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A COMPARATIVE PRAGMALINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF ECONOMIC EUPHEMISMS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK FINANCIAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract. This study investigates the structural, functional, and pragmalinguistic characteristics of economic euphemisms within English and Uzbek financial discourse. In contemporary economic communication, euphemisms serve not merely as stylistic embellishments but as potent cognitive and pragmatic instruments designed to mitigate negative economic realities, manage public perception, and maintain institutional reputation ("face-saving"). Employing a contrastive-typological and pragmatic approach, this paper analyzes economic euphemisms collected from authoritative financial publications and institutional reports in both languages between 2020 and 2026. The theoretical framework integrates Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory with Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to decode the underlying manipulative and defensive mechanisms of economic softening. The findings reveal that while English economic discourse relies heavily on abstract, metaphor-driven lexical substitutions to desensitize market volatility, Uzbek financial discourse predominantly utilizes descriptive, socio-politically oriented periphrases aimed at ensuring societal stability perception. The study contributes to cross-cultural pragmatics and provides a methodological framework for translating socio-economically sensitive discourse.

Keywords: Economic euphemisms, pragmalinguistics, financial discourse, contrastive analysis, politeness theory, critical discourse analysis, English, Uzbek.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Language and economy exist in a state of dynamic codependency, wherein economic shifts continuously reshape linguistic structures, and linguistic choices actively construct financial realities. Within this paradigm, financial discourse is rarely neutral; it is fundamentally persuasive, strategic, and ideologically driven. Among the various linguistic mechanisms employed to navigate the sensitive terrain of market fluctuations, fiscal crises, and corporate restructurings, euphemisms occupy a central position. According to the seminal framework established by Allan and Burridge (1991, 2006), euphemisms function as linguistic shields against the psychological, social, or political discomfort associated with taboo or inherently negative topics. In the context of economic discourse, the "taboo" shifts from traditional domains (such as death or bodily functions) to fiscal failures, inflation, unemployment, and institutional deficits.

In the 21st century, particularly accentuated by global post-pandemic recoveries and subsequent geopolitical shifts affecting macroeconomic stability up to 2026, economic euphemisms have evolved into specialized linguistic instruments. Terms such as "negative growth" (recession), "rightsizing" or "workforce optimization" (mass layoffs), and "price adjustment" (inflation) demonstrate how language is systematically engineered to soften the impact of harsh economic indicators.

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1.2. Problem Statement (The Knowledge Gap)

While the pragmatic and cognitive dimensions of economic euphemisms have been extensively documented in Western linguistic literature, specifically within Anglo-American corporate discourse (e.g., Linfoot-Ham, 2005; Resche, 2015), comparative research involving non-Germanic and developing economic contexts remains markedly sparse. Specifically, the cross-linguistic and cross-cultural manifestation of economic euphemisms between English—as the global lingua franca of capitalism—and Uzbek—a language navigating rapid socioeconomic modernization and market liberalization—has not yet been systematically explored through a pragmalinguistic lens.

Existing Uzbek linguistic scholarship has traditionally treated euphemisms through the prism of general lexicology, literary stylistics, or cultural decorum (andoza, istixora), emphasizing everyday social etiquette (e.g., Ismatullayev, 1980). However, the specific functioning of euphemisms within modern Uzbek institutional, financial, and media discourse remains under-theorized. There is an analytical gap regarding how the Uzbek language adapts its inner semantic resources to translate or generate functional equivalents for globalized economic euphemisms, and how cultural specificities influence the pragmatic choices of Uzbek financial actors compared to their Western counterparts.

1.3. Research Questions and Objectives

To address this academic gap, this study formulates the following research questions:

- What are the primary structural-semantic types of economic euphemisms utilized in English and Uzbek financial discourse?
- How do the pragmatic functions of these euphemisms align with or diverge from the principles of Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) and institutional obfuscation across both linguistic cultures?
- To what extent do macro-structural socio-economic contexts influence the conceptualization of financial softening in English and Uzbek texts?

Accordingly, the primary objective of this paper is to conduct a systematic, contrastive pragmalinguistic analysis of economic euphemisms in English and Uzbek, mapping their functional-semantic taxonomy and identifying the socio-cultural variables that dictate their deployment in financial communication.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Classical and Contemporary Frameworks of Euphemism Theory

The conceptualization of euphemisms has shifted from a narrow, purely stylistic paradigm into an expansive cognitive and pragmatic domain. Classical philology traditionally defined euphemisms as structural aesthetic variations used to circumvent linguistic taboos, primarily rooted in religious, superstitious, or visceral domains (Paul, 1920; Meillet, 1906). However, modern pragmalinguistics repositioned the phenomenon as a strategic communicative tool.

The foundational framework established by Allan and Burridge (1991, 2006) defines a euphemism as an alternative to a dispreferred expression, utilized to avoid projecting a negative face value onto the interlocutor or the speaker themselves. They introduced the concept of "linguistic remodeling," arguing that euphemisms act as a social shield. Crucially, in institutional and economic spheres, the traditional "taboo" is replaced by institutional failure, financial deficit, and market volatility. While Allan and Burridge emphasize the face-saving nature of these figures, Warren (1992) adds a structural-semantic layer, identifying specific linguistic models of euphemism generation, such as overstatement, understatement, and implication. In economic contexts, as Resche (2015) notes,

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these models are weaponized to engineer corporate narratives, shifting the semantic burden from concrete material harm to abstract procedural necessity.

2.2. Pragmalinguistics and the Economics of Discourse

To decode why economic actors consistently resort to obfuscation, researchers heavily rely on Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory. Economic downturns, mass layoffs, and fiscal austerity measures inherently constitute Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs). Institutional speakers (central banks, corporate executives, politicians) use economic euphemisms as a form of positive or negative politeness strategy to mitigate these FTAs, protecting the "public face" of the institution and minimizing public anxiety.

However, critical linguists argue that applying pure politeness theory to economic discourse sanitizes its deceptive potential. Fairclough's (1992, 2013) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework posits that language is a form of social practice deeply embedded in power relations. Within CDA, economic euphemisms are analyzed as ideological tools utilized by the dominant socio-economic class to manufacture consent and naturalize economic hardship. As Chilton (2004) points out in his political-linguistic matrices, the strategic functions of such discourse include coercion, resistance, and legitimization/deligitimization. In financial discourse, legitimization is achieved by replacing morally or socio-economically damaging terms with technocratic, pseudo-scientific jargon. For instance, replacing the word "debt" with "leveraged exposure" shifts the perception from a financial liability to a strategic administrative calculation.

2.3. Euphemism and Discourse Analysis in Uzbek linguistics

The study of euphemisms within the Uzbek linguistic tradition has evolved through distinct socio-ideological and methodological phases. Initially, early Soviet-era Uzbek lexicology approached euphemisms primarily through the lens of cultural decorum, folklore, and ethno-stylistics. The foundational monograph by Ismatullayev (1980), "O'zbek tilida evfemizmlar", established the lexicological basis for the discipline.

Ismatullayev categorized euphemisms as manifestations of istixora (linguistic modesty) and andoza (tactfulness), focusing heavily on domestic, physiological, and traditional social interactions.

In post-independence Uzbek linguistics, the focus expanded significantly due to the emergence of national pragmalinguistic and sotsiolingvistik schools, influenced heavily by the theoretical models of A. O'rinboyev and E. Begmatov. O'rinboyev's pioneering research into colloquial Uzbek discourse and speech etiquette shifted the analytical focus from static dictionary units to dynamic speech acts. More recently, the modernization of Uzbek financial, legal, and media discourse has triggered contemporary dissertations exploring institutional communication (e.g., Omanturdiyev, 2006). Modern Uzbek scholars have begun investigating "lingvo-madaniy" profiles of speech, noting that the Uzbek public sphere traditionally prioritizes collective social harmony over individualistic transactional clarity. However, a critical gap persists: while Western scholarship has extensively mapped the intersection of capitalism and corporate jargon, Uzbek linguistics has yet to establish a comprehensive taxonomy for economic euphemisms (iqtisodiy evfemizmlar), frequently classifying financial euphemisms under the generic umbrella of professional lexicon or journalistic style.

2.4. Synthesis and the Comparative Gap

When contrasting the two traditions, a sharp divergence appears. English economic discourse operates within a highly institutionalized, market-driven capitalist paradigm in which euphemisms are highly abstracted, lexicalized, and legally cushioned. Conversely, Uzbek economic discourse is characterized by a transitional lexical state; it simultaneously borrows Anglo-American technocratic loan-words and generates native descriptive periphrases that rely on contextual socio-political

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buffering to maintain public trust. By synthesizing Western CDA and politeness models with Uzbek socio-pragmatic traditions, this study provides the missing analytical framework required to evaluate how these two typologically and culturally distinct languages structurally handle economic mitigation.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Data Collection and Corpus Construction

The research corpus was systematically constructed from authoritative financial media, institutional economic reports, and central bank communications in both English and Uzbek, published within the timeframe of 2020 to 2026. This period captures the linguistic adjustments necessitated by post-pandemic economic recovery, global inflation waves, supply chain re-orderings, and subsequent macroeconomic stabilizations.

3.2. Analytical Methods and Theoretical Framework

Once compiled, the corpus underwent a multi-layered linguistic analysis structured across three core phases:

Phase 1: Structural-Semantic Classification. Units were mapped using Warren's (1992) structural taxonomy to identify the dominant morphological and semantic mechanisms of softening (e.g., loan-word substitutions, abstract nominalizations, periphrasis).

Phase 2: Pragmalinguistic and Contextual Analysis. Each expression was analyzed within its syntactic environment and macro-context using Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory and Fairclough's (2013) CDA to determine if the driver was politeness or ideological manipulation.

Phase 3: Contrastive Typological Synthesis. A contrastive matrix was developed to cross-examine the datasets, isolating the unique cultural and systematic linguistic variables that influence financial discourse customization in Germanic and Turkic language families.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Structural-Semantic Taxonomy of Financial Softening

The structural analysis indicates that English and Uzbek employ different morphological and semantic resources to generate economic euphemisms:

1. **Abstract Nominalization and Technocratic Jargon (Dominant in English):** English financial discourse heavily relies on transforming active, human-driven negative events into passive, abstract structural states.

English Example: "Asset-liability mismatch" or "Liquidity constraint" instead of Insolvency or Running out of money (Federal Reserve Bulletin, 2023).

2. **Descriptive Periphrasis and Semantic Expansion (Dominant in Uzbek):** Uzbek financial discourse prefers elaborate descriptive phrases that contextualize the negative event within a broader narrative of state-led optimization or societal care.

Uzbek Example: "Ijtimoiy himoya tizimini takomillashtirish jarayonida resurslarni maqbullashtirish" instead of Shtatlarni qisqartirish (Layoffs) or Byudjet xarajatlarini kesish (Ministry of Finance, 2024).

3. **Lexical Borrowing and Calquing as a Shield (Emerging Trend in Uzbek):** A highly distinct trend identified in the 2020–2026 Uzbek sub-corpus is the direct adoption of English financial terms, which lack immediate semantic transparency for the average native speaker.

Uzbek Example: "Korporativ restrukturizatsiya" or "Diversifikatsiya risklari" instead of closing companies or financial damage.

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4.2. Quantitative and Pragmatic Comparative Matrix

STRUCTURAL MECHANISM	ENGLISH FUNCTIONAL PARADIGM	UZBEK FUNCTIONAL PARADIGM	DOMINANT PRAGMATIC OBJECTIVE
Abstract Nominalization	Negative growth (Recession) Market correction (Crash)	Salbiy o‘sish sur’atlari Bozor konyunkturasining o‘zgarishi	**De-sensitization:** Neutralizing public panic by removing visceral imagery.
Corporate Metaphor	Rightsizing / Workforce optimization (Layoffs)	Ish o‘rinlarini maqbullashtirish Mehnat resurslarini unifikatsiya qilish	**Institutional Face-Saving:** Protecting corporate reputation and stock value.
Periphrastic Dilution	Sub-optimal macroeconomic conditions (Crisis)	Murakkab iqtisodiy geosiyosiy vaziyatda barqarorlikni ta’minlash choralari	**Legitimization:** Framing domestic inflation/deficits as external inevitable effects.
Semantic Shifts	Price adjustment / Calibration (Price hikes)	Narxlarni erkinlashtirish / Tariflarni tartibga solish	**Obfuscation / Ideological Masking:** Shifting blame from policy to market mechanics.

4.3. Pragmalinguistic Discussion: Politeness vs. Manipulation

In English discourse, economic euphemisms operate predominantly to protect the "Loss of Face" of corporate entities and financial institutions. Market volatility can be triggered by sudden panic; therefore, euphemisms serve a systemic stabilizing function. However, from a CDA perspective, this discourse uses hyper-abstracted, Latinate, and Greek-rooted terminology to create a specialized code that distances the lay public from macroeconomic policy.

In contrast, Uzbek economic vocabulary operates within a transitional environment where the state traditionally maintains a paternalistic role. Thus, Uzbek economic euphemisms are intensely socio-centric. When talking about inflation or utility tariff hikes, institutions wrap them in socio-political cushioning, such as "aholi farovonligini ta’minlash va bozor mexanizmlariga bosqichma-bosqich o‘tish". Pragmatically, this fulfills a positive politeness strategy: it preserves linguistic harmony between governing institutions and collective society, minimizing the risk of public dissatisfaction by constructing a narrative of social stability.

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5. CONCLUSION

This comparative pragmalinguistic investigation has systematically decoded the structural and functional configurations of economic euphemisms within English and Uzbek financial discourse. English discourse prioritizes extreme abstraction and technocratic formulas to detach economic consequences from human agency. Conversely, Uzbek financial discourse relies on elaborate periphrastic configurations and descriptive cushioning to prioritize social harmony and trust during structural market transitions.

The theoretical framework developed in this research offers a concrete methodology for cross-linguistic discourse analysis, demonstrating that economic vocabulary cannot be detached from ideological structures. Practically, the findings serve as an essential reference for financial translators, lexicographers developing specialized bilingual glossaries, and media analysts navigating cross-border economic communication.

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