, and procedural guidance within a single utterance.

Healthcare and public-safety communication

Medical interactions reveal the limits of purely stylistic mitigation because recipients may need precise information for consequential decisions. The statements "Bemorning ahvoli og'ir" (The patient's condition is serious) and "Bemorning ahvoli barqaror emas" (The patient's condition is unstable) cannot be regarded as full semantic equivalents: severity and stability refer to different clinical dimensions. Replacing the former with the latter may therefore alter the content rather than merely soften its impact. Healthcare communication should combine sensitivity to distress with explanations that preserve relevant distinctions, particularly when patients or relatives need to understand the significance of a diagnosis or intervention.

Public-safety discourse places an even greater burden on transparency because messages may guide immediate collective behavior. If a location presents a specific danger, "Hududda xavf mavjud" (There is a danger in the area) communicates the relevant condition more clearly than "Hududda muayyan noqulayliklar kuzatilmoqda" (Certain inconveniences are being observed in the area). The latter may be suitable for minor disruptions, but it underrepresents an actual threat. In risk communication, the emotional discomfort associated with an explicit warning can be justified by the recipient's need to understand seriousness and respond appropriately.

A reliable institutional warning should preserve the nature of the event, affected location, required conduct, and level of urgency. A tactful tone can accompany explicit instructions, but it must not replace them. The direct expression of a hazard is not a

violation of communicative ethics merely because it is unpleasant. On the contrary, understatement in the presence of genuine danger may conflict with the institution's communicative responsibility. Thus, the threshold for permissible euphemistic reduction varies across professional contexts according to the likely consequences of misunderstanding.

Discussion: a functional model for evaluating indirect expression

The examined examples suggest three interdependent criteria for pragmatic evaluation. Semantic adequacy concerns the preservation of essential factual content, including the difference between related but nonidentical states. Interpersonal appropriateness concerns the degree to which an expression respects the recipient's vulnerability, status, and expectations. Institutional transparency concerns whether the utterance makes important consequences, agency, and required actions intelligible. Each criterion constrains the others: maximum directness can cause avoidable interpersonal harm, while maximum mitigation may deprive the audience of necessary information.

These distinctions have implications for professional Uzbek-language instruction. Students can compare direct, mitigated, and misleading versions of an identical institutional notice, then explain where the propositional content changes. Further tasks may require rewriting an unnecessarily harsh message without omitting relevant responsibility or deadlines. Assessment should prioritize the ability to justify linguistic choices according to institutional setting and communicative outcome, rather than simply rewarding the greatest number of polite expressions. Such exercises integrate pragmatic interpretation with semantic discrimination and professional ethics.

Conclusion

Euphemism in Uzbek institutional discourse is a context-dependent communicative resource rather than an intrinsically positive form of linguistic refinement. Administrative, educational, healthcare, and public-safety examples show

that indirect formulations can reduce interpersonal tension, distribute criticism constructively, and acknowledge uncertainty; the same resources can obscure agency, minimize consequences, or compromise semantic precision when they are used without regard to communicative responsibility. The principal distinction is therefore not between polite and impolite vocabulary but between contextually justified mitigation and information that has been unnecessarily withheld or changed.

The proposed criteria of semantic adequacy, interpersonal appropriateness, and institutional transparency provide a basis for evaluating such expressions without assuming that directness and respect are incompatible. Their application can contribute to professional language education and to clearer Uzbek institutional texts. Subsequent research should test the framework using authentic documents, carefully described sampling procedures, and independent pragmatic annotation, thereby establishing the extent to which particular strategies recur across professional domains.

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