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## **EUPHEMISMS IN MODERN POLITICAL DISCOURSE: JOSEPH BIDEN'S SPEECHES IN THE WAR IN UKRAINE**

Евфемізми як засоби толерантного та пом'якшувального висловлювання потребують ґрунтовного та детального дослідження й аналізу. Публікація спрямована на дослідження особливостей використання та функціонування евфемізму в політичному дискурсі 46-го президента США Джозефа Байдена під час українсько-російської війни. Актуальність розвідки зумовлена необхідністю вивчення мовного образу російсько-української війни та її основних політичних акторів у сучасному політичному дискурсі. Для досягнення поставленої *мети* нами використано такі *методи*, як описовий, суцільної вибірки, компонентного та лексико-семантичного аналізу, методи порівняння та спостереження, класифікації та систематизації даних, кількісних підрахунків тощо. Ми також використовуємо мультимодальний дискурс-аналіз (МДА). Об'єктом дослідження є евфемізми як елемент сучасного політичного дискурсу.

Аналіз політичних промов Джозефа Байдена дозволив виокремити групи найуживаніших типів евфемізмів, а саме: приховування військових конфліктів ("*conflict*", "*invasion*", "*aggression*", "*fight for freedom*", "*crisis*", "*the great battle for freedom*"); табування смерті ("*sacrifice*", "*pass away*", "*lose their lives*"); соціально-економічної сфери ("*the continued support*", "*support*"). За емпіричними даними дослідження, у промовах Джозефа Байдена 47,2% евфемізмів виконують вуалітивну функцію, 38,9% евфемізмів субститують мають кооперативну функцію, а 8,3% евфемізмів виконують превентивну функцію. Аналізуючи співвідношення жестів і евфемізмів, ми дійшли висновку, що Джозеф Байден використовував ці жести переважно з інтегративною та комплементарною функціями. У статті показано, як поліфонічне "Я" політичного лідера США передається не лише через мову, але й через жест.

*Ключові слова: евфемізм, адресат, семантика, функції, політичний дискурс, війна в Україні, мультимодальний дискурс-аналіз.*

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### **Introduction**

Language is a vital element of politicians' daily lives. Finding the right language and the right words to address the audience is necessary to create a positive image of themselves, their parties, and the countries they represent. The political language is purpose-oriented: political actors use it to maintain support, achieve consensus, influence people's opinions, and attract potential voters. The competence of politicians in the international arena and within the country allows them to disseminate ideas, establish connections, promote civic position, and influence the way people think and behave. In fact, political leaders do not use language

by accident: their speeches and public comments are consciously constructed with a specific purpose in mind. According to F. Batsevich, political discourse is a reflection of social reality using key political terms [Бацевич, 2004, p. 134]. It is the main reliable source of information about current events in the world. However, it often includes negative news. Political leaders often use an indirect nomination, i.e., a euphemism, to mitigate negative information or its elements, to avoid misunderstandings and conflicts.

Joseph Biden is an American politician who serves as the 46<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. Keraf suggests [Keraf, 2006] that it is possible to determine the personality, character, and ability of a person who uses a language by its style. Thus, the current study will provide insights into the peculiarities of euphemism usage in modern political discourse (based on Joseph Biden's speeches).

The research of speeches is not a new trend. Many types of studies in this field have been carried out. The interest in analyzing the speeches of the President of the United States of America on the Ukrainian-Russian war is significant, since the statements of the US President not only attract the attention of other countries, serve as an appeal for the united collective strength of countries and the firm support for Ukraine, but also represent a multidimensional linguistic phenomenon that covers social, cognitive, discursive, and semiotic components. We should also note that political discourse on the war in Ukraine has dominated the world news since February 2022.

Therefore, the core objective of the present study is to probe into the rhetorical device of euphemism in the political discourse of the 46<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, Joseph Biden, during the Ukrainian-Russian war. To date, there have been no studies that examine this issue. The study attempts to fill in the gap by focusing on investigating the following research questions:

1. What functions do euphemisms perform in Joseph Biden's political discourse?
2. What euphemism-accompanying gestures does the 46<sup>th</sup> US president employ?
3. Does Joseph Biden communicate different or similar viewpoints across gestures and speech?

The significance of the study is based on the necessity to research the linguistic image of the Russian-Ukrainian war and its main political actors in current political discourse. The relevance of this study is also determined by the aim to show the use of euphemisms in current political discourse on the example of Joseph Biden's speeches.

## **Methodology**

Modern linguistics defines discourse as the unity of speech and the extralinguistic, pragmatic, sociocultural factors that accompany the act of speech. Recently, we have seen a rapid increase in interest in the study of political discourse among representatives of various scientific disciplines, including linguists, sociologists, psychologists, and mass communication researchers.

Socio-political vocabulary is at the centre of attention today due to extralinguistic and interlinguistic factors. The problem of political discourse and the phenomenon of euphemism has been and is of interest to many linguists. Ukrainian linguist F. Batsevych argues that the concepts of political communication and political discourse are inextricably linked. The researcher explains that political communication acts as a special type of political relations through which subjects regulate the dissemination of socio-political opinions [Бацевич, 2004]. I. Butova argues that the US political discourse is characterized by constant development, and thus the glossary is replenished in various ways [Бутова, 2010].

Linguistic studies note that political communication has its own special language, the so-called language of power or political discourse. Scholars have emphasized that political euphemisms are used for a specific purpose, i.e., to influence and control events [Leinfellner, 1971, p. 71]. American linguists David and Roger Johnson define the concept of political discourse as "the formal exchange of reasoned views as to which of several alternative courses of action should be taken to solve a societal problem" [D. Johnson, R. Johnson, 2000, p. 317].

The study of political discourse is not limited to analyzing the features of political texts and debates. Researchers are interested in the linguistic means by which politicians influence and control public opinion. We agree with O. Herus and A. Kulyk that the text of a political speech

is the most effective among other genres (government discussions, parliamentary debates, creation of party programs, etc.) within the English-language political discourse. Researchers consider speech to be a tool for communicating and disseminating information by a politician in order to gain support from the addressee, and it is carried out through manipulation, namely the widespread use of euphemisms [Герус, Кулик, 2018, p. 32].

Euphemisms as a rhetorical strategy are heavily employed in political discourse [Mihás, 2005; Blackledge, 2006; Arif, 2015]. Euphemism is mainly based on minimizing a negative aspect or purposefully switching the means or names by which it is expressed, creating desirable connotative meanings. The name change, aside from conferring new properties upon the denotation, reflects political leaders' propensity to hide the true essence of the message in order to make it palatable to the public taste [Mihás, 2005]. Prominent Ukrainian and foreign researchers (V. Velykoroda [Великорода, 2008], Z. Dubynets [Дубинець, 2011], O. Saprykina [Саприкіна, 2017], Yu. Shvechko [Швечкова, 2021], O. Taranenko [Тараненко, 2017], V. Turchyn and M. Turchyn [В. Турчин, М. Турчин, 2011], O. Yanush [Януш, 2009], R. Holder [Holder, 2002], E. Mihás [Mihás, 2005]; A Blackledge [Blackledge, 2006], N. Arif [Arif, 2015] etc.) have researched euphemisms. Their works are a significant theoretical basis for our study, as they proposed terminology and classifications allowing us to comprehensively cover the issue.

Discourse analysts seek to investigate how political leaders attempt to convince their audiences through the use of different rhetorical devices. Ukrainian scholar Pavlichenko has researched the linguistic image of the Russian-Ukrainian war and its main political actors in British and American media political discourse. She concentrated on the analysis of the main discursive strategies of polarization in political media discourse and the linguistic means of their verbalization. This research argues that polarisation is being demonstrated in the media discourse on the Russian-Ukrainian war in 2022 [Pavlichenko, 2022].

We review previous studies that have analyzed Biden's political discourse and euphemisms as rhetorical devices he employs to convince his audiences. Mahfoud and Khaldaoui have researched Biden's first speech on the war in Ukraine. It was analyzed from the perspective of van Dijk's Ideological Square Model. The scholars argue that the 46th President of the United States employed eight discursive strategies (Actor Description, Consensus, Comparison, Evidentiality, Values expression, Victimization / criminalization, National self-glorification, and Presupposition) [Mahfoud, Khaldaoui, 2023]. Indonesian scholars investigated the rhetorical appeals of President Joseph Biden's inaugural speech. The researchers employed Aristotle's theory of rhetoric as the theoretical basis for their study, they also applied descriptive qualitative analysis. According to research results, the 46<sup>th</sup> President of the United States have used all three Aristotelian rhetorical tactics (pathos, ethos, and logos) in his inauguration address. Biden skillfully employed rhetoric appeals to engage and establish trust among US citizens [Nurkhamidah, Fahira, Ningtyas, 2021].

Amairah and Rababah also examined the discourse of President Joseph Biden. Scientists examined the political rhetoric of his speech to the nation on Afghanistan. The researchers also employed Aristotle's theory of rhetoric and van Dijk's Ideological Square Model, they analyzed how Biden attempted to persuade the audience of his perspectives and choices regarding the US war in Afghanistan. The study found that Biden portrayed himself, his administration, and his nation favourably. In contrast, he portrayed the Afghan government, people, and nation negatively. The scholars argue President Biden employed ethical, emotional, and rational arguments to persuade the audience of his views, beliefs, and government policies [Amairah, Rababah, 2022].

Amairah's paper is a rhetorical analysis of the political discourse in the speeches of US President Joseph Biden. The research data includes 40 speeches delivered by Joseph Biden from January 2021 to February 2022. The researcher also employed Aristotle's theory of rhetoric, Amairah has investigated one key canon of rhetoric, Invention. The results of the quantitative study have shown that personal pronoun *we* is the most common in the corpus to build a bond with the listeners. *I* is the second most frequently pronoun in the corpus for establishing the credibility, competence, and reliability of the speaker. The scholar suggests Joseph Biden tries to spread the good feelings of hope and love, which is the most commonly used vocabulary in the corpus for emotion. He also uses a lot of logical appeals and persuasive arguments to persuade his audience, including the use of statistics and numbers, citing sources such as authoritative figures and the Bible [Amairah, 2023].

Chinese scholar Ye focused on exploring the rhetorical strategies adopted in Joseph Biden's speech in Warsaw on March 26, 2022. The ideological square model in the realm of critical discourse analysis was adopted to analyze President Biden's discourse. According to Ye, "US officials and leaders always make speeches which are stuffed with the mentality of polarization and self-other rhetoric tactics" [Ye, 2022, p. 56].

A closer look at the literature on Joseph Biden's modern political discourse in the war in Ukraine, however, reveals a number of gaps and shortcomings. The literature review shows that most early studies mainly focus on analyzing Joseph Biden's speeches he made before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine (February 24, 2022.). The Amaireh's research data include 40 speeches delivered by Joseph Biden from January 2021 to February 2022 [Amaireh, 2023]. Amaireh and Rababah examined the political rhetoric of his speech to the nation in Afghanistan [Amaireh, Rababah, 2022]. Scholars have also investigated the rhetorical appeals of President Joseph Biden's inaugural speech [Nurkhamidah, Fahira, Ningtyas, 2021]. Mahfoud and Khaldaoui have only researched Biden's first speech on the war in Ukraine [Mahfoud, Khaldaoui, 2023]. Ye focused on exploring the rhetoric strategies adopted in Joseph Biden's speech in Warsaw on March 26, 2022 [Ye, 2022]. However, Joseph Biden's other speeches on the war in Ukraine have not been the subject of scientific linguistic research.

Secondly, most literature on political speeches in general and Joseph Biden in particular has been dedicated to traditional discourse analysis focusing either on written or spoken language. Most scholars [Nurkhamidah, Fahira, Ningtyas, 2021; Amaireh, Rababah, 2022; Ye, 2022; Mahfoud, Khaldaoui, 2023; Amaireh, 2023] employed Aristotle's theory of rhetoric and van Dijk's Ideological Square Model to analyze Joseph Biden's political discourse.

The majority of research tends to focus on either verbal or non-verbal resources, ignoring the interaction of other modes of communication in the meaning-making process. The current study also employs an innovative approach (Multimodal Discourse Analysis) to the intersemiosis between verbal and nonverbal semantic resources that appear in these speeches.

Although studies on Joseph Biden's modern political discourse have been conducted by some authors, the problem of euphemism usage is still insufficiently explored. To our knowledge, no prior studies have examined euphemisms in Joseph Biden's modern political discourse in the war in Ukraine.

## Results and discussion

It is a known fact that the political discourse of US President Joseph Biden is characterized by standardized and accessible texts. The reasonableness and easy interpretation of the message is ensured by numerous stylistic means. Euphemisms as a driver of politically correct intercultural communication is obviously a priority for the politician.

President Joseph Biden's speeches on the United Efforts of the Free World to Support the People of Ukraine (February 26, 2022) [Biden, 2022] and on the One-Year Anniversary of Russia's Brutal and Unprovoked Invasion of Ukraine of the US (February 21, 2023) [Biden, 2023] at the Royal Castle in Warsaw serve as a material for the study of euphemisms in political discourse. The American leader's speeches were devoted to the issue of uniting the efforts of the free world to support the Ukrainian people in the war against Russia. The focus of the speeches on a democratic society and the mention of the vulnerable position of the Ukrainian people in the difficult struggle for their freedom and independence demonstrate the deep pragmatism of the text.

This leads to a clear selection of linguistic units to express the content of the message, a high level of evocative statements and the use of politically correct language enriched with euphemisms. For instance: "*The United States and our partners stand with Ukraine's teachers, its hospital staff, its emergency responders, the workers in cities across Ukraine who are fighting to keep the power on in the face of Russia's cruel bombardment*" [Biden, 2023]. Euphemistic phrase "*to keep the power on in the face of Russia's cruel bombardment*" [Biden, 2023] represents the fact that Russia attacked Ukrainian power infrastructure facilities cutting off power to cities and towns, dropping bombs on homes and killing citizens throughout Ukraine. The phrase "*Ukraine's teachers, its hospital staff, its emergency responders, the workers in cities*" [Biden, 2023] is used to build more trust with listeners, to show understanding and to appreciate their efforts.

Joseph Biden often avoids the direct nomination of “war” by appealing to a democratic society. The reason for such communicative behaviour is that any military action on foreign territory is a form of aggression in foreign policy. As a result, it causes dissatisfaction among citizens of the democratic societies. Therefore, the usage of the word “war” in a speech automatically causes dissatisfaction among the addressees because it evokes unpleasant associations. The main purpose of using euphemisms in such a situation is to prevent these negative emotions from being transferred to the perception of the politician’s personality and policies. A characteristic feature of Joseph Biden’s speeches is the usage of less categorical politically correct synonyms. For example: *“But we emerged anew in the great battle for freedom: a battle between democracy and autocracy, between liberty and repression, between a rules-based order and one governed by brute force”* [Biden, 2022].

Joseph Biden compared the twentieth-century repressions and the Russia-Ukraine war in 2022, he emphasizes the growing threat for most countries and peoples. We think the phrase *“the great battle for freedom”* [Biden, 2022] is motivated by the aim to get the sympathy of the audience. According to V. Velykoroda’s [Velykoroda, 2008] classification of the political euphemisms’ functions, we can consider it as an example of the cooperative function.

While using various word partners with *“freedom”* to nominate the Ukrainian-Russian war, Joseph Biden usually holds his arms and palms open. He appears serious and calm, looking straight ahead during the entirety of the speech (February 26, 2022). His hands are moving but in controlled motions and there are no exaggerated gestures. According to Svitlana Rybalka, the raised hands with open palms towards people indicate a person’s directness and frankness [Рибалка, 2006, с. 100]. Analyzing gesture-speech correlation, we suggest that these hand movements are mainly used by the 46<sup>th</sup> US President with integrative and complementary functions. So, the information provided by such gestures adds precision and emphasis to linguistic information.

Another euphemism for the war in Ukraine is *“invasion”*, which Joseph Biden often uses in his speeches. For example, *“since the invasion, America has committed another \$1.35 billion in weapons and ammunition”* [Biden, 2022]. According to the Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, invasion is *“an occasion when an army or country uses force to enter and take control of another country”* [Cambridge Dictionary]. The words *“invasion”* and *“war”* have different meanings, war is a violent armed conflict between countries or between national, ethnic or other groups, usually involving armed struggle. Since the Russian troops invaded the territory of Ukraine and were the first to open fire, we consider the term *“invasion”* to be used instead of *“war”* to soft the statement (euphemism’s veiling function).

Joseph Biden often uses the euphemism *“aggression”* to substitute *“war”*: *“the world has already voted multiple times, including in the United Nations General Assembly, to condemn Russia’s aggression and support a just peace”* [Biden, 2023]; *“Vladimir Putin’s aggression have cut you, the Russian people, off from the rest of the world, and it’s taking Russia back to the 19th century”* [Biden, 2022]. According to the Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, aggression is *“spoken or physical behaviour that is threatening or involves harm to someone or something”* [Woodford, 2013] while in fact, it relates to war. We see the reason for the change in the US president’s desire to avoid categorical elements that could provoke fear, irritation, and panic among the target audience. This word is also used to achieve a politically correct tone of speech that corresponds to the cooperative function of euphemisms.

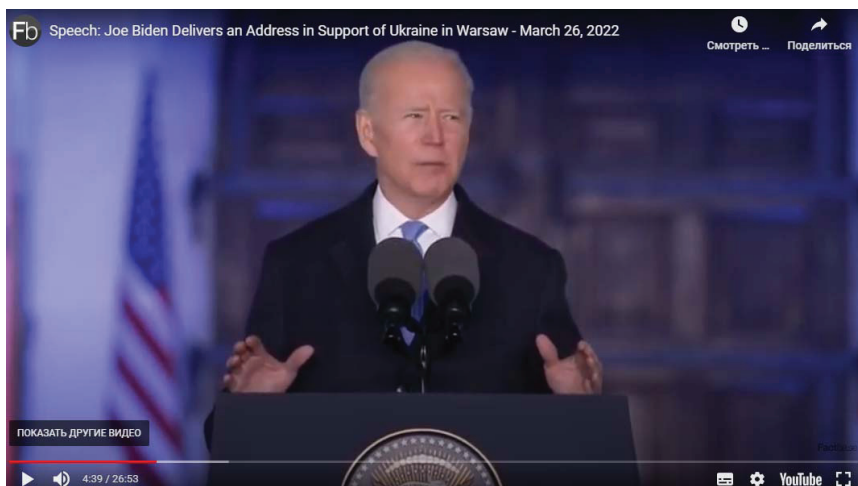
In his speech, Joseph Biden also discusses Russia’s current position on the global political stage, and he argues that the economic crisis is inevitable by using the word *“cut”*. Its neutral connotation and polysemy confirm that the US president is not just hiding the unpleasant reality of the political situation in both countries, but he is also trying to influence the recipient’s way of thinking through verbal means. This allows us to consider this example as manipulation (the rhetorical function of a euphemism).

The identification of the long-term armed conflict between Ukraine and Russia with the national struggle for democracy indicates Joseph Biden’s intention to replace the crude concepts of *“battle”* or *“war”* with an element that emphasizes significance and sacrifice. For instance, *“in the perennial struggle for democracy and freedom, Ukraine and its people are on the frontlines fighting to save their nation”* [Biden, 2022]. Thus, the distortive function of euphemism is realized by giving a positive connotation to a negative phenomenon. He employed the

phrase “*perennial struggle*” to emphasize the long-standing nature of the fight for democracy and freedom. He also drew listeners’ attention to Ukrainians’ crucial role in this ongoing global battle by words “*are on the frontlines fighting to save their nation*” [Biden, 2022].

The nonverbal means accompanying this statement are equally significant (Figure 1). The raising of his hands, even if only slightly, can be interpreted as a gesture of solidarity and support. This movement indicates that he emotionally supports the Ukrainian people. The slight opening of his hands could be seen as a symbolic gesture of openness, transparency, and a willingness to engage in a collaborative effort.

The background is blurred, and the audiovisual narrative focuses on the speaker’s figure shown in close-up. The President uses psychological pauses to intensify his speech expression. The psychological pauses frame the euphemism “*the perennial struggle*” gaining logical stress in this way. Thus, the pause becomes a component of the metonymic construction (“*Ukraine and its people are on the frontlines of fighting*” [Biden, 2022]), intensifying the expressive connotation and emotional impact of the message on the recipient.



**Figure 1. President Biden Delivers Remarks on the United Efforts to Support the People of Ukraine (February 26, 2022): “*in the perennial struggle for democracy and freedom, Ukraine and its people are on the frontlines fighting to save their nation*” [Biden, 2022].**

Biden’s euphemistic statements, adding imagery and expression to his speech, are especially significant because the US president’s speech is delivered to a large number of people in the open air. The richness of vivid images and cognitive metaphors focusing on the “*great battle for freedom*” as a leitmotif (“*But we emerged anew in the great battle for freedom: a battle between democracy and autocracy, between liberty and repression, between a rules-based order and one governed by brute force*” [Biden, 2022]; “*And my message to the rest of Europe: This new battle for freedom has already made a few things crystal clear*” [Biden, 2022]; “*This battle will not be won in days or months either*” [Biden, 2022]) not only adds expressiveness to the speech, but also causes cognitive transformations in the collective consciousness, as the leitmotif of the “*great battle for freedom*” lasting forever actualizes the reference to the well-known archetypal characters of ancient heroes who defeated evil in eternal battles.

In this case, we can consider the manipulative function of euphemisms associated with the connotation of “*battle*” that are aimed at the response (reaction) of the audience. In this situation, Biden’s speech is not so much about the message as it is about communication and influence.

Joseph Biden uses another euphemism phrase “*extraordinary brutality*” speaking on the war in Ukraine: “*Extraordinary brutality from Russian forces and mercenaries*” [Biden, 2023]. It is a substitute for the military crimes and inhumane actions of the Russian soldiers against the Ukrainian citizens. Joseph Biden has used it in order to soften and avoid naming the real events that are taking place in Ukraine. President Biden has used the euphemism “*abuses*” to speak for the severe damage and war crimes committed by Russian armed forces against the Ukrainian

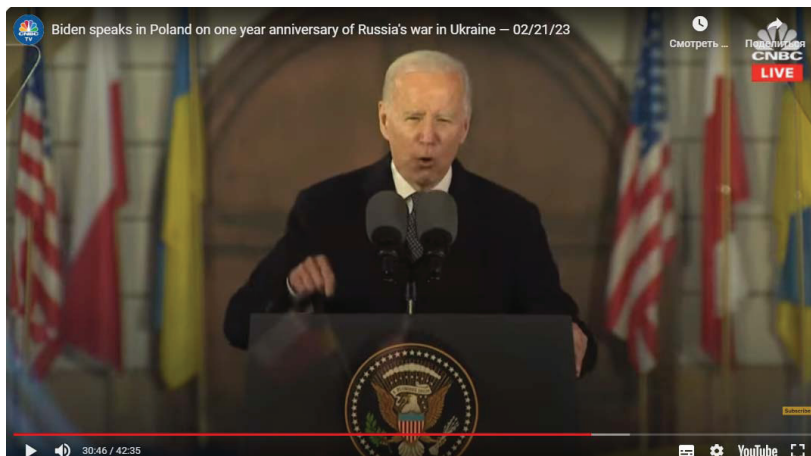
people and infrastructure during the war: *“Meanwhile, together we have made sure that Russia is paying the price for its abuses”* [Biden, 2023]. He speaks without any positive gestures, the speaker is discussing a matter of extreme concern (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Biden speaks in Poland on the one-year anniversary of Russia’s war in Ukraine (February 21, 2023): *“Extraordinary brutality from Russian forces and mercenaries”* [Biden, 2023].

Joseph Biden draws attention to the unhuman behaviour of Russian troops employing both verbal (direct nomination) and nonverbal (gestures) means (Figure 3). The use of finger-pointing to accuse others can convey a strong sense of responsibility. Furthermore, it serves to create a direct and powerful connection with the audience as a means of personally engaging with them and compelling their attention. Joseph Biden effectively communicates the severity of the situation regarding the inhumane behaviour of Russian troops by combining this commanding nonverbal gesture with direct verbal nominations. The use of dominating finger-pointing serves to amplify his message, leaving a lasting impression on the audience and reinforcing the need for decisive actions in response.

In this particular fragment, we also notice the specific intonation of the most expressive phrases and sentences. Here, Biden’s speech is characterized by a short syntagm, as he slows down the pace, trying to convey every word to the audience. The stress is mostly emphatic, with emphasis created by increasing pitch, volume, and duration. Pauses, intonations, voice, register, and tone of speech, being a frame of euphemistic connotations, form the specificity of the communicative and pragmatic field of audiovisual narrative.



**Figure 3.** Biden speaks in Poland on the one-year anniversary of Russia’s war in Ukraine (February 21, 2023): *“No one — no one can turn away their eyes from the atrocities Russia is committing against the Ukrainian people. It’s abhorrent. It’s abhorrent”* [Biden, 2023].

Joseph Biden's speeches contain another euphemism for the concept of "war". For example: *"In the lead-up to the current crisis, the United States and NATO worked for months to engage Russia to avert a war"* [Biden, 2022]. The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary states that a crisis is *"a time of great disagreement, confusion, or suffering"* [Woodford, 2013]. Thus, this euphemism is intentionally used not to name the situation directly taking into account the differences in the meanings that; the "crisis" is used as a euphemistic substitute for the "war". The euphemistic phrase *"murderous assault"* is also used to replace the word "war": *"You know, it was nearly one year ago — (applause) — nearly one year ago I spoke at the Royal Castle here in Warsaw, just weeks after Vladimir Putin had unleashed his murderous assault on Ukraine"* [Biden, 2023].

The euphemism expression *"lust for land and power"* refers to the aggression and acts of war that Putin has committed to gain Ukrainian territory: *"President Putin's craven lust for land and power will fail"* [Biden, 2023]. We think these euphemisms perform a cooperative function aimed at achieving politically correct discourse.

President Biden often uses expressive and emotive vocabulary. We suggest that Joseph Biden employs euphemisms for the purpose of conflict-free intercultural communication and emphasizing the positive aspects of negative phenomena. For example: *"The defense of freedom is not the work of a day or of a year. It's always difficult"* [Biden, 2023]; *"And my message to the rest of Europe: This new battle for freedom has already made a few things crystal clear"* [Biden, 2022].

Speaking about the Ukrainian-Russian war, the American leader prefers metaphorical phrases such as *"defense of freedom"*, *"fight for freedom"*, *"battle for freedom"*, *"great battle for freedom"*, *"struggle for democracy and freedom"* and *"frontlines of freedom"* to describe it. Thus, the positive connotation of the term *"freedom"* leads to positive associations for the recipient. Verbal impact on the addressee is considered to be the main characteristic of the rhetorical function of euphemisms. Thus, we think it would be better to consider the dual functions that these euphemisms have, i.e., distortive and rhetorical.

However, the direct nomination (without euphemisms) of the main concepts is followed by pointing gestures with his fingers. In our opinion, such Joseph Biden's hand gestures create the effect of unambiguous interpretation. They also serve as an effective non-verbal means of drawing the audience's attention to the key concepts of the speech. The direct nomination of "war" is followed by the right-hand gesture (Figure 4). Using pointing gestures to accompany direct nominations of key concepts such as "war" effectively emphasizes the seriousness of the situation ensuring that the audience fully understands the significance of the issues being addressed.

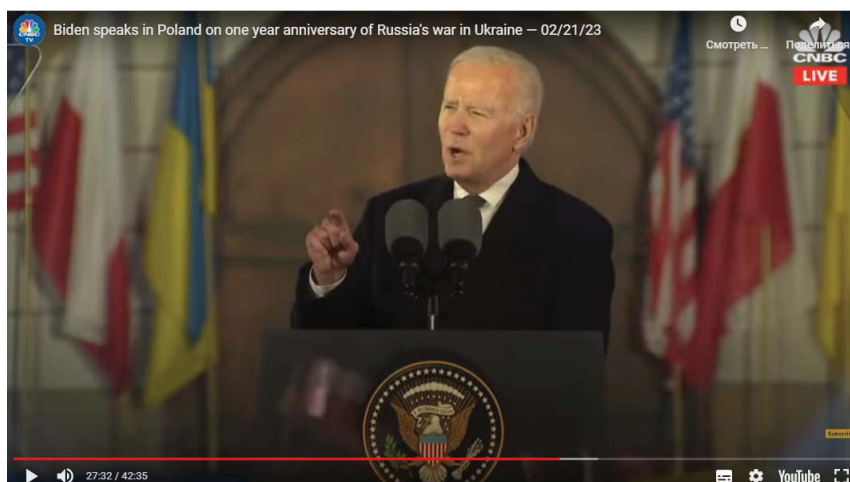
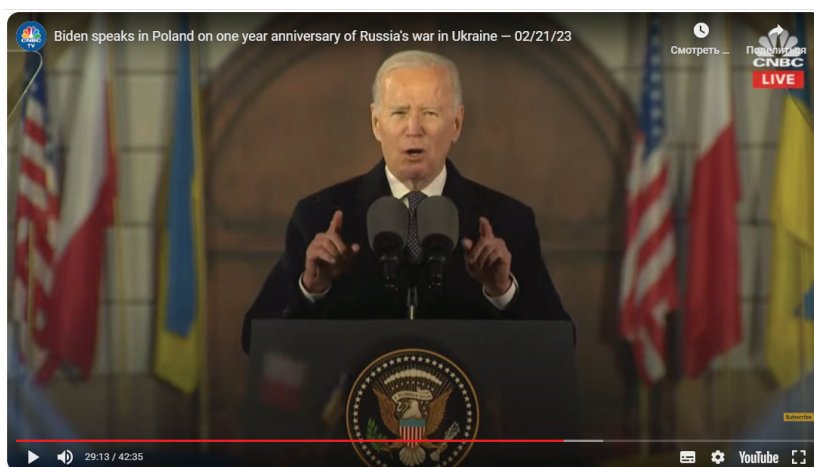


Figure 4. Biden speaks in Poland on the one-year anniversary of Russia's war in Ukraine (February 21, 2023): *"This war was never a necessity; it's a tragedy. President Putin chose this war. Every day the war continues is his choice. He could end the war with a word"* [Biden, 2023].



The 46<sup>th</sup> US President has also used pointing gestures of both hands to emphasize the key message of his speech in Warsaw on February 21, 2023 (Figure 5). Using pointing gestures of both hands is a powerful nonverbal communication technique for emphasizing key messages in a speech. In the context of the speech, the use of pointing gestures with both hands served to emphasize the importance of the key message and demonstrate a strong sense of conviction and determination in communicating ideas to the audience. Joe Biden's use of both hands raised and pointing while stating, "No, you will not take my country", "No, you will not take my freedom", and "No, you will not take my future" [Biden, 2023] enhances the overall impact and effectiveness of the speech, making it more memorable and compelling for the listeners.

Joe Biden uses euphemisms to describe the war in Ukraine and Putin's assumptions and plans: "He thought he could weaponize energy to crack your resolve — Europe's resolve" [Biden, 2023]. This euphemistic expression means the usage of energy resources as a means to gain power, control the outcome of military actions, and use energy resources as a weapon to win Ukraine. American leader often uses the adjectives "dark", "not easy", "hard", and "unclear" to refer to more serious social problems. For example, the euphemism "dark moments" is intended to describe the brutal policies of the Soviet Union in the last century without direct nominations.



**Figure 5. Biden speaks in Poland on the one-year anniversary of Russia's war in Ukraine (February 21, 2023): "No, you will not take my country". "No, you will not take my freedom". "No, you will not take my future" [Biden, 2023].**

In every society, euphemisms for death are the prevailing norm. People use them consciously or unconsciously. It is a linguistic courtesy and conveys a social attitude. Joe Biden uses the lexeme "sacrifice" which, in our opinion, indicates his intention to verbally represent the concept of "death" through alternative linguistic means: "I was honored to visit their memorial in Kyiv yesterday to pay tribute to the sacrifice of those who lost their lives, standing alongside President Zelenskyy" [Biden, 2023]. Following the politically correct and ethical tone, the President of the United States of America uses the indirect nomination "lose their lives". We consider the usage of euphemisms to be quite appropriate in this context to avoid the taboo of death, which indicates its preventive function.

According to the literature review, the word "support" is widely used in English-language political discourse to more formally and politically correct the process of supplying humanitarian aid, weapons, finance, etc. The United States of America has repeatedly provided material assistance and supplied weapons and ammunition to Ukraine. Joseph Biden uses the widespread politically correct term "support" to reflect the broad spectrum of US involvement in the war against Russia: "our support", "continued support", "economic support". For example: "Our support for Ukraine will not waver, NATO will not be divided, and we will not tire" [Biden, 2023]. We conclude that euphemism has a cooperative function according to V. Velykoroda's classification [Velykoroda, 2008].

As far as “support” in Joseph Biden’s speeches is concerned, we want to pay attention to the background against which the analyzed this word is heard. We mean the flags of Poland, Ukraine and the United States of America (Figures 2–5). Flags are a visual confirmation of the unity and cooperation between these countries. It emphasizes the shared values and common goals of these nations, drawing attention to the importance of their relationship and mutual cooperation in addressing common challenges and promoting common interests. The use of flags as a backdrop can also demonstrate the unity of these countries in their efforts for stability, security and democracy. They are a visual representation of the strong partnership and cooperation between the United States, Poland, and Ukraine.

According to research data (Table one), 47.2% (34 euphemisms) have a cooperative function in Joseph Biden’s speeches. 38.9% (28 euphemisms) have been used for verbal cooperation, conflict-free communication with the recipient (cooperative function). Six euphemisms (8.3%) were used by the US President as a euphemistic substitute for taboos of religion, death, diseases (preventive function), two euphemisms (2.8%) have rhetorical a function, and others (2.8%) provide a euphemistic function.

Table 1.

Euphemism in Joseph Biden’s speeches

Function	Frequency	Percentage
Veiling function	28	38.9 %
Cooperative function	34	47.2 %
Preventive function	6	8.3 %
Rhetorical function	2	2.8 %
Euphemistic function	2	2.8 %
Total	72	100 %

Figure 6 demonstrates euphemism functions in Joseph Biden’s speeches.

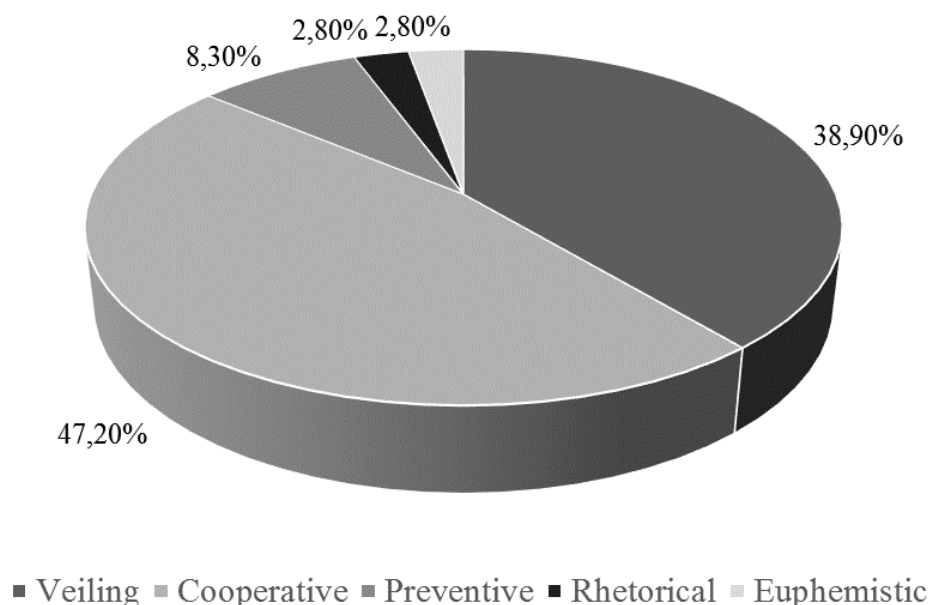


Figure 6. Euphemism functions in Joseph Biden’s speeches

## Conclusions

Political discourse is a special type of political relations characterized by institutionalization, informativeness, distance, logical statements, socio-political terminology, and evocative vocabulary. It is an integral part of domestic and foreign political processes and reflects the complex of relations between the individual and society. Euphemism is a characteristic element of political discourse. The role of euphemisms in political discourse is primarily determined by the desire for politically correct intercultural communication, politeness and tolerance, and mutual understanding. Euphemisms express the moral values of the society and help to overcome intercultural barriers. The analysis of Joseph Biden's political speeches made it possible to identify groups of the most commonly used types of euphemisms, namely, concealment of military conflicts ("conflict", "invasion", "aggression", "fight for freedom", "crisis", "the great battle for freedom"); taboo of death ("sacrifice", "pass away", "lose their lives"); socio-economic sphere ("*the continued support*", "*support*"). According to research data, 47.2% of euphemisms have a veiling function, 38.9% of euphemisms perform a cooperative function and 8.3% of euphemisms have a preventive function in Joseph Biden's speeches.

As for multimodal aspects, we suggest Joseph Biden delivers the same viewpoint across gesture and speech. Analyzing the gesture-euphemism correlation, we conclude that the 46<sup>th</sup> US President mainly employed these gestures with integrative and complementary functions. The present paper shows how the polyphonic self of the US political leader is conveyed not solely through speech, but also through gesture. Thus, we assume that the driving force in the evolution of the politician's polyphonic self is the distribution of viewpoints across modalities of political discourse, where they influence each other in live communication. Biden's speech is characterized by a short syntagm, as he slows down the pace, trying to convey every word to the audience. The stress is mostly emphatic, with emphasis created by increasing pitch, volume, and duration. Pauses, intonations, voice, register, and tone of speech, being a frame of euphemistic connotations, form the specificity of the communicative and pragmatic field of audiovisual narrative.

To conclude, an area worth further investigation is researching the peculiarities of reproducing the functional features of euphemisms in the translation of Joseph Biden's speeches into Ukrainian.

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## EUPHEMISMS IN MODERN POLITICAL DISCOURSE: JOSEPH BIDEN'S SPEECHES IN THE WAR IN UKRAINE

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**Key words:** *euphemism, addressee, semantics, functions, political discourse, war in Ukraine, Multimodal Discourse Analysis.*

Euphemism occupies a central place in political discourse. The article *aims* to probe into the rhetorical device of euphemism in the political discourse of the 46<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, Joseph Biden, during the Ukrainian-Russian war. The significance of the study is based on the necessity to research the linguistic image of the Russian-Ukrainian war and its main political actors in current political discourse. The relevance of this study is also determined by the aim to show the use of euphemisms in current political discourse on the example of Joseph Biden's speeches. The *research methods* of the article combine continuous sampling, component analysis; comparison and observation, classification and systematization of data, quantitative calculations, etc. The study also employs Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) which explores the relations between language and power as well as the relations between language and image. Our research limits its analysis of multimodality to two modalities, gesture and speech. President Joseph Biden's speeches on the United Efforts of the Free World to Support the People of Ukraine (February 26, 2022) and on the One-Year Anniversary of Russia's Brutal and Unprovoked Invasion of Ukraine of the US (February 21, 2023) at the Royal Castle in Warsaw serve as a material for the study of euphemisms in political discourse.

*Conclusions.* Euphemism is a characteristic element of political discourse. The role of euphemisms in political discourse is primarily determined by the desire for politically correct intercultural communication, politeness and tolerance, and mutual understanding. Euphemisms express the moral values of society and help to overcome intercultural barriers. The analysis of Joseph Biden's political speeches made it possible to identify groups of the most commonly used types of euphemisms, namely, concealment of military conflicts ("conflict", "invasion", "aggression", "fight for freedom", "crisis", "the great battle for freedom"); taboo of death ("sacrifice", "pass away", "lose their lives"); socio-economic sphere ("*the continued support*", "*support*"). According to research data, 47.2% of euphemisms have a veiling function, 38.9% of euphemisms perform a cooperative function and 8.3% of euphemisms have a preventive function in Joseph Biden's speeches. We suggest Joseph Biden delivers the same viewpoint across his gestures and speeches. Analyzing the gesture-euphemism correlation, we conclude that the 46<sup>th</sup> US President mainly employed these gestures with integrative and complementary functions. The present paper shows how the polyphonic self of the US political leader is conveyed not solely through speech, but also through gesture. Thus, we assume that the driving force in the evolution of the politician's polyphonic self is the distribution of viewpoints across modalities of political discourse, where they influence each other in live communication. Biden's speech is characterized by a short syntagm, as he slows down the pace, trying to convey every word to the audience. The stress is mostly emphatic, with emphasis created by increasing pitch, volume, and duration. Pauses, intonations, voice, register, and tone of speech, being a frame of euphemistic connotations, form the specificity of the communicative and pragmatic field of audiovisual narrative.

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