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Research Paper

## The Role of Euphemistic Strategies in Manipulation of Realities and Persuasion in Political Speeches

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### Abstract

This study investigates the role of euphemistic strategies in the manipulation of realities and persuasion within political discourse, focusing on speeches by American and Iranian politicians during the 2013-2015 nuclear negotiations. Employing Van Dijk's socio-cognitive model, the research conducts a comparative discourse analysis to identify and categorize euphemistic expressions used to justify policies, address controversial issues, and influence public opinion. The analysis reveals distinct patterns in the use of euphemistic strategies, with American politicians, such as John Kerry, frequently employing polarization and burden/topos, while Iranian politicians, like Mohammad Javad Zarif, emphasize evidentiality and positive self-presentation. These differences reflect varying rhetorical styles and objectives, highlighting how euphemisms serve as tools for ideological manipulation and audience persuasion. The study underscores the importance of understanding euphemistic language in political communication, offering insights into the mechanisms of public perception and legitimizing political agendas. By comparing English and Persian political discourses, this research contributes to cross-cultural discourse analysis and enhances critical discourse awareness, equipping audiences to deconstruct political rhetoric and recognize underlying persuasive techniques.

**Keywords:** American politicians; Euphemism; Iranian politicians; Political discourse

**نقش استراتژی های خوشمزه در دستکاری واقعیت ها و ترغیب در سخنان سیاسی**  
این مطالعه به بررسی نقش استراتژی های خوب در دستکاری واقعیت ها و افشاء در گفتمان سیاسی می پردازد ، با تمرکز بر سخنان سیاستمداران آمریکایی و ایرانی در طی مذاکرات هسته ای ۲۰۱۳-۲۰۱۵ . این تحقیق با استفاده از الگوی اجتماعی و شناختی ون دیژک ، تجزیه و تحلیل گفتمان مقایسه ای را برای شناسایی و طبقه بندی عبارات حسن نیت استفاده شده برای توجیه سیاست ها ، پرداختن به موضوعات بحث برانگیز و تأثیرگذاری بر افکار عمومی انجام می دهد. این تجزیه و تحلیل الگوهای متمایز در استفاده از استراتژی های خوشمزه را نشان می دهد ، با سیاستمداران آمریکایی ، مانند جان کری ، اغلب از قطبش و بار/توپ ها استفاده می کنند ، در حالی که سیاستمداران ایرانی ، مانند محمد جواد زاریف ، بر آشکار بودن و خودآزمایی مثبت تأکید می کنند. این تفاوت ها نشان دهنده سبک ها و اهداف مختلف بلاغی است ، و نشان می دهد که چگونه حسن نیت به عنوان ابزاری برای دستکاری ایدئولوژیک و ترغیب مخاطبان خدمت می کنند. این مطالعه بر اهمیت درک زبان خوشمزه در ارتباطات سیاسی تأکید می کند و بینش هایی در مورد مکانیسم های ادراک عمومی و مشروعیت بخشیدن به برنامه های سیاسی ارائه می دهد. این تحقیق با مقایسه گفتمانهای سیاسی انگلیسی و فارسی ، به تجزیه و تحلیل گفتمان متقابل فرهنگی کمک می کند و آگاهی از گفتمان انتقادی را تقویت می کند ، مخاطبان را به ساختار لفاظی سیاسی و به رسمیت شناختن تکنیک های متقاعد کننده می بخشد.  
**کلمات کلیدی:** سیاستمداران آمریکایی ؛ حسن نیت ؛ سیاستمداران ایرانی ؛ گفتار سیاسی

## Introduction

Language is a powerful tool that shapes perceptions constructs realities and influences decision-making processes (Van Dijk, 1997). In political discourse, language plays a pivotal role in conveying ideologies, framing narratives, and persuading audiences (Ilic & Radulovic, 2014). Among the various linguistic strategies employed by politicians, euphemism stands out as a crucial rhetorical device. Euphemisms, by softening or altering the directness of expression, allow speakers to mitigate harsh realities, avoid controversial statements, and maintain a positive public image. As such, euphemistic strategies serve as both a means of manipulation and persuasion, subtly guiding public perception and shaping sociopolitical discourse.

Political speeches in different cultural and geopolitical contexts reveal distinct patterns of euphemistic usage (Ilic & Radulovic, 2014). While American and Iranian political discourses operate within unique sociocultural and ideological frameworks, both frequently employ euphemistic strategies to navigate sensitive topics, justify policies, and align public sentiment with state objectives. Given the varying political structures, values, and constraints in these two nations, a comparative analysis of euphemistic strategies can offer valuable insights into how language is strategically deployed to manipulate realities and persuade audiences (Fairclough, 2005; Van Dijk, 1997).

Despite the extensive body of research on political discourse and persuasion, limited attention has been paid to the specific role of euphemism in shaping public perceptions and legitimizing political agendas across different cultural and national contexts (Burridge, 2012). Much of the existing literature has focused either on general political rhetoric or on euphemisms in isolated linguistic or cultural settings (Crespo-Fernandez, 2014). However, a comparative study that systematically examines euphemistic strategies in American and Iranian political speeches remains largely unexplored. This gap is particularly significant given the ongoing geopolitical tensions between the two countries, where language plays a crucial role in framing national narratives and influencing international relations.

The present study seeks to fill this research gap by investigating the role of euphemistic strategies in the manipulation of realities and persuasion in Iranian and American political speeches. Through a discourse analysis of key political speeches from both nations, this study aims to identify, categorize, and analyze euphemistic expressions used to justify policies, address controversial issues, and influence public opinion. By comparing and contrasting these linguistic strategies, the study will provide a deeper understanding of how euphemism functions as a persuasive and manipulative tool in political communication.

This study, then, draws on Van Dijk's (2004) socio-cognitive model to critically analyze the speeches of U.S. and Iranian politicians during nuclear negotiations (2013–2015). It investigates how language, particularly euphemism, is strategically employed to construct ideologies, justify actions, and persuade audiences. By comparing English and Persian political discourses, the study identifies similarities and differences in euphemistic strategies and their role in shaping public perceptions, revealing the subtle mechanisms of ideological manipulation in political communication. Understanding the strategic use of euphemisms in political discourse is of paramount importance for several reasons. First, it sheds light on the mechanisms through which language is used to shape public perception, legitimize actions, and reinforce ideologies. Second, by comparing American and Iranian political discourse, the study contributes to cross-cultural discourse analysis, revealing how different political systems and cultural values influence linguistic choices. Finally, this research has broader implications for media literacy and critical discourse awareness, equipping audiences with the analytical tools to deconstruct political rhetoric and recognize the underlying persuasive and manipulative techniques at play.



In sum, this study will not only contribute to the theoretical understanding of euphemistic strategies in political discourse but also provide practical insights into the linguistic mechanisms that shape contemporary political communication. By analyzing political speeches from two distinct geopolitical landscapes, this research will illuminate the nuanced ways in which euphemisms operate to construct realities and persuade audiences, ultimately enhancing our comprehension of the intricate relationship between language, power, and ideology (Luts, 1990).

## **Literature Review**

### **Discourse Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis**

Discourse analysis (DA) is a field of study that examines how language is used in various contexts to construct meaning, shape social relationships, and reflect power structures (Fairclough, 1992). DA focuses on linguistic features such as lexical choices, syntax, and pragmatic elements to uncover the underlying messages conveyed in communication. It is widely applied in political, social, and media studies to understand how language functions beyond mere words. Discourse analysis, in other words, explores how language functions within its social, cultural, and political contexts, examining both written and spoken communication (Wodak & Meyer, 2015). Traditional linguistic approaches focused on the sentence as the primary unit of analysis. However, modern discourse analysis emphasizes language as a tool for interaction and meaning-making, moving beyond isolated sentences to include broader social and cultural dimensions (Fairclough, 1992).

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), a subfield of DA, goes further by emphasizing the role of discourse in power relations and social inequalities. It emerged in the 1970s as a response to the need to study power dynamics and ideologies embedded in language. CDA reveals how language reflects and reproduces social power, dominance, and inequality, making it particularly suited for analyzing political discourse (Van Dijk, 1993). CDA, in fact, aims to reveal hidden ideologies, biases, and manipulations within texts, particularly in political and media discourse. The core premise of CDA is that language is not neutral but rather a means through which dominance, control, and social structures are reinforced (Crespo-Fernandez, 2014). Scholars such as Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak have developed frameworks for analyzing how discourse perpetuates power imbalances, making CDA a crucial tool for examining euphemistic strategies in political speech.

### **Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Approach (SCA) Model**

Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Approach (SCA) provides a theoretical foundation for understanding the interplay between discourse, cognition, and society. The SCA posits that discourse is shaped by cognitive structures, including mental models, schemata, and frames, which influence how individuals process and interpret language. Van Dijk emphasizes the importance of context models, which guide how political actors construct and convey messages to different audiences. The SCA also highlights the concept of ideological discourse structures, which enable political elites to legitimize actions, marginalize opposition, and reinforce dominant narratives. By examining how political figures employ euphemisms within these ideological frameworks, the SCA provides valuable insights into the cognitive and social mechanisms underlying persuasive and manipulative political discourse.

In general, Van Dijk (1998) proposed a triangular relationship between discourse, cognition, and society, highlighting the role of mental models in shaping discourse. His "ideological square" framework—emphasizing positive self-representation and negative other-representation—illustrates how political language creates in-group and out-group dynamics. This approach underscores the cognitive mechanisms that underlie ideological manipulation in texts (Chilton & Schäffner, 1997).



## Euphemism in Political Speech

Euphemism is a key rhetorical device in political communication, allowing speakers to frame contentious issues in a more palatable manner. Politicians use euphemisms to soften negative connotations, obscure controversial actions, and appeal to public sentiment (Wodak (2001)). This strategy is evident in war rhetoric (e.g., ‘collateral damage’ instead of ‘civilian casualties’), economic policies (e.g., ‘downsizing’ instead of ‘mass layoffs’), and diplomatic discourse (e.g., ‘enhanced interrogation’ instead of ‘torture’).

Euphemism represents a crucial linguistic phenomenon that functions as a means of communication, especially in discussions surrounding sensitive subjects or societal taboos (Jaganegara, 2023). It enables individuals to express their thoughts while emphasizing politeness and the maintenance of social cohesion. Euphemistic language frequently appears across various media platforms, including news articles, where it aids in presenting potentially distressing realities in a more acceptable manner (Jaganegara, 2023). In the realm of political discourse, euphemism plays a pivotal role, acting as a rhetorical strategy to shape public perception. Such expressions mitigate the impact of unpleasant truths, allowing politicians to address contentious issues while preserving the support of their constituents (Allan & Burridge, 1991). For instance, phrases like “collateral damage” serve to replace more direct and harsh terms related to civilian casualties, thereby obscuring the moral and ethical considerations associated with military operations. These linguistic choices illustrate the dual function of euphemism in promoting politeness while simultaneously masking ideological manipulation (Lutz, 1990; Van Dijk, 2004). This analysis underscores the inherent conflict between effective communication and the obligation of political figures to ensure transparency in their communications (Zhao, 2010).

The frequent use of euphemisms in political communication has generated considerable debate surrounding ethical implications (Kameneva & Rabkina, 2020). Detractors contend that the dependence on euphemistic expressions may create a gap between political dialogue and the realities encountered by the populace, which could obscure vital societal challenges and intensify public disenchantment (Yafarova, 2015). In both American and Iranian political speeches, euphemisms serve to align narratives with national interests, justify governmental decisions, and mitigate potential backlash. While American political discourse often employs euphemisms to maintain diplomatic decorum and media appeal, Iranian political rhetoric frequently uses euphemistic language to navigate ideological constraints and reinforce national identity.

The pragmatic functions of euphemisms in political discourse include concealing unpleasant truths, minimizing public resistance, and persuading audiences. These functions align with Austin’s (1962) speech act theory, where euphemisms perform illocutionary acts to influence perception and perlocutionary acts to shape behavior. By analyzing the use of euphemisms in political speeches from both countries, this study will uncover the linguistic strategies employed to construct realities and persuade audiences. This comparative approach will contribute to a deeper understanding of how euphemistic language functions within distinct political and cultural contexts, offering critical insights into the broader implications of language manipulation in political discourse (Badakhshan & Mousavi, 2013).

To accomplish the purposes of the current study, the following research questions were posed:

**RQ1.** How do Iran and America’s political speeches make use of euphemistic strategies?

**RQ2.** Do Iran and America’s political speeches significantly differ based on Van Dijk’s classification of euphemistic strategies?

This study holds considerable importance as it provides a more profound understanding of the mechanisms underlying political persuasion and the nuanced ways in which language influences public discourse. Grasping these strategies is essential for promoting critical media



literacy, which empowers audiences to more effectively analyze and evaluate political communications. Furthermore, this research enhances the field of discourse analysis by integrating lexical and syntactic perspectives on euphemism within political language.

## Method

### Research Design

A mixed-methods research design was utilized in the present study, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. This approach involved a quan-qual framework, where a portion of the data was gathered through quantitative means, followed by a qualitative analysis of the collected data. In alignment with the research questions, three pairs of euphemistic strategies employed by politicians were examined. The quantitative analysis involved a separate comparison of each pair to determine any significant differences. On the qualitative side, content or document analysis was employed as a qualitative research method to identify specific characteristics within the speeches. The researcher meticulously analyzed the speeches, categorizing various euphemistic strategies into distinct tables and graphs. The objective was to identify the most and least frequently utilized euphemistic strategies in political speeches, facilitating comparison and contrast of these strategies while exploring the manipulation of realities and ideologies through euphemistic language and critical discourse analysis. Furthermore, the study benefited from content validity, as it was grounded in an established theoretical framework proposed by van Dijk (2004). Research Design

### Research Materials

The dataset for this research comprised transcriptions of direct quotations from speeches delivered by American and Iranian politicians in both English and Persian, specifically concerning nuclear negotiations. These speeches were sourced from online platforms for analytical purposes. To mitigate biases associated with political slant and editorial alterations prevalent in traditional media, direct quotations were prioritized over newspaper articles. The collection included speeches from President Obama and President Rouhani, as well as those from Foreign Secretaries Kerry and Zarif, spanning the period from November 2013 to September 2015. The selection of all speeches within this timeframe was intentional, as a more thorough examination of the topic necessitated a substantial corpus.

In examining the speeches delivered by the leaders of the two nations, Presidents Obama and Rouhani, each presented four addresses, while their respective Foreign Secretaries contributed two speeches. Consequently, both parties were equivalent in the total number of speeches concerning nuclear negotiations. However, the analytical framework employed focused on the word count rather than the sheer number of speeches. This approach aimed to evaluate the content of the politicians' speeches based on the total number of words used. It is important to note that a limitation arose in the word count, as the speeches from U.S. politicians were generally more extensive than those from their Iranian counterparts. To ensure a balanced comparison, only selected excerpts from the longer speeches were randomly chosen for analysis.

The final component of the study's materials encompassed all speeches made by the Presidents and Foreign Secretaries of both the United States and Iran. The total word count for these speeches was approximately 31,000, with each country's political figures contributing around 15,500 words. A summary of the speeches is provided in Tables 1 through 4.





**Table 1***Date and word numbers of Obama's Speeches*

Obama	Speech one	Speech two	Speech three	Speech four
Date	Nov., 23, 2013	April, 2, 2015	July, 14, 2015	August, 5, 2015
Word number	1026	2102	2601	6381
Total number of words	12110			

**Table 2***Date and word numbers of Rouhani's Speeches*

Rouhani	Speech one	Speech two	Speech three	Speech four
Date	Nov., 23, 2013	Nov., 24, 2014	April, 9, 2015	July, 14, 2015
Word number	1602	1509	2546	2955
Total number of words	8612			

**Table 3***Date and word numbers of Kerry's Speeches*

Kerry	Speech one	Speech two
Date	July, 19, 2014	1241
Word number	Sep., 2, 2015	7670
Total number of words	8911	

**Table 4***Date and word numbers of Selected Speeches*

Zarif	Speech one	Speech two
Date	Dec. 2, 2014	4256
Word number	July 21, 2015	2749
Total number of words	7014	

Moreover, Table 5 illustrates the distinctions between the two predominant categories of speeches in the two languages. It reveals that the speeches delivered by the presidents of these nations contain a total of 17,224 words, while the speeches given by the Foreign Secretaries amount to 14,028 words. Moreover, the speeches from politicians in each country comprise 15,626 words, resulting in an aggregate word count of 31,252 across all speeches.

**Table 5***Comparison of Total Words in Two Languages*

Politician	President	Foreign Secretary	Total
America	8612	7014	15626
Iran	8612	7014	15626
Total	17224	14028	31252

### Instruments

The analytical framework employed in this research was derived from Van Dijk's (2004) model, which originates from his work on Politics, Ideology, and Discourse. This framework was utilized to identify discursive structures within the transcripts of political speeches, facilitating a



comparative analysis to ascertain whether significant differences existed among them. Furthermore, it served to uncover the underlying ideologies associated with these discursive structures. To achieve the study's objectives, the macro strategies of 'positive self-representation' and 'negative other-representation'—which are closely linked to the polarization of in-group versus out-group ideologies, often framed as US versus THEM—along with an additional 25 more nuanced strategies, proved to be effective criteria for assessing attitudes and opinions. Van Dijk (2004) details 27 ideological strategies, prominently featuring the fundamental dichotomy of 'self-positive-representation' and 'other-negative-representation' as two key semantic macro-strategies. Positive self-representation, or in-group favoritism, was employed for purposes of 'face keeping' or 'impression management' (Van Dijk, 2004), while negative other-representation served as a complement to positive self-representation. This dichotomy effectively illustrated the distinctions between in-groups and out-groups, categorizing entities as 'good' versus 'bad', superior versus inferior, or US versus THEM.

### Data Collection Procedure

The dataset for this study consisted of transcriptions of speeches delivered by politicians, which were sourced from the Internet during the period from November 2013 to September 2015. This timeframe was selected due to the significant negotiations concerning nuclear matters that occurred following an extended period of tension between the United States and Iran. To minimize potential identification errors and ensure a consistent dataset, inter-rater (inter-coder) reliability was employed. In this process, all selected speeches were thoroughly reviewed and analyzed by a rater (coder) who possessed a strong understanding of the study's objectives and the theoretical framework's strategies. Subsequently, the findings were compared with those of the researcher to assess the inter-rater (inter-coder) reliability of the judgments made by both the researcher and the rater (coder).

### Data Analysis Procedure

Euphemistic strategies at both the word and sentence levels were systematically coded, extracted, and quantified in the two languages under investigation. Subsequently, these strategies were categorized according to the framework proposed by Van Dijk (2004), allowing for an analysis of the frequency of each euphemistic strategy within each language for comparative purposes. To assess the significance of any observed differences, a quantitative analysis was conducted utilizing the chi-square test, which is deemed suitable for nonparametric statistical evaluation, to identify and ascertain any significant variations in the frequency of the identified elements.

After classifying the data and defining the frequency of the euphemistic elements, they were subjected to detailed qualitative analysis within the critical discourse analysis of Van Dijk's (2004) framework to know the underlying ideological points of the two politicians. It is worth mentioning that in detecting discursive strategies within the transcripts of the candidates' speeches and discovering the ideologies underlying them, the macro strategies of 'positive self-representation' and 'negative other-representation' through 25 other more subtle strategies were used for the evaluation of underlying ideologies. In this framework, Van Dijk (2004) elaborates on 27 ideological strategies, among which the fundamental dichotomy of 'positive-self presentation' and 'negative-other presentation' stands out.

### Results

Table 6 below presents a quantitative analysis of various euphemistic strategies employed across four speeches. The table categorizes the strategies and provides numerical values indicating their frequency in each speech, along with a total count. Among the strategies, *Polarization* is the most frequently used, appearing 276 times across the speeches, with Speech 4 exhibiting the highest

occurrence (133). *Burden/topos* follows with a total of 218 instances, heavily concentrated in Speech 4 (90) and Speech 3 (54). Similarly, *Categorization* is another prominent strategy, appearing 209 times, with Speech 4 (90) having the highest frequency. Other frequently employed strategies include *Positive self-presentation* (124), *Authority* (115), *Evidentiality* (149), and *Negative other-presentation* (91). These strategies indicate a strong rhetorical focus on establishing credibility, reinforcing ideological positioning, and framing narratives favorably. Conversely, certain euphemistic strategies are used sparingly. For instance, *Irony* and *National self-glorification* appear only four times, while *Metaphor* is employed twice. *Victimization* is notably absent across all speeches. Speech 4 consistently demonstrates the highest usage of euphemistic strategies across most categories, particularly in *Polarization*, *Categorization*, and *Positive self-presentation*, suggesting a rhetorical emphasis on defining ideological positions and reinforcing arguments. Speech 2 and Speech 3 also exhibit considerable use of euphemistic strategies, though at slightly lower levels compared to Speech 4.

Generally, the data highlights the strategic employment of euphemistic language in Obama's speeches, with certain strategies being preferred over others to frame discourse, establish authority, and persuade audiences.

**Table 6**

*Degree of Utilization of Euphemistic Strategies in Obama Speeches*

Euphemistic Strategy	Speech1	Speech 2	Speech 3	Speech 4	Total
Actor description	1	6	9	35	51
Authority	11	22	30	52	115
Burden/ topos	30	44	54	90	218
Categorization	30	42	47	90	209
Comparison	10	6	9	17	42
Consensus	8	7	7	8	30
Counterfactuals	3	4	7	9	23
Disclaimers	2	1	1	5	9
Euphemism	3	1	2	2	8
Evidentiality	20	33	21	75	149
example/ illustration	4	16	5	51	76
Generalization	1	2	1	4	8
Hyperbole	11	19	21	32	83
Implication	7	18	10	39	74
Irony	0	0	0	4	4
Lexicalization	1	1	1	12	15
Metaphor	1	0	0	1	2
National self-glorification	0	0	1	3	4
Number game	6	14	12	42	74
Norm expression	1	7	10	8	26
Negative other-presentation	6	9	16	60	91
Polarization	36	60	77	133	276
Populism	8	15	10	15	48
Positive self-presentation	21	24	15	64	124
Vagueness	3	16	4	19	42
Victimization	0	0	0	0	0





**Table 7***The most frequent euphemistic strategies in Obama's speeches*

1. polarization	2. burden/ topos	3. categorization
4. evidentiality	5. positive self-presentation	6. authority
1. victimization	2. metaphor	3. Irony & national self-glorification

Further, as it is clear from the above table, in Obama's speeches, polarization is the most frequently used euphemistic device, and the next frequent category is burden/ topos, followed by categorization, evidentiality, positive self-presentation, and authority. Regarding the least frequent euphemistic device, victimization is the least one, and it is followed by metaphor, irony, and national self-glorification.

Table 7 presents a quantitative analysis of euphemistic strategies used across four speeches. The table categorizes different strategies and provides their frequency in each speech, along with a total count. Among the various euphemistic strategies, *Polarization* is the most frequently used, appearing 191 times, with the highest concentration in Speech 3 (96). *Burden/topos* follows closely with 120 instances, particularly prevalent in Speech 4 (50) and Speech 3 (36). *Positive self-presentation* also appears frequently (111 times), showing a significant presence in Speech 3 (41) and Speech 4 (30). Other commonly used strategies include *Authority* (107), *Evidentiality* (98), *Categorization* (93), and *Vagueness* (90). These suggest an emphasis on reinforcing credibility, structuring arguments persuasively, and allowing for interpretative flexibility. *Example/illustration* (67) and *Number game* (68) are also relatively frequent, indicating reliance on supporting details and statistical framing.

On the other hand, some strategies are minimally utilized. *Irony* is entirely absent, while *National self-glorification* appears only twice. *Victimization* is used sparingly (10 times), and *Disclaimers* appear only three times. *Metaphor* and *Consensus* also have relatively low usage, with 11 and 5 instances, respectively. Speech 3 exhibits the highest overall usage of euphemistic strategies, particularly in *Polarization*, *Evidentiality*, and *Positive self-presentation*, suggesting a strong rhetorical emphasis in this particular speech. Speech 4 also contains a notable concentration of euphemistic elements, particularly in *Burden/topos*, *Number game*, and *Evidentiality*. Speech 2 generally has the lowest counts across most categories.

In summary, Rouhani's speeches demonstrate a strategic deployment of euphemistic language, with a pronounced reliance on *Polarization*, *Burden/topos*, and *Positive self-presentation*. This suggests an effort to construct persuasive narratives through contrast, responsibility attribution, and favorable self-representation, while more subtle rhetorical strategies like *Irony* and *Metaphor* are less prominent.

**Table 8***Degree of Utilization of Euphemistic Strategies in Rouhani Speeches*

Euphemistic Strategy	Speech1	Speech 2	Speech 3	Speech 4	Total
Actor description	12	1	23	11	47
authority	20	8	49	30	107
Burden/ topos	25	9	36	50	120
categorization	29	9	28	27	93
Comparison	2	3	3	7	15
consensus	1	1	2	1	5
counterfactuals	1	1	6	3	11
Disclaimers	1	0	0	2	3
euphemism	4	1	4	5	14
Evidentiality	14	6	46	32	98



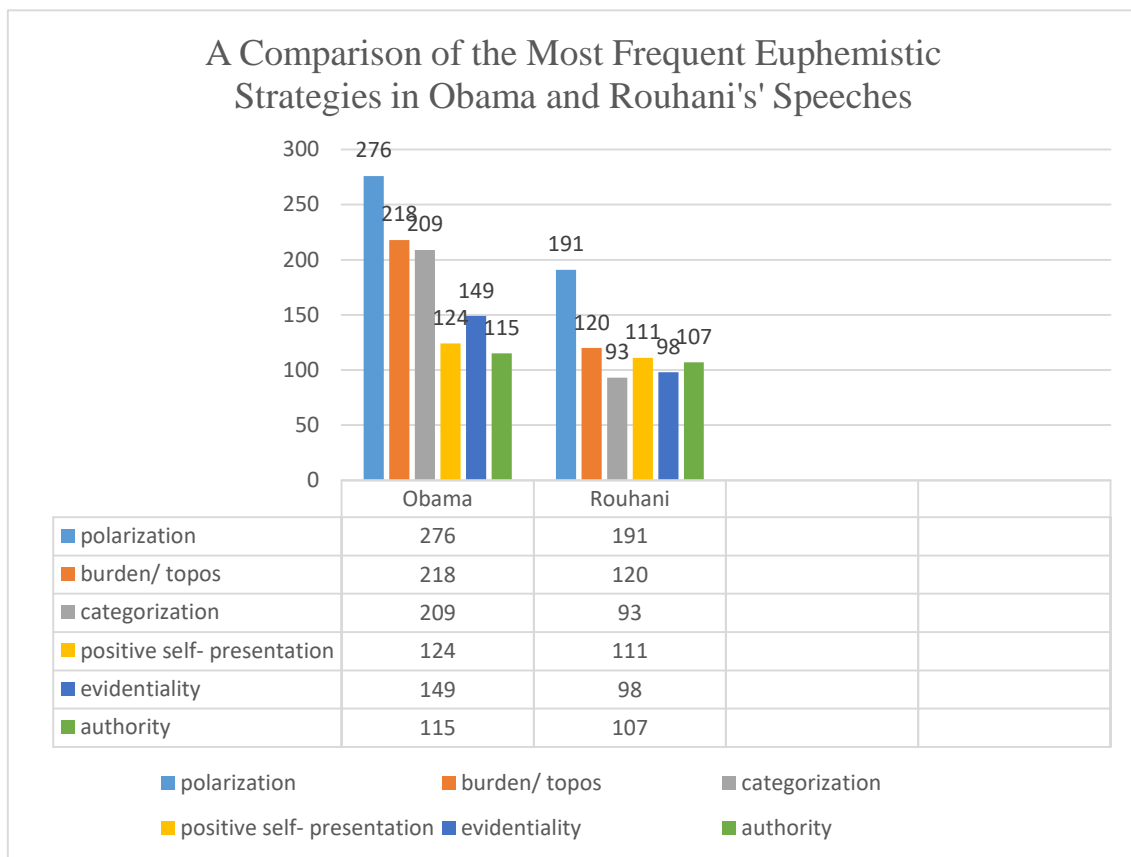
<b>example/ illustration</b>	6	1	22	38	67
<b>Generalization</b>	0	0	4	5	9
<b>Hyperbole</b>	1	0	5	4	10
<b>Implication</b>	4	5	8	7	24
<b>Irony</b>	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Lexicalization</b>	1	2	8	6	17
<b>Metaphor</b>	2	4	2	3	11
<b>National self-glorification</b>	0	0	1	1	2
<b>Number game</b>	9	2	12	45	68
<b>Norm expression</b>	2	9	5	6	22
<b>Negative other-presentation</b>	3	3	22	15	43
<b>Polarization</b>	18	22	96	55	191
<b>populism</b>	4	8	31	9	52
<b>Positive self-presentation</b>	18	22	41	30	111
<b>Vagueness</b>	11	16	39	24	90
<b>victimization</b>	1	1	5	3	10

The most frequent euphemistic strategies in Rouhani's speeches

<b>1. polarization</b>	<b>2. burden/ topos</b>	<b>3. positive- self-presentation</b>
<b>4. authority</b>	5. evidentiality	6. categorization

The least frequent euphemistic strategies in Rouhani's speeches

<b>1. irony</b>	<b>2. national self-glorification</b>	<b>3. disclaimers</b>
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In a similar vein, the comparison of euphemistic strategies in the speeches of Obama and Rouhani reveals notable differences in their rhetorical approaches. *Polarization* emerges as the most frequently used strategy for both leaders, with Obama employing it significantly more (276 instances) than Rouhani (191 instances). Similarly, *burden/topos* appears more often in Obama's speeches (218) than in Rouhani's (120) speeches, indicating a greater emphasis on attributing responsibility or framing issues in a particular way. *Categorization* also follows this pattern, with Obama using it 209 times, whereas Rouhani employs it only 93 times. *Positive self-presentation* shows a smaller difference, with Obama (124) slightly surpassing Rouhani (111), suggesting that both leaders strategically craft their image in a comparable manner. *Evidentiality*, which involves citing sources or using evidence to support claims, is more prominent in Obama's discourse (149) than in Rouhani's (98). However, *authority* is the only strategy where Rouhani (193) exceeds Obama (115), indicating a stronger reliance on authoritative references in his rhetoric. Overall, Obama demonstrates a higher tendency to use euphemistic strategies across most categories, except for *authority*, which plays a more central role in Rouhani's speeches.

**Table 9**

*Degree of Utilization of Euphemistic Strategies in Kerry Speeches*

Euphemistic Strategy	Speech1	Speech 2	Total
<b>Actor description</b>	1	19	20
<b>authority</b>	6	59	65
<b>Burden/ topos</b>	21	123	144
<b>categorization</b>	12	87	99
<b>Comparison</b>	7	14	21
<b>consensus</b>	7	11	18
<b>counterfactuals</b>	0	9	9
<b>Disclaimers</b>	2	2	4
<b>euphemism</b>	0	6	6
<b>Evidentiality</b>	16	57	73
<b>example/ illustration</b>	9	39	48
<b>Generalization</b>	0	1	1
<b>Hyperbole</b>	4	24	28
<b>Implication</b>	3	22	25
<b>Irony</b>	0	1	1
<b>Lexicalization</b>	0	1	1
<b>Metaphor</b>	0	1	1
<b>National self-glorification</b>	0	0	0
<b>Number game</b>	9	50	59
<b>Norm expression</b>	2	3	5
<b>Negative other-presentation</b>	2	39	41
<b>Polarization</b>	57	214	271
<b>populism</b>	1	18	19
<b>Positive self-presentation</b>	14	86	100
<b>Vagueness</b>	6	13	19
<b>victimization</b>	0	3	3

The most frequent euphemistic strategies in Kerry's speeches

<b>1. polarization</b>	<b>2. burden/ topos</b>	<b>3. positive self-presentation</b>
<b>4. categorization</b>	5. evidentiality	6. authority

## The least frequent euphemistic strategies in Kerry's speeches

<b>1. national self-glorification</b>	<b>2. metaphor, irony, &amp; generalization</b>	<b>3. victimization</b>
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With respect to euphemistic strategies in Kerry's speeches, it can be said that the most frequent euphemistic devices are polarization, burden/ topos, positive self-presentation, categorization, evidentiality, and authority, while national self-glorification, metaphor, irony, and generalization (have the same frequency), and victimization are the least frequent ones.

**Table 10***Degree of Utilization of Euphemistic Strategies in Zarif Speeches*

<b>Euphemistic Strategy</b>	<b>Speech1</b>	<b>Speech 2</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Actor description</b>	29	7	36
<b>authority</b>	39	47	86
<b>Burden/ topos</b>	62	70	132
<b>categorization</b>	32	39	71
<b>Comparison</b>	8	5	13
<b>consensus</b>	12	2	14
<b>counterfactuals</b>	4	1	5
<b>Disclaimers</b>	2	1	3
<b>euphemism</b>	8	1	9
<b>Evidentiality</b>	82	67	149
<b>example/ illustration</b>	30	7	37
<b>Generalization</b>	9	3	12
<b>Hyperbole</b>	9	7	16
<b>Implication</b>	25	11	36
<b>irony</b>	1	2	3
<b>Lexicalization</b>	12	3	15
<b>Metaphor</b>	10	2	12
<b>National self-glorification</b>	1	2	3
<b>Number game</b>	24	17	41
<b>Norm expression</b>	6	13	19
<b>Negative other-presentation</b>	30	18	48
<b>Polarization</b>	85	21	106
<b>populism</b>	22	8	30
<b>Positive self-presentation</b>	79	51	130
<b>Vagueness</b>	25	25	50
<b>victimization</b>	5	4	9

## The most frequent euphemistic strategies in Zarif's speeches

<b>1. Evidentiality</b>	<b>2. burden/ topos</b>	<b>3. positive self-presentation</b>
<b>4. polarization</b>	<b>5. authority</b>	<b>6. categorization</b>

## The least frequent euphemistic strategies in Zarif's speeches

<b>1. metaphor, irony, &amp; disclaimers</b>	<b>2. counterfactuals</b>	<b>3. victimization</b>
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The most frequent euphemistic devices in Zarif's speeches are the same as the other politicians but their order is different. The order of using euphemistic devices in the Zarif's speeches is evidentiality, burden/ topos, positive self- presentation, Polarization, authority and

categorization. In addition, metaphor, irony, and disclaimers, counterfactuals and victimization are the least ones.

**Table 11**

*Degree of Utilization of Euphemistic Strategies in Zarif and Kerry Speeches*

<b>Euphemistic Strategy</b>	<b>Kerry</b>	<b>Zariff</b>
<b>Actor description</b>	20	36
<b>Authority</b>	65	86
<b>Burden/ topos</b>	144	132
<b>categorization</b>	99	71
<b>Comparison</b>	21	13
<b>Consensus</b>	18	14
<b>counterfactuals</b>	9	5
<b>Disclaimers</b>	4	3
<b>euphemism</b>	6	9
<b>Evidentiality</b>	73	149
<b>example/ illustration</b>	48	37
<b>Generalization</b>	1	12
<b>Hyperbole</b>	28	16
<b>Implication</b>	25	36
<b>irony</b>	1	3
<b>Lexicalization</b>	1	15
<b>Metaphor</b>	1	12
<b>National self-glorification</b>	0	3
<b>Number game</b>	59	41
<b>Norm expression</b>	5	19
<b>Negative other-presentation</b>	41	48
<b>Polarization</b>	214	106
<b>populism</b>	18	30
<b>Positive self-presentation</b>	86	130
<b>Vagueness</b>	13	50
<b>victimization</b>	3	9

The most frequent euphemistic devices used by Kerry and Zarif

<b>Kerry</b>	<b>Zarif</b>
<b>polarization</b>	Evidentiality
<b>Burden/ topos</b>	Burden/ topos
<b>Positive self- presentation</b>	Positive self- presentation
<b>categorization</b>	polarization
<b>evidentiality</b>	authority
<b>authority</b>	categorization

The least frequent euphemistic devices used by Kerry and Zarif

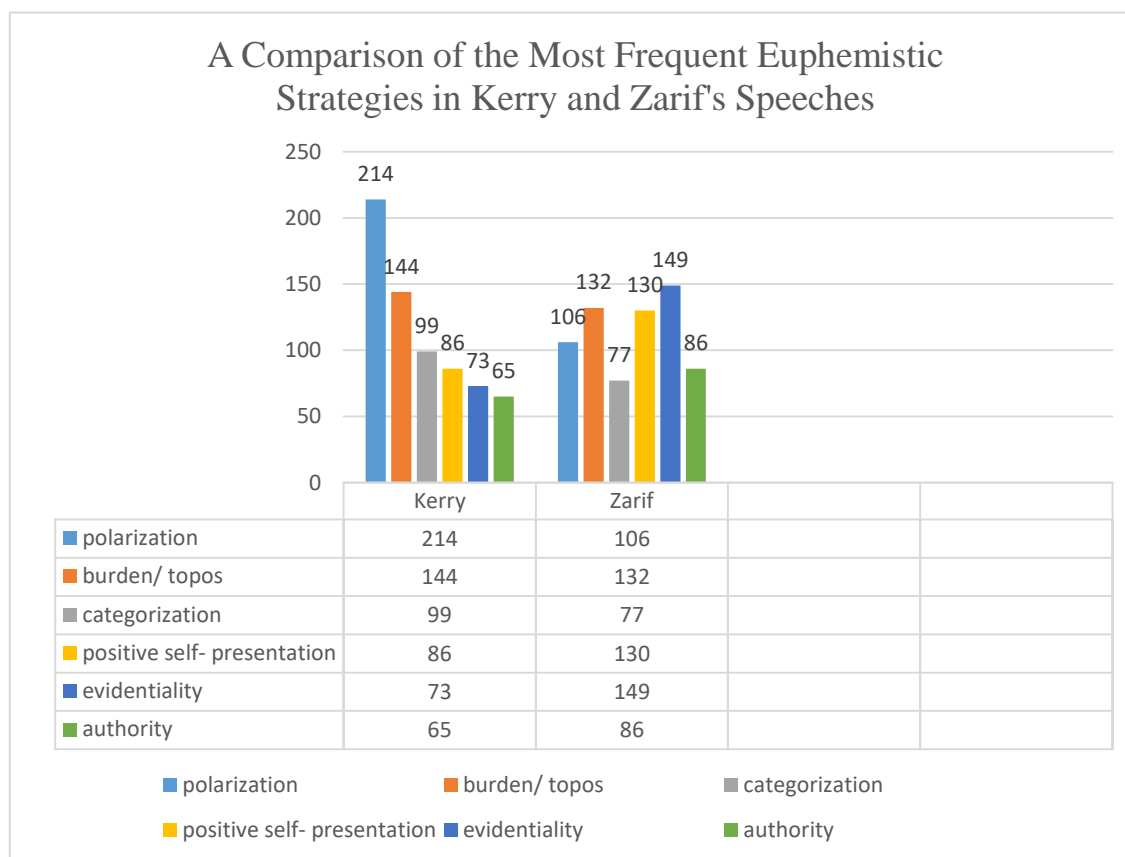
<b>Kerry</b>	<b>Zarif</b>
<b>National self- glorification</b>	Metaphor, Irony, disclaimers
<b>Metaphor, irony, generalization</b>	counterfactuals
<b>victimization</b>	victimization

With respect to euphemistic strategies in Kerry's speeches, it can be said that the most frequent euphemistic devices are polarization, burden/ topos, positive self-presentation, categorization, evidentiality, and authority, while national self-glorification, metaphor, irony, and



generalization (have the same frequency), and victimization are the least frequent ones. The most frequent euphemistic devices in Zarif's speeches are the same as Kerry's, but their order is different. The order of euphemistic devices in Zarif's speeches is evidentiality, burden/ topos, positive self-presentation, polarization, authority, and categorization, respectively. In addition, metaphor, irony, disclaimers, counterfactuals, and victimization are the least ones.

The following graph further presents a comparative analysis of the euphemistic strategies employed by John Kerry and Mohammad Javad Zarif in their speeches. The most frequently used strategy by Kerry is "polarization," with a count of 214 instances. This is significantly higher than Zarif's use of the same strategy, which stands at 106 instances. The strategy of "burden/topos" is also more prevalent in Kerry's speeches (144 instances) compared to Zarif's (132 instances). However, Zarif employs the strategy of "evidentiality" more frequently (149 instances) than Kerry (73 instances). In terms of "categorization," Kerry uses this strategy 99 times, while Zarif uses it 77 times. The strategy of "positive self-presentation" is more common in Zarif's speeches (130 instances) compared to Kerry's (86 instances). Lastly, the use of "authority" is slightly higher in Zarif's speeches (107 instances) than in Kerry's (65 instances).



Overall, the graph indicates that Kerry tends to rely more on polarization and burden/topos, while Zarif emphasizes evidentiality and positive self-presentation. These differences may reflect distinct rhetorical styles and objectives in their respective speeches.

### Discussion

Euphemistic strategies serve to manipulate meaning within discourse, particularly in the realm of political communication. This study illustrates how politicians employ euphemistic devices to distort the truth and further their objectives both domestically and internationally. In the political



arena, these strategies are utilized to reshape public perceptions of facts, beliefs, and ideologies to align with the politicians' aims. In the context of Iranian speeches, politicians endeavor to portray an optimistic perspective on negotiations, suggesting that such discussions will lead to improved economic conditions for Iranians, all while maintaining their nuclear reactor programs. Conversely, American politicians express pride in their efforts to halt the Iranian nuclear initiative, which they perceive as a significant global threat. By curtailing this program, they assert that they can foster peace for people worldwide.

In the context of polarization, politicians endeavor to articulate the interests of their constituents. Furthermore, the prevalence of polarization, characterized by the frequent use of collective pronouns such as "we" and "they," underscores the political and historical rift between the United States and Iran. This linguistic choice serves to highlight the significant challenges inherent in their diplomatic relations, particularly during discussions surrounding nuclear negotiations (Håkansson, 2012). By employing such language, politicians create a narrative of divergence and distinction, emphasizing the issues that complicate their interactions. Additionally, the use of collective pronouns fosters a sense of inclusivity, reflecting a shared identity among government members, the general populace, and allied nations, thereby reinforcing notions of solidarity and partnership (Bull & Fetzer, 2006).

The prevalence of positive self-presentation among discursive euphemistic devices indicates that politicians strategically portray themselves and their actions in a favorable light. This approach allows them to reinforce their self-image while simultaneously promoting their ideological perspectives to the audience, thereby seeking to influence public opinion. For instance, American politicians assert that nuclear negotiations will thwart Iran's development of nuclear weapons, claiming that such agreements will foster global peace and enhance security for both the United States and the world at large. Conversely, Iranian politicians endeavor to assure the international community of their intentions to pursue nuclear weapons. They also aim to persuade both domestic and foreign audiences, as well as the public within Iran, that their nuclear reactor operations will persist and that their advancements in nuclear technology will be maintained. Through this narrative, they seek to legitimize their nuclear activities by cultivating a positive self-image among both their supporters and detractors. Consequently, they aim to position themselves as the true victors of the negotiations in the eyes of their domestic audience while also attempting to convince the public that the agreement will lead to significant improvements in the economy and overall quality of life.

Furthermore, the leaders of these two nations, particularly the Presidents, cultivate a favorable self-image by characterizing the members of their negotiating teams as diligent, effective, courageous, honest, loyal, and professional. From the perspective of the American President, the negotiators are depicted as skilled, dedicated, and loyal individuals who are earnestly striving to achieve peace and security through their commitment to robust and principled American diplomacy. Conversely, Iranian officials express gratitude towards their negotiating team members, highlighting their diligence, seriousness, logical reasoning, professionalism, trustworthiness, and courage while also noting the backing of Iran's leader and the public as a significant accomplishment in the negotiation process.

To recap, political speeches can be understood as a form of political communication situated within a competitive arena, where politicians engage in a contest to garner public support, often at the expense of disparaging their rivals (Van Dijk, 2006). In their efforts to establish credibility, politicians frequently portray themselves as trustworthy and honest, aiming to be perceived as legitimate authorities and victorious representatives in negotiations. This strategy serves to shield them from severe criticism and to redirect such criticism through deflection, as noted by Lakoff (2017). Consequently, a favorable narrative is crafted for the public, designed to persuade the masses towards a specific ideology by projecting a positive self-



image through politically motivated commendations and self-congratulatory remarks regarding their negotiation efforts. This optimistic portrayal is achieved through the use of euphemistic language and ideologically driven strategies that serve the politicians' interests.

### Conclusion

This research aimed to perform a discourse analysis of euphemisms at both the lexical and syntactic levels within political speeches delivered by U.S. and Iranian politicians regarding the nuclear agreement from 2013 to 2015. By investigating the interplay between these two linguistic dimensions in conveying subtle meanings and shaping audience perceptions, the study seeks to reveal the strategic use of euphemism in the realm of political discourse.

The analysis of the speeches indicates that politicians employ euphemistic strategies related to authority and evidentiality to establish a foundation for burden or topos, which refers to the construction of compelling arguments against a particular issue. In essence, they present substantial evidence or validation through references to authoritative figures, including esteemed experts, moral leaders, and reputable international organizations such as the United Nations and Amnesty International. By citing credible individuals, scholarly articles, and relevant scenarios, they aim to project objectivity, reliability, and credibility. This approach serves to reinforce their claims and perspectives within the discourse, rendering their arguments against the topic as self-evident, adequate, rational, and plausible.

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