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FRAMING INCLUSION THROUGH POLITICALLY CORRECT LANGUAGE IN BRITISH-AMERICAN POLITICAL RHETORIC

This article discusses how politically correct language and euphemism serve as tools of inclusive framing in contemporary British and American political discourse. The research draws upon speeches by key politicians, including Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, Donald Trump, David Cameron, Boris Johnson, and Liz Truss, to demonstrate how the use of euphemistic techniques influences public opinion on social issues such as migration, ethnicity, and inequality. The qualitative discourse analysis is combined with a functional-semantic framework that distinguishes how the euphemisms function, their purpose and their target. The findings demonstrate that both rhetorical traditions rely on euphemism to achieve inclusive communication; however, they differ in tone and strategic approach. American political speech displays emotive appeal and identity-affirming re-labelling, where euphemisms function to uplift and moralise. On the contrary, in the British rhetoric, pragmatic moderation and institutional politeness dominate, with the use of periphrasis and generalisation to maintain social cohesion and legitimise the discussion of policy issues. In both corpora, the domain of Migration appears as the most sensitive domain and is framed through Empathy, Security, Ethics and Solidarity, respectively. Domain Ethnicity – through Unity, Morality and Diversity. Domain Inequality – through Fairness and Social Progress. These differences reflect more general cultural values, as the contrast between American idealism and British procedural pragmatism illustrates the complex ways in which linguistic framing shapes perceptions of global social challenges. Among the practical implications of this study are the enhancement of media literacy and the possibility of cross-cultural analysis of political communication, which allows journalists and educators to identify framing patterns and promote inclusive, ethically responsible public discourse.

Keywords: political correctness; euphemism; framing; inclusion; political discourse; sentiment; media linguistics.

1 INTRODUCTION

Problem statement. The rapid circulation of political messages across digital platforms in the contemporary media landscape has amplified the persuasive and manipulative potential of language. Discursive framing and euphemistic manipulation became more pervasive and less visible to audiences. For this reason, linguistic literacy and awareness of rhetorical patterns remain crucial for understanding how language influences public opinion and collective sentiment in the digital era.

Political speeches, being an institutional discourse genre, represent not only a communicative but also an ideological act. According to Beard (2000, p. 18), “a political speech is a political act., for which the utterance is equivalent to political action.” In this sense, linguistic choice functions as a form of political behaviour, with each lexical selection bearing potential framing effects. This view aligns with Chilton’s (2004) conceptualisation of political language as a mechanism of persuasion and social positioning, and with van Dijk’s (1997) contention that discourse itself is a form of power exercise through the control of cognition.

From this basis, *euphemization becomes a rhetorical strategy of constructing politically correct language*. Euphemism is defined as “a word or expression used in place of one that is unpleasant or rude” (Allan & Burridge, 2006, p. 32). It is, therefore, a linguistic tool that softens the emotive tone of discourse and redirects public perception of politically contentious realities.

However, in the context of British and American public political speeches, a notable gap exists: while both political cultures share a common language and similar institutional frameworks, they differ in terms of rhetorical traditions, audience expectations, genre conventions, and sensitivity to the norms of political correctness. An integrated, comparative study is thus necessary to gain insight into how politically correct language and euphemistic framing operate in both UK and US elite political speeches, with special emphasis on inclusion, specifically how targeted social groups are named, represented, and dignified.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Research on euphemism in political discourse has flourished in the last few decades. Euphemistic expressions show their dual persuasive and ideological nature in political communication, and “can be used as rhetorical resources for legitimizing controversial actions and maintaining the moral credibility of politicians,” (Charteris-Black, 2011, p. 34). In political debate, euphemisms “serve as signals of political-tribal membership but also as means to convince ambivalent voters to support one policy or the other” (Crespo-Fernández, 2014, p. 19). Furthermore, the use of euphemisms in political or media texts has been repeatedly shown “to cover up real facts or to make the political environment more stable and acceptable to the audience” (Allan & Burridge, 2006, p. 233).

The literature on framing has developed significantly, providing a conceptual toolkit for analysing how inclusive or euphemistic discourse structures audience interpretation. Framing means “selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient... to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (Entman, 1993, p. 52). More recent studies expand this idea by describing framing not just as media packaging, but as “the interactive construction of issues, identities and processes” (van Hulst and Yanow, 2016, p. 97), with the important emphasis that communicators construct interpretive frames rather than merely transmit information.

Investigations into inclusive language within the frameworks of sociolinguistics, educational linguistics, and public policy consistently note the movement toward lexical forms that affirm dignity and equality. Such linguistic choices exemplify “a discursive movement from objectification to humanisation,” reflecting broader social endeavours to construct inclusion and avoid linguistic othering (Carilo, 2024, p. 203).

The purpose of the article. This paper carries out a comparative linguo-pragmatic analysis of politically correct language used in publicly delivered speeches by British and American political leaders. The aim is to explore the ways in which speakers employ euphemistic lexical strategies in framing the inclusion of marginalised social groups and to contrast these strategies in both British and American rhetorical and political contexts. The specific objectives are to identify and categorise the mechanisms of euphemisation in political speech and to assess their functions (cooperative, elevative, conflict-preventive, ideological).

The article contributes to the understanding of the rhetorical architecture of inclusion: how speechwriters and politicians construct inclusion linguistically, how different social-issue domains are addressed through politically correct language, and how this approach differs between two major English-speaking political systems.

2 METHODS

The research methodological basis is grounded in critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1997), pragmatic stylistics (Allan & Burridge, 2006), and framing theory (Entman, 1993; Boydston, 2013). Analysis of political speeches is conducted within the linguo-pragmatic paradigm, the one which takes language as both a reflection and a constructor of social meaning.

The analysed material comprises selected public speeches by British and American political leaders for the past two decades, selected using the method of purposeful sampling based on their thematic relevance to the issues of inclusion. Each speech is analysed along three interrelated analytical dimensions:

- Mechanism (*how*) – the linguistic means of euphemisation;

- Function (*why*) – the communicative and rhetorical purpose of those choices;
- Target (*who/what*) – the social domain or group being discursively constructed.

This paper analyses the semantic and emotive potential of politically correct language through a framing and tone analysis, drawing on Boydston's Policy Frames Codebook (2014), which identifies morality, fairness, and security frames as common in political discourse. To this end, it is essential to analyse collocation profiles that surround euphemistic or inclusive expressions to highlight framing. In this study, we combine quantitative description (e.g., frequency observation and distributional tendencies of frames) with qualitative interpretation to classify politically correct expressions into social-issue domains, which are considered targets of sentiment construction. Domains include **migration, ethnicity and inequality**.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 American Corpus

The following section discusses the results of analysing the American corpus, which comprises the public speeches of U.S. political leaders whose rhetoric reflects contemporary trends in political correctness.

3.1.1 Migration

Migration discourse remains one of the most sensitive domains for euphemisation in American politics. During her 2016 campaign, Hillary Clinton strategically employed inclusive rhetoric to counteract Donald Trump's exclusionary stance on illegal immigration. Addressing the *Congressional Hispanic Caucus*, she declared:

"You fight every single day to lift up the Latino community... And no one understands better than you the pivotal moment we're at right now, not just for Latinos but for our country." (Clinton, 2016).

Her use of "*Latino community*" exemplifies a collectivising euphemism, employing the **empathy frame** towards a stigmatised group as an active component of the national "we". The mechanism here is *generalisation* with a *cooperative function* that invites inclusion rather than distinction. In contrast, Donald Trump's lexical choices illustrate *anti-euphemistic framing*: his preference for *Hispanics*, often preceded by the definite article ("the *Hispanics*", "the *Muslims*") (Trump, 2016), signals separation rather than inclusion. Such linguistic behaviour, marked by de-euphemisation, corresponds to a **security frame** rather than an empathy frame.

3.1.2 Ethnicity

One of the major areas of politically correct discourse in American presidential rhetoric is racial identity and representation. Barack Obama frequently deploys euphemisms of identification that reflect respect toward ethnic diversity. In one of his early public addresses, he notes:

"I think it is wonderful that Asian Americans, Latinos, African Americans, and others are represented in all parties and across the political spectrum." (Obama, 2005)

This passage exemplifies the mechanism of renaming, replacing historically loaded terms such as *Hispanics* with *Latinos*, and *Negro* with *African American*. It constitutes a sociocultural move toward neutralisation and identification with oneself, in line with the euphemistic mechanism of *re-labelling*. Obama's rhetoric further illustrates an elevative function of politically correct language: not only does it avoid offence, but it also constructs a collective American identity beyond racial division. For example:

"There is not a Black America and a White America, there's the United States of America." (Obama, 2005)

This utterance illustrates a **unity frame**, where dichotomous identifiers (*Black/White*) are retained as cultural realities. Likewise, the term *African American* links racial identity to ancestral heritage, performing both a historical and moral frame:

"So many of the disparities that exist in the African American community today can be

directly traced to inequalities passed on from an earlier generation that suffered under the brutal legacy of slavery and Jim Crow.” (Obama, 2008)

Here, the euphemism *African American* operates as a moral-historical marker, situating current inequality within a narrative of inherited trauma, which explicates *a morality frame*.

3.1.3 Inequality

Another frequent domain of politically correct language in U.S. political rhetoric concerns socio-economic stratification. Euphemisms such as “*low-income families*” and “*those at the bottom of the income scale*” are used to describe poverty without invoking stigma.

“*Children from low-income families score 27 points below the average reading level, while students from wealthy families score fifteen points above the average*” (Obama, 2005)

The term *low-income* mitigates potential discomfort while signalling a policy concern. Conversely, the term “*wealthy*” functions as a disfeminism, carrying implicit critique and signalling inequality. The contrast reflects the dual orientation of language: *mitigating the weak while moralising the strong*. Obama’s later expression,

“*It’s a course that further divides Wall Street from Main Street.*” (Obama, 2008), extends this frame through metaphorisation, contrasting elite financial power and ordinary labour. Such figurative euphemisms enhance accessibility and emotional resonance while embedding critique within a *fairness frame*.

A subtler example of euphemistic mitigation appears in the historical reference to Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal era:

“*...an America where too many were ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-housed, and insecure.*” (Obama, 2005).

The repeated prefix “*ill-*” functions as a softener, diminishing the perceived severity of social crises while maintaining a dignified tone suitable for presidential discourse.

3.2 British Corpus

The following section presents key findings from the British corpus; each domain illustrates how politically correct language serves to frame social sensitivity and construct a certain sentiment.

3.2.1 Migration

Migration is one of the most linguistically sensitive and politically charged topics in contemporary British discourse. David Cameron, for example, demonstrates a cooperative tone when discussing migration and European security:

“*And today, we continue to play our full role in European security and in global security... saving lives and busting the people smuggling rings in the Central Mediterranean.*” (Cameron, 2014)

Similarly, Liz Truss, in her speech “*Time to find common cause with our European friends*”, uses euphemistic periphrasis to address migration flows following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine:

“*We must respond together to this transnational tragedy and stand with desperate people, including Ukrainian refugees, who have lost their homes.*” (Truss, 2022)

The term *trans-national tragedy* reframes “*migration crisis*” in emotional and humanitarian terms, while *desperate people* and *Ukrainian refugees* personalise suffering and invite solidarity. This illustrates the elevative function of euphemism.

Boris Johnson employs similar strategies, often avoiding *migrants* altogether in favour of empathetic periphrasis:

“*We will always stand by those in need, men, women and children seeking refuge, and support all those who come here legally, those directly fleeing the worst of humanity.*” (Johnson, 2021)

This layered construction not only avoids categorical naming but reframes migration as a moral urgency; people fleeing evil are seen as individuals seeking refuge rather than those seeking advantage. The repeated syntactic pattern (*those who...*) creates inclusivity and moral rhythm,

revealing the cooperative roles of euphemisms projecting a *solidarity frame*.

3.2.2 Ethnicity

As in the American context, British political rhetoric demonstrates a sustained focus on issues of race and multiculturalism through the lens of the *diversity frame*. The tone tends to be more institutional and formal, aligning with the UK's long-standing multicultural policy discourse. In his address for *Black History Month 2014*, David Cameron explicitly celebrates cultural diversity:

“Today we recognise the outstanding contribution of black and African-Caribbean people to our national life and the strength that diversity brings to Britain.” (Cameron, 2014)

Here, the euphemistic and affirmative descriptors “*black*” and “*African-Caribbean*” operate as periphrastic terms of respect, while “*diversity*” encapsulates a moral frame of inclusion.

Boris Johnson demonstrates similar linguistic awareness when replacing potentially exclusionary identifiers with accepted modern terminology. In one speech, he refers to “*the South Asians who have built so much of our modern Britain*” and “*our Jewish community whose resilience inspires us all*” (Johnson, 2021). These phrases represent a shift from category to contribution (e.g., not “*Jews*” but “*Jewish community*”), a strategy that mitigates difference while highlighting collective belonging.

3.2.3 Inequality

Euphemistic constructions are also prominent when politicians discuss poverty, class, and labour, allowing them to address sensitive socio-economic divisions without alienating audiences. Cameron avoids *poor people*, instead referring to “*our most vulnerable citizens*”:

“We will not forget those at the bottom of the income scale – the most vulnerable citizens who depend on our public services the most.” (Cameron, 2014)

The periphrastic expression transforms a direct label of deficiency (*poor*) into a neutral descriptor of position, reinforcing dignity and policy empathy. Likewise, Johnson uses reframing to humanise social aspiration:

“I accept that these people – whether six hundred or a thousand – are in search of a better life, of the opportunities that the United Kingdom provides and the hope of a fresh start.” (Johnson, 2021)

The phrase “*in search of a better life*” acts as a moral euphemism, situating economic struggle within a narrative of hope and perseverance rather than one of poverty. This cooperative approach enables the speaker to advocate reform while avoiding divisive class rhetoric.

An additional example of occupational upgrading appears in Johnson’s speech:

“Today’s workforce, and the next generation of green collar workers, will have the extra satisfaction of knowing that they are helping to save the planet.” (Johnson, 2021)

Here, the compound “*green collar workers*” is a metaphoric euphemism that elevates environmental labour to the prestige traditionally associated with *white-collar* professions. The phrasing aligns with a *social progress frame*, signalling both inclusion and pride in non-elite work.

3.3 Contrastive Analysis of American and British Corpora

Across both the American and British corpora, political leaders construct inclusion and belonging through strategically euphemised and morally charged language, yet the mechanisms, tone, and framing functions differ in culturally revealing ways. American political discourse, particularly in the speeches of Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, tends to employ *moral and empathetic frames*, where inclusion is conceptualised as a matter of justice, equality, and shared history. In contrast, British rhetoric, as represented by David Cameron, Boris Johnson, and Liz Truss, maintains a *pragmatic and institutional tone*, often using euphemism to balance empathy with restraint and to align inclusion with stability, national duty, and collective resilience. Quantitatively, the distribution of fragments across the three examined domains (see Table 1) reveals contrasts between American and British political rhetoric.

Table 1. Distribution of Inclusion-Related Fragments Across the American and British Corpora

Domain	US: N (%)	US – Dominant Frames	UK: N (%)	UK – Dominant Frames
<i>Migration</i>	16 (33%)	Empathy; Security	18 (39%)	Ethics; Solidarity
<i>Ethnicity</i>	21 (44%)	Unity; Morality	14 (30%)	Diversity
<i>Inequality</i>	7 (15%)	Fairness	9 (20%)	Social progress
Other domains	4 (8%)		5 (11%)	
Total	48		46	

The results show that the domain *Migration* appears as the most sensitive domain in both corpora. U.S. discourse combines both *Empathy* and *Security frames*, reflecting concerns with responsibility and moral inclusion of two competing political powers. Euphemisms here serve an integrative function, inviting participation and constructing solidarity by transforming minority identity into civic membership. Trump's counter-discourse, by contrast, employs de-euphemisation, activating what Boydston (2013) defines as a *security frame*, which evokes externality and threat. UK politicians rely on a *Morality frame*, placing emphasis on border management and collective protection, which reflects what Charteris-Black (2011) calls "*moral rationalisation*" as a blend of empathy and political control. The euphemistic mechanisms (generalisation, periphrasis, humanisation) function to maintain dignity while reaffirming state authority.

Domain *Ethnicity* dominates the American corpus (44%) and is framed predominantly through *Unity*, reflecting the U.S. tradition of explicitly addressing racial divides. It echoes Obama's "*one America*" rhetoric that exemplifies *renaming* and *reclaiming* mechanisms through replacing historically charged terms (e.g., *Negro*, *Oriental*) with neutral or self-identifying alternatives (*African American*, *Asian American*). This linguistic evolution, as Allan and Burridge (2006) argue, functions as "*re-labelling to re-legitimise*", restoring dignity and equality. The British corpus frames race through *Diversity*, emphasising cultural contribution rather than assimilation and mirroring Britain's long-standing multicultural model. Here, euphemisms function not to challenge hierarchy, but to stabilise it through affirmation. The tone is *moral-institutional* rather than *moral-revolutionary*. As Musolff (2016) notes, British public rhetoric often employs "*soft euphemism*" to maintain *discursive balance between inclusivity and hierarchy*. Interestingly, this tendency is less visible in American populist or activist-style political discourse.

Domain *Inequality* shows relatively similar proportions in both corpora (15% in the U.S. and 20% in the UK). Yet, American politicians frame inequality through the lens of *Fairness*, while British speakers operate within a *Social Progress frame*. This complements the qualitative findings: U.S. rhetoric tends to moralise economic differences, whereas British discourse favours institutional solutions and responsibility toward "*vulnerable groups*". Such figurative moral framing aligns with Charteris-Black's (2011) concept of *moral legitimisation*, where political discourse simultaneously comforts and mobilises.

Overall, both corpora reveal the same pragmatic truth: euphemism and framing are not merely linguistic strategies but acts of political navigation within moralised publics (Boydston, 2013).

4 CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

This study contrasts British and American political discourses, revealing that despite a shared tendency to inclusive communication and political correctness, these two rhetorical traditions differ in their linguistic mechanisms, functional focus, and framing tone. Rhetorical differences also reflect deeper cultural aspects of political mentality. American rhetoric shows a moral and identity-centred orientation, with politically correct language often serving as a means of public alignment with values such as equality, justice, and civic unity. It is rooted in civic activism and the moral rhetoric of rights, emphasising emotional appeal through euphemisms that often dramatise inclusion as an ethical mission: to restore dignity, recognise diversity, and address social injustice. British rhetoric is characterised by institutional politeness and pragmatic decorum, in which euphemisms primarily function as tools for maintaining civility. Here, inclusion is seen as a matter of fairness, responsibility, and good governance rather than a moral crusade.

Future research could extend this comparative framework by employing quantitative collocation analysis to assess how euphemisms cluster around particular policy areas and emotional tones over time. Analysing how language constructs inclusion and influences sentiment at the intersection of politics, media, and culture contributes to understanding not only political rhetoric but also the ethical aspects of communication in the twenty-first century.

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Ольга Бешлей. Фреймінг інклюзії через мову політкоректності в британсько-американській політичній риториці. У цій статті розглядається, як політкоректна мова та евфемізми слугують інструментами інклюзивного фреймінгу в сучасному британському та американському політичному дискурсі. Дослідження спирається на промови ключових політиків, включаючи Барака Обаму, Гілларі Клінтон, Дональда Трампа, Девіда Кемерона, Бориса Джонсона, Ліз Трасс, щоб продемонструвати, як використання евфемістичних методів впливає на громадську думку щодо таких соціальних питань, як міграція, етнічна приналежність та нерівність. Якісний дискурс-аналіз поєднується з функціонально-семантичною структурою, яка розрізняє функціонування евфемізмів, їхню мету та цільову аудиторію. Результати дослідження показують, що обидві риторичні традиції покладаються на евфемізми для досягнення інклюзивної комунікації; однак вони відрізняються тоном та стратегічним підходом. Американська політична мова демонструє емоційну привабливість

та переназви, що стверджують ідентичність, тоді як евфемізми функціонують для піднесення та моралізації. Навпаки, у британській риториці домінують прагматична поміркованість та інституційна ввічливість, з використанням перифраз та узагальнень для підтримки соціальної згуртованості та легітимізації обговорення політичних питань. В обох корпусах сфера міграції постає як найбільш чутлива сфера та окреслюється відповідно через фрейми Емпатія, Безпека, Етика та Солідарність. Сфера Етнічна приналежність – через фрейми Єдність, Моральність та Різноманітність. Сфера Нерівність – через фрейми Справедливість та Соціальний Прогрес. Ці відмінності відображають загальні культурні цінності, оскільки контраст між американським ідеалізмом та британським процедурним прагматизмом ілюструє складні способи, якими лінгвістичний фреймінг формує сприйняття глобальних соціальних викликів. Практична цінність цього дослідження – підвищення медіаграмотності та можливість міжкультурного аналізу політичної комунікації, що дозволяє журналістам та освітянам виявляти моделі фреймінгу та сприяти інклузивному, етично відповідальному публічному дискурсу.

Ключові слова: політична коректність; евфемізм; фреймінг; інклузія; політичний дискурс; настрої; медіалінгвістика.

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