

UDC 81

Features of referential manipulation in the political discourse of modern Tajikistan

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Abstract

The article is devoted to such features of political discourse as inaccurate reference and referential manipulation on the example of discourse of official Tajikistan. The use of words of inaccurate semantics, due to their referential ambiguity, allows for a wide spread in interpretations, which makes it possible to form phantom pictures from lexeme data. Euphemisms are used to hide the truth about the negative sides of the denotation. Thus, news about economic decline in the Tajikistan can be euphemistically informed, as far as the request for economic assistance. The extreme poverty of the Tajik people is described in terms of preventing wastefulness. Euphemization is a strategy to obscure undesirable information, which allows one to muffle the unpleasant facts, make them less obvious. The general scheme of the synecdoche euphemization is as follows: Tajikistan is implicit in describing countries that badly need the help of the world community. During the years of the power struggle, the discourse of Emomali Rahmon was marked by an abundance of dysphemism in relation to the opposition and the civil war unleashed by it. Modern official Tajikistan, with its policy of "open doors", uses little dysphemization, since it has no potential enemies, except for "global threats" such as drug trafficking, terrorism, etc.

For citation

Usmonov R.A. (2018) Osobennosti referentsial'nogo manipulirovaniya v sovremennom politicheskom diskurse Tadjikistana [Features of referential manipulation in the political discourse of modern Tajikistan]. *Yazyk. Slovesnost'. Kul'tura* [Language. Philology. Culture], 8 (1-2), pp. 28-38.

Keywords

Language, politics, political linguistics, political discourse, euphemism, dysphemization, mystery, hint, Tajik politics.

Introduction

Euphemism and dysphemism are special vocabulary strategies that are part of a wider communicative strategy of indirection. We highlighted some of the most prominent features of indirection in the political discourse of modern Tajikistan; now let us briefly discuss the strategies of euphemization and dysphemization, which are two interrelated ways of hidden influence on the audience.

Euphemisms and dysphemisms can be correlated with two rhetorical strategies of political discourse – strategies for mobilizing and demobilizing public opinion. The first is used by those politicians for whom it is important to change the existing state of affairs. “With this strategy, political events are presented in a dramatic way, and the situation as terrible, requiring decisive action. This strategy “seeks guilty, using negative but evaluative nominations” [Mikhalskaya, 1996, 151]. With the demobilization strategy, “the situation is presented as normal, albeit complicated, and events as naturally proceeding, requiring patience from members of society. This strategy applies euphemisms and avoids pointing out specific perpetrators or those responsible for what is happening” [ibid, 152].

Euphemization in the characteristics of the political and economic situation in Tajikistan

Euphemism is anti-invective; it is based on minimizing the degree of a negative trait or on switching an evaluation from negative to positive. To speak euphemistically is to use language as a shield against an object that causes fear, hostility, anger and contempt. Euphemisms are used to conceal the truth about the negative aspects of the denotation.

In a pragmatic sense, euphemization is associated with a deviation from the mode of action (clarity of presentation) [Lakoff, 1995]. This is a strategy to hide unnecessary and harmful information, which allows to disguise, obscure unwanted facts. R. Denton and G. Woodward associate political euphemism with the concept of mystification. A hoax through redaction (mystification by redefinition) is the use of nominations that “impede our ability to grasp the essence of political events”, “plunging the description of events into verbal fog” [Denton, Woodward, 1985]. This is a very common technique in the political discourse of modern Russia, and in the discourse of official Tajikistan.

Thus, news of the economic decline in the country can be reported euphemistically: “The severe frosts of the past winter caused our country's economy to suffer more than 2 billion 900 million somoni,

and this created certain difficulties for the implementation of macroeconomic indicators at the stipulated level” [Diplomacy of Tajikistan, 2009, 130]. Here, a method of euphemization is used, such as an underestimation of the degree of a trait (a narrowing of the volume of reference), as well as some quantifier of uncertainty. The use of the euphemism “certain difficulties for the implementation of macroeconomic indicators” to replace the words “poverty”, starvation hides the truth about the negative aspects of life in Tajikistan, replacing it with vocabulary with vague semantics.

In the same way, a request for economic assistance can be expressed euphemistically: “According to estimates of international experts, we need approximately 500 to 600 million US dollars for commissioning of 2 units, that is, the first stage of the Rogun hydropower plant. Next year we intend to allocate about \$ 100 million from the state budget for the construction of this station. If we try hard, we will be able to commission the first stage of the Rogun hydropower plant within 2-3 years, using advanced technology” [ibid, 133]. The euphemism “if we try hard” hides the intention of asking for economic assistance to a poor country, which is unable to master the construction of hydropower plants. However, euphemization gives the request such a level of implication that the request for help on content looks like a promise to cope on its own. Such an intention is contained in pointing out the impossibility of the closed functioning of economic systems: “The existence or attempts to prolong the life of closed systems of stable, non-convertible economic values, unfortunately, did not turn out to be viable” (T. Nazarov) [Diplomacy of Tajikistan, 2006, 130].

The extreme poverty of the Tajik people is described in terms of preventing waste: “Work in this direction must be arranged in such a way as to avoid waste, unnecessary spending and showing off in all spheres of life, including the use of electricity, heat, water and gas. It should become the norm and an integral part of the family culture of our cultural people” [Diplomacy of Tajikistan, 2009, 134]. Instead of recognizing poverty, the inability of the country's economy to ensure a decent standard of living for citizens, instead of recognizing the harsh or unbearable living conditions of the population, semantic ellipsis is used, a euphemistic description of poverty as non-wasteful, lacking in all spheres, including communal. Removing a negative perception, a euphemism shifts the evaluative attribute from negative to positive. It is a kind of political gain, exposing its position in the country's economy and social sphere in the best light. This is an attempt to hide the economic and social disaster beyond the terms of self-restraint.

The impossibility of a substantial increase in teachers' salaries is hidden behind the euphemism: “In order to increase the social security of working in this sphere, it is planned to improve the system of their wage rates” [ibid, 139]. This is in line with the demobilization strategy of public opinion, when the situation is presented though difficult (working in this sphere are not socially protected), but

naturally proceeding as usual, and even correctable. It uses a dimming of the internal form of the euphemism, which makes it difficult to decipher and correlate with the original nomination: “improving rates” does not have to mean raising them, and the status “planned” indicates that this “improvement” is not going to happen soon.

Extremely low wages and pensions are described euphemistically, paints have been softened: “Although in the last two years in our country the average wage has increased almost one and a half times and the social pension is 50 percent, it is still not satisfactory” [ibid, 141] . It is caused by the desire to hide the urgency of social problems, to present them as irrelevant, to remove the possibility of social conflict.

The sharpness is also reduced when describing the legal illiteracy of the Tajik population: “... the legal outlook of our country's citizens in protecting the rights and freedoms, their legitimate interests, respect and strict compliance with the laws is still unsatisfactory” [Ibid, 143]. When pronouncing these words at the international level, the intention to present the population of the country in a favorable light, to attract potential allies to your side is obvious.

Sexual education and abortions from a legislative point of view are described descriptively: “As we see, the idea of family planning does not contradict the prescriptions of religion. In most Islamic countries, this business has been practiced for a long time, and in some states, like in the Islamic State of Iran, notable success has been achieved on this issue” [Rakhmonov, 2004, vol. 4, 190].

Moreover, from time to time official Tajikistan describes the situation in the country in terms of complete optimism: “The whole world community is witnessing how much progress we have achieved in all areas of life at this stage of development of our state” [ibid, t. 3, 20]. The plight of the Tajik people, who have a low level of wages and education, social benefits, is in fact presented as complete prosperity and success. This is due to the intention to prove the positive role of the government in the life of the country.

According to D. Crystal, the political discourse along with the advertising one is most suitable to embellish reality and hide the real state of affairs [Crystal, 1995]. There is every reason to believe that the tendency towards euphemization is one of the pragmatic laws of the functioning of a political language. Euphemization is a strategy of veiling, obscuring unwanted information, which allows to mute, make unpleasant facts less obvious, and this is fully manifested in the sampling of quotes from the political discourse of Tajikistan that has been undertaken.

I would like to dwell on a kind of synecdoche euphemizing of the image of Tajikistan, regularly undertaken in the political discourse of the country. The general scheme is as follows: Tajikistan is not called, but is implied when describing countries that are in deep need of help from the world community. The silence of the name of the country is a euphemistic move, designed for guessing.

Let us give quotes of this kind.

1) “Countries in transition, poorly prepared for the economic conditions of the open market and fierce competition, will suffer the greatest damage in such a situation” [Diplomacy of Tajikistan, 2009, 131] - euphemism here serves as a means of avoiding loss of face;

2) “... although today we are proud of the cultural heritage, we keep every ancient exhibit in the largest museums of the world, we promote the diversity of languages and cultures of peoples and regions of the planet as a unique historical phenomenon, nevertheless, a universal way of protecting the diversity of cultures in the context of globalization has not been found yet. This problem is of serious concern to those nations and states that have an ancient and rich civilization and are now making consistent efforts to develop it” [Diplomacy of Tajikistan, 2005, 9] - the desired picture of the cultural development of Tajikistan is euphemistically described;

3) “Particular attention in these plans should be given to issues of interest to the least developed countries, small island states, as well as countries with economies in transition and landlocked countries. It is necessary to frankly admit that these groups of countries without attracting foreign aid and investment will find it very difficult to achieve the goals of both phases of the Summit on the information society” [ibid, 91] - euphemization serves the purpose of keeping silent about the plight of Tajikistan, bringing it to a whole range of countries;

4) “in our conviction, support for the poorest countries should be the main task of the second half of the International Decade for Action “Water for Life” [Diplomacy of Tajikistan. Yearbook 2008, 2010; 183] - the country also becomes an object of euphemization; the Tajik leader speaks not about Tajikistan, but about a number of countries; such a hidden method of asking for economic assistance allows the policy not to lose face;

5) “The unstable global financial system, which affects both the financial market and the real sector of the economy, has caused significant damage to developing countries. They see a decrease in capital inflows and a slowdown in economic development and income generation [Diplomacy of Tajikistan, 2010, 223] - the inclusion of developing countries in the euphemism of polysemantic expression serves both goals to evoke sympathy for an implied country (as little developed) and to point to the country's efforts to develop their potential;

6) “... given the huge debt of developing countries, they should be assisted on the basis of grants or soft loans” [Diplomacy of Tajikistan. Yearbook 2008, 2010; 223] - this is a call for help to other countries, but essentially represents a request for assistance to Tajikistan;

7) “... we expect that in view of the negative impact of the global financial crisis, developed countries will prove their adherence to the priorities of the Monterrey Consensus and continue their

efforts to reduce the gap between countries and the uneven economic development of individual developing countries of the world" [ibid, 223] - not only Tajikistan is coded, but also economic aid, which is presented as a reduction of the gap between the countries.

The use of political euphemism makes it possible to highlight "anti-values", to designate the coordinates of social evil. The names of phenomena that are not directly inconvenient or embarrassing because they constitute a departure from the code of values, the embodiment of the socially unacceptable, and stigmatic, are euphemizing. Euphemisms change the nature of the signified, eliminating the unpleasant fact by changing the way it is described. This is a kind of language hoax.

Deciphering the euphemistic statement and restoring the true denotation, we simultaneously decipher the implicatures contained in it (we derive a statement of implied values). Thus, the denomination of social unacceptability is removed in euphemism, in comparison with the original, "tabooing" (in a broad sense). To talk about the poverty of one's own country is embarrassing and unpleasant, but if you put it in a row like it and point out the need to help the poorest countries, this position looks more than worthy.

Dysphemization as a derogation of denotation

Dysphemization uses a similar euphemistic mechanism of referential shift, the same types of seminal transformations. The main difference is the direction of the estimated variation: from a neutral-objective statement of fact to the pejorative or from a moderately negative qualification to a hyperbolic pejorative.

Dysphemism is an invective, based on the hyperbolization of a negative trait or the replacement of a positive evaluation sign with a negative one. To speak dysphemistically means to use language as a weapon to attack the "enemy". Dysphemisms are motivated by the desire to belittle a note; their goal is to form the perception of an object as suspicious and undesirable, to qualify it so as to cause hostility, aversion or hatred.

Dysphemization can be used to characterize any shortcomings in the internal life of the country: "Analysis shows that a significant part of research institutes have not achieved any significant scientific achievements in recent years, and the sectoral institutes of some ministries and departments exist only on paper" [Diplomacy of Tajikistan, 2009, 140]. Rector dramatizes the situation, uses hyperbole to enhance the impact.

During the years of struggle for power, Emomali Rakhmon's discourse was distinguished by an abundance of dysphemism in relation to the opposition and the civil war unleashed by it: "Our beloved homeland turned into a testing ground of murders, our house was destroyed, and we have a funeral

instead of celebrations. Tajiks became refugees on their land, Tajik became afraid of the Tajik” [Rakhmonov, 2004, v.1, 13]. Dysphemism, as well as euphemism, orients the listeners to the basic semantic opposition “ours or stranger’s”; it gives the opposition the image of the enemy. Appealing to the basic, highest values of peace and friendship, or rather, to their violation, the rational-critical perception of the audience is suppressed.

The evolution of the opposition’s political views is seen as chameleonism: “Thinking about the tragedy that occurred in our society, one cannot but pay attention to the political chameleon phenomenon inherent in the leaders of these parties and movements that constantly change their ideological camouflage depending on the state of the struggle for power” [*ibid.*, 22]. What could be assessed as flexibility is assessed as chameleonism and camouflage as applied to the opposition camp.

Oppositionists are characterized in the forms of dysphemism that are familiar to Soviet discourse: “promoted by the so-called Islamic-Democratic alliance, heavily mixed in with clan-local interests” [*ibid.*, 23]. They “threw tens of thousands of people into the fire of the civil war and were ready to fight to the last Tajik from both sides for the irrepressible desire to establish an Islamic regime” [*ibid.*, 27]. “They turned our fragrant and prosperous land into the arena of fratricidal war and destruction” [*ibid.*]. The mystification of dysphemism is associated with appealing to affectively colored words and concepts, which suppresses rational perception and allows to see only enemies in the opposition.

Subsequently, with the weakening of the opposition’s position, dysphemism became a rarely used strategy. On the whole, official Tajikistan, with its “open door” policy, makes little use of dysphemization, since it potentially has no opponents, except for “global threats” such as drug business, terrorism, etc.

Mystery and hint in the political discourse of Tajikistan

Another important feature of political discourse related to its truth is mystery. At the same time, political power in a modern open society is exercised in the process of mass communication, which by and large is not compatible with mystery.

The specifics of secret speech in political discourse is not in the language of politics as most of the signs are widely known, generally accessible for understanding, but in the very nature of communication. In other words, the esotericity of political discourse is not a semantic, but a pragmatic characteristic.

In the political discourse of the post-Soviet space, there were specific hint speech clichés containing the reduction of the rhematic communication component. The relative transparency of such clichés enhances their conventionality, and the high index of repeatability and predictability in the discourse

of a particular group subject of a policy gives them the character of ritualism, minimizing the efforts to decipher.

Thus, at the beginning of the formation of Tajikistan, a hint is used as a means of describing the opposition: “certain forces led our people to a national catastrophe, launched a fratricidal war on the ancient Tajik land” [Rakhmonov, 2004, v. 1, 5]. “Several ambitious people, having not achieved power by legal means, put on themselves masks of defenders of democracy, freedom of the nation, happiness of the people, Islam” [ibid, 34]. “As you know, there were people in the republic who wanted Tajikistan to have relations only with neighboring and Farsi-speaking countries. The other group, on the contrary, believed that Tajikistan should cooperate only with Western countries” [ibid.]. An indication of the listeners is made: “You know very well who wanted power, and how they wanted it” [ibid, 5]. Note the widespread use of uncertainty quantifiers: several, certain; names with undefined reference: another group. These markers of the category of predictability involve the addressee (the people) in the process of solving, make it clear that there is no doubt in the common sense, although there is nothing to solve here. Nevertheless, the “guessed” addressee is pleased, and therefore less critical is the promises of the speaker’s speech.

The weakening of the positions of the opposition led to the fact that this technique began to be used in foreign policy: “Against the background of political and social changes, various forces in this region are becoming more active, and they are trying to realize their geopolitical interests in the resulting chaos” [Zarifi, 2011]. “The special significance of this is clearly realized at the beginning of the XXI century - in those days when more or less influential groups and circles purposefully, pursuing their dirty goals, implant the spirit of opposition from civilizations. In this sense, a striking example of such attempts is the self-serving use of the pure name of Islam, the distortion and defaming of the highest values of our light religion, including in the form of caricatures of the Noble Prophet” [Diplomacy of Tajikistan, 2009, 126]. The object of implicit reference, indirect targeting, become one or another state. The pragmatic act achieves its goal, without revealing the communicative intention explicitly.

Conclusion

Inaccuracy of reference and referential manipulation are the most interesting properties of political discourse, as they are phenomena that come into apparent contradiction with the mission of political discourse, but at the same time they are very influential in a pragmatic aspect.

Euphemisms are used to conceal the truth about the negative sides of the denotation. Thus, news of the economic decline in a country and request for economic assistance can be euphemistic. The extreme poverty of the Tajik people is described in terms of preventing waste. The impossibility of a substantial increase in the remuneration of teachers is hidden behind a euphemistic formulation.

Periodically, official Tajikistan describes the situation in the country in terms of complete optimism. Euphemization is a strategy of veiling, obscuring unwanted information, which allows to mute, make unpleasant facts less obvious, and this is fully manifested in the sampling of quotes from the political discourse of Tajikistan that has been undertaken.

The general scheme of synecdoche euphemizing is as follows: Tajikistan is not called, but is implied when describing countries that are in deep need of help from the world community. The silence of the name of the country is a euphemistic move, designed for guessing. To talk about the poverty of one's own country is embarrassing and unpleasant, but if you put it in a row like it and point out the need to help the poorest countries, this position looks more than worthy.

During the years of struggle for power, Emomali Rakhmon's discourse was distinguished by an abundance of dysphemism in relation to the opposition and the civil war unleashed by it. Modern official Tajikistan, with its "open door" policy, makes little use of dysphemization, since it potentially has no opponents, except for "global threats" such as drug business, terrorism, etc.

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Council of Foreign Ministers of the SCO member states (Almaty, May 14)]. Available at: <http://www.mfa.tj/index.php?node=news&dt=&id=2653> [Accessed 13/01/2017].

Особенности референциального манипулирования в современном политическом дискурсе Таджикистана

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Аннотация

Статья посвящена таким особенностям политического дискурса, как неточность референции и референциальное манипулирование на примере дискурса официального Таджикистана. Использование слов неточной семантики, вследствие их референциальной неопределенности, допускает широкий «разброс» в интерпретациях, что позволяет формировать из данных лексем фантомные картины. Эвфемизмы применяются для сокрытия правды об отрицательных сторонах денотата. Так, эвфемистично могут сообщаться новости об экономическом упадке в стране; просьба об экономической помощи. Крайняя бедность таджикского народа описывается в терминах предотвращения расточительства. Эвфемизация представляет собой стратегию затушевывания нежелательной информации, которая позволяет приглушить, сделать менее очевидными неприятные факты. Общая схема синекдохического эвфемизирования такова: Таджикистан не называется, но подразумевается при описании стран, которые остро нуждаются в помощи мирового сообщества. В годы борьбы за власть дискурс Эмомали Рахмона отличался обилием дисфемизмов по отношению к оппозиции и развязанной ею гражданской войне. Современный официальный Таджикистан, с его политикой «открытых дверей», мало использует дисфемизацию, так как он потенциально не имеет противников, кроме «общемировых угроз» типа наркобизнеса, терроризма и т.д.

Для цитирования в научных исследованиях

Усмонов Р.А. Особенности референциального манипулирования в современном политическом дискурсе Таджикистана // Язык. Словесность. Культура. 2018. Том 8. № 1-2. С. 28-38.

Ключевые слова

Язык, политика, политическая лингвистика, политический дискурс, эвфемизм, дисфемизация, тайна, намек, таджикская политика.

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