

The Cultural Collision of Euphemisms: A Comparative Study of Asian and European Expressions

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Abstract:

This paper explores the cultural similarities and differences in the use of euphemisms in European and Asian societies. Generally speaking, euphemisms are used to soften language and deal with sensitive topics in order to maintain social harmony and protect interpersonal relationships. In Asian cultures such as China, Korea and Mongolia, euphemisms are deeply rooted in Confucian and religious traditions and reflect the importance of respect, face-saving and harmony. In Western cultures, euphemisms are often used to conform to social norms and evolving legal frameworks. This paper explores euphemisms in both cultures and finds that euphemisms are not only a linguistic phenomenon, but also a socio-cultural mechanism that reveals deeper meanings of social values and identity formation.

Keywords: Euphemism; European culture; Asian culture; Languages express; Face.

1. Introduction

As a universal phenomenon in language, euphemisms have been used to clarify cultural variances in how individuals handle difficult topics, uphold social bonds, and express themselves. The way euphemisms are used in Asia and Europe is very different. This study compares euphemism usage in Europe and Asia, delves into the cultural factors that influence it and its effects on social interactions and language expressions, and ultimately draws conclusions about the similarities and differences. We can gain a greater understanding of the interconnected nature of language and culture, as well as its effects in the context of globalization, by comparing euphemisms in Europe and Asia. Not only do linguistic forms reflect

this, but so do social conventions, values, and methods of interpersonal communication. Examining the cultural origins of euphemisms and how they affect social interaction and language expression, this article will compare and contrast euphemism usage in Europe and Asia. One way to have a better grasp of the intertwined nature of language and culture, and the consequences of this for the globalization setting, is to compare euphemisms in Asia and Europe. This paper shares some important similarities: 1) The Goal of Using Euphemisms: Euphemisms are used by both Asian and European civilizations to avoid being offensive and to keep the peace. To facilitate communication in both cultures, euphemisms are also used; 2) Social functions: Language helps keep the

peace, communicate cultural values, and broach delicate subjects. When dealing with sensitive or taboo subjects like death, identity, or controversial politics, euphemisms play a part in the larger social function of language. Furthermore, essential distinctions exist 1) Origins in culture: For the simple reason that greater societal conventions, regulatory frameworks, and direct communication styles impact euphemisms in Europe. In contrast, traditional values (such as respect, indirectness, and the preservation of face) greatly impact the euphemisms used in Asian cultures, particularly in China, Korea, and Mongolia. 2) Expressing Oneself: Euphemisms in Asian contexts tend to center on cultural values rather than social norms or legal acknowledgment, in contrast to European contexts where they might represent social standards and recognition (e.g., LGBTQ+ concerns in the UK). Specifically, the reverence for established order, mortality, and communal peace. 3) Linguistic evolution: When Asian euphemisms are used to describe topics such as death, they are influenced by religious and historical beliefs, such as Confucianism and Buddhism. European euphemisms, in comparison, tend to be more direct, pragmatic and take into account factors such as law.

2. Euphemisms in Western Culture

2.1 Euphemism Use in Armenia and the UK

Euphemism is a linguistic phenomenon, which is mainly used to maintain good social relations in communication and to avoid embarrassment or touching on sensitive topics by substituting gentle, indirect expressions for direct wording that may cause discomfort or offence. People employ euphemisms in everyday interactions to preserve mutual dignity and harmonious relationships because people from the Chinese cultural background place a high value on interpersonal relationships and the ability to “face” challenges. Aristotle addressed euphemism as a replacement rhetorical figure in his work *Poetics*, and the usage of this rhetorical device dates to Ancient Greece. Euphemisms have been continually used since ancient times, which have become a common linguistic phenomenon. The English term “euphemism” entered the language in the 17th century, deriving from the Greek word “*euphēmismós*,” which means “fail of speech” or “speak fail [1].” People seek to maintain harmonious social relationships with the evolution of language and culture. The term “euphemism” originates in Greece, deriving from the ancient Greek language. Though the prefix “*eu*” and “*euphemism*” refers to “good” and “to speak” separately, when they are combined together, they denote good and propitious words. The Oxford Dictionary defines a euphe-

mism as a mild or indirect word or expression, instead of a word or expression that is considered too harsh or blunt to be offensive or embarrassing [2]. Euphemisms play a crucial role in maintaining linguistic cooperation by adhering to established conventions, which can be not only a linguistic phenomenon, but also a socio-cultural one that influences other elements of social life [3].

In Armenia, there are certain expressions (e.g., “that” or “such kind of”) that are used to refer to the LGBT community indirectly. This is typically observed in formal settings, such as parliamentary speeches, where speakers often use these indirect expressions to convey negative attitudes towards the LGBT community with using potentially controversial term indirectly. These strategies are named as “hedged hate speech,” since they aim to appear courteous while conveying animosity. In the UK, this kind of conduct is uncommon. Adjectives that could be used as a rhetorical device were avoided when speaking about “sexual minorities” and “homosexuals.” Instead, the dangerous “greatest threat,” “potentially damaging,” “destructive process,” and “dangerous” were utilized to characterize the group’s detrimental impacts. On the other hand, the LGBTQ+ group is treated with tolerance in the UK [4]. Armenian speakers attempted to act as polite while openly expressing their animosity towards the LGBTQ population, demonstrating how certain idioms discreetly convey unfavorable opinions towards particular groups. This tactic is sometimes referred to as “veiled hate speech,” since the speaker expresses opposition without being overtly antagonistic. Compared to Armenia, the United Kingdom is more accepting and open when it comes to LGBTQ+ issues. British speakers steer clear of potentially offensive words when referring to “sexual minorities” and “homosexuals,” instead using moderate or neutral wording. The LGBTQ+ community in Britain is supported legally and culturally, and the choice of language reflects that. This linguistic approach reflects both the tolerance and inclusiveness of British society and its respect for personal freedoms and rights.

2.2 Euphemism and Social Stratification in Yucatán

The word “*mestizo*” is frequently used as a term in the Yucatán region. A “*mestizo*” is someone whose ancestry includes Spanish and Indian people. A euphemism for what is commonly referred to as “*Indio*” in Yucatán is “*mestizo*,” albeit the term “*Indio*” might have a negative connotation in local culture. To conserve language, this paper employs this euphemism instead of “*Indians*.” Furthermore, “*mestizo*” is closely associated with ethnicity and professional identity in the Yucatán. Peasants dressed in traditional folk

clothes are called “mestizos,” whereas those dressed in urban attire are called “catrins,” indicating a potential vocational classification. The main character of the satirical novel “*Don Catrin de la Fachenda*,” Don Catrin, wants to become more prominent in society by seeming dignified and dressing elegantly. However, his actions simply serve to mirror the privileges’ behavior rather than bringing about any real change. This parody and satire emphasizes the difficulties of identifying one’s race in the political and cultural setting of the Yucatán, mirroring the conflicts that arise between different social strata [5].

2.3 Comparative Linguistic Strategies in the West

To avoid the negative connotations of the term “Indio,” the author uses the term “mestizo.” This choice represents the complexity of racial identity in the local community and helps to avoid stereotypes. The local community’s complex sentiments about racial identity are likewise mirrored in it. In order to blur or reduce the pejorative labels associated with Indian identity, the term ‘mestizo’ may be used in the community to ease tensions within the society. Many different societies, including Britain, Armenia and so on have used language as a social conditioning mechanism designed to protect some sort of internal hierarchy or value system. In addition to this, the term ‘mestizo’ is used as a euphemism in the Yucatan Peninsula. Such euphemisms are not only used for ethnic identity, but also have a similar role in social and professional identity. Since language has a huge impact on social identity and behavior, it is important to give examples of how Armenian English and British English express different perceptions of the LGBTQ+ community. ‘Mestizo’ is a way for Yucatanians to express their ethnicity or occupation and also helps people to maintain cultural cohesion and social order by preventing people from talking about issues that could lead to social conflict. That kind of person’ is a way for Armenians to express hostility towards the LGBTQ+ community. The LGBTQ population is far more accepted in the UK, although the country’s tendency to avoid using offensive terminology in favor of neutral or mild phrases may be the result of unconscious societal conditioning. In all three sectors, language use is inextricably linked to preserving specific cultural norms and values. Disguised hate speech in Armenia assists to maintain traditional norms, even though it appears to be a reference to civility. The United Kingdom actively promotes diversity and inclusion in all spheres of society, including language, in reaction to multiculturalism and globalization. In addition, language plays a role in moderating or radicalizing social tensions among different cultures. Despite different cultur-

al and social backgrounds, Yucatan, British and Armenian use language as a tool to express socially sensitive topics and maintain social order indirectly. Hence, whether expressing through euphemisms or through moderate language that promotes inclusiveness implicitly, they reflect the commonalities and differences between the cultures of these countries in the use of language to address complex social issues.

While the previous section described the use of euphemisms in European countries, this paper will explore the use of euphemisms from the perspective of Asian countries (China, Korea, Mongolia). In Asian countries, cultural values, social norms and linguistic structures profoundly influence the use of euphemisms.

3. Euphemisms in Asian Culture

3.1 Internet Euphemisms and Code-Mixing in China

Traditional euphemisms, code-mixing, metaphorical language, and various sources are all features of Internet euphemisms. The language used on the web is extremely expressive and diverse because of its dynamic nature. It is more common for younger generations to employ this kind of euphemism. Code-mixing is one characteristic of euphemisms used online. Internet language is quite versatile and can take on a broad range of shapes because it is dynamic. Unlike their more conventional equivalents, euphemisms used on the Internet can refer to more than just letters, numbers, and traditional Chinese characters. New forms, such as numbers, are frequently used in online language. Using the symbolic qualities of numbers, some words or curse words can be cleverly rephrased, such as the number 4 (meaning death) or the number 74 (indicating rage). Using these numerical symbols instead of direct words makes the expression less aggressive, leading to a more nuanced message transmission. Respondents gave instances of how they pronounced the number ,74‘ as ,74 (qi1 si4),‘ changing only the pitch of their voices. Furthermore, they spoke about how they substituted number harmonics for controversial or insulting expressions. These numerical symbols are euphemisms for their respective meanings; they are less offensive than using words [6]. The Chinese culture has a long historical tradition of evading the term ,death‘, which mirrors the collective psychological apprehension and avoidance of unfavorable occurrences. When discussing subjects related to death, individuals typically adopt a more prudent approach to prevent needless stress or worry. Utilizing euphemisms can effectively mitigate these worries within communal awareness since language plays a role in preserving psy-

chosocial equilibrium. People tend to use euphemism language when discussing death because of the negative connotations attached to the topic. Empathy can sometimes prevent unnecessary arguments or misunderstandings and promote healthy relationships between people. One can also category this language skill as a form of social etiquette. In today's world, verbal avoidance is becoming more and more common, especially on the Internet and social media. Individuals persist in evading the concept of 'mortality' by employing numerical representations, abbreviations, harmonious arrangements, and other novel forms of expression. This evolution demonstrates the phenomenon of contemporary cultures adjusting to the demands of novel social contexts and technological advancements while preserving traditional cultural values.

3.2 Evolution of Euphemisms in Modern Chinese Society

The innovation and change of Internet language is a continuation of the continuous development of language expression since the New Culture Movement. Since the New Culture Movement in 1915, the Chinese language has gradually evolved from archaic to vernacular, and people's expressions have also changed from the euphemistic way in the past to straightforward and concise. And this change is especially evident in people born in different generations. People born before the millennium usually use more traditional euphemisms, for example, they still tend to talk about 'death' in an older way, while the younger generation born after the millennium are more straightforward and even use 'I'm dying of laughter' or 'I'm going to die of laughter' in their online communication 'or 'I'm going to die laughing' or 'I'm going to die laughing'. 'I'm dying of laughter' or "I'm going to die" in online communication to convey emotions, but this is overwhelmingly the case among young people. Age differences in how people feel about euphemisms reflect generational shifts. Euphemisms have historically been used to avoid touchy or taboo subjects, but younger people like direct and light-hearted remarks. The way that society views taboo and delicate subjects has evolved over time to become more accepting and tolerant.

3.3 Monosyllabic Euphemisms in Online Communication

The growing inclination towards colloquialism and informality in online communication has resulted in the increased use of monosyllabic terminology in this relaxed and casual situation. In addition to being more phonetically straightforward, these words also fit in better with spoken language, meeting the need for brief and efficient

communication. In the world of the Internet, getting fast and efficient communication is very important, which means that using words with only one phoneme fulfils exactly this need. For example, the abbreviation '可' (which IPA is ke³ and means able in English) simplifies words without changing their original meaning, making them suitable for quick responses and instant communication. In addition, words such as '囧' (which IPA is jiong³ and the English equivalent of embarrassment) originated in the dialect and have the advantage of being syllabically simple and very conducive to communication. As a result, they have gradually acquired new connotations and contexts of use in network culture. For example, the word '囧' was originally derived from the local pronunciation of '窘' (which IPA is also jiong³), indicating a state of humiliation or uneasiness. It has become an emoticon signifying humiliation, powerlessness, and anxiety due to online culture. Visualizing this sign enhances its emotional expressiveness, making it an emotional embodiment. This succinct lexical and symbolic representation is commonly used to improve online communication efficiency and readability. Online language may adapt to varied events and emotions faster than printed language. This linguistic extension illustrates the need for creative expression in modern culture, especially in internet communication. Simple vocabulary and symbols and expressions that promote cyberlanguage diversity and expressiveness exemplify this innovation. Network culture's lexicon and symbols reveal how modern people utilize language to manage emotions, maintain social links, and communicate their thoughts and feelings.

4. Cultural Significance of Death Euphemisms in Korea and Mongolia

4.1 Monosyllabic Euphemisms in Online Communication

Death is universally regarded as the most delicate, dreaded, rarely discussed, and highly taboo topic in all communities and across nearly all languages. Mongolia and Korea are not exempt from this. Indeed, Mongolian and Korean languages have a greater abundance of euphemisms pertaining to death when compared to other nations. In the Korean language, euphemisms for death can be categorized into two groups: those that originate from Chinese phrases with the root si (死, meaning to die) [7]. Korean euphemisms, which distinguish between the language used by a king and that of a commoner, have their roots in Chinese Confucianism and vary in expression depending on social hierarchy. To put it another way,

the death of an ordinary person is usually referred to as “death,” but the passing of a king is seen as the crumbling of a massive mountain. There are further differences in the king’s ascent to heaven. In Korea, influenced by Confucianism, the king ascends to heaven riding on the chariot of an immortal deity. In Mongolia, however, the king ascends to heaven without the use of a chariot. Mongolian euphemisms for death have their origins in Lamaism and Shamanism. The concept in the perpetual existence of the soul was prevalent among the ancient and probably even present Mongolian populations. Thus, death represented the soul’s process of rebirth and beginning over [7].

4.2 The Role of Euphemisms in Addressing Death Taboos

Euphemisms in Mongolian and Korean have strong theological foundations, particularly in the context of Buddhism and Confucianism [8]. These euphemisms are closely tied to religious beliefs regarding the afterlife, virtuous actions, transgressions, and similar concepts. Furthermore, euphemisms serve to demonstrate a sense of reverence towards the elderly. Crucially, the development of euphemisms is connected to the utilization of terms that are considered socially unacceptable in many cultures. Furthermore, euphemisms are created with the best terminology possible, taking into account the differences between the two cultures and their particular contexts [9-10]. In almost all countries, death is regarded as a strictly forbidden topic of conversation, with the Korean and Mongolian languages expressing this taboo, and euphemisms happen to be a linguistic device used to overcome the taboo of discussing death by speaking in a gentle, indirect manner in an endeavor to alleviate any potential discomfort associated with the topic. This approach is rooted in etiquette and societal concerns about death, as well as complex emotions about the end of life.

5. Conclusion

This paper emphasizes notable variations in the usage of euphemisms between Asian and European civilizations. In several European countries, euphemisms show a more direct way to use language in the context of social ex-

pectations and rules by depending on social norms and legal frameworks. Conversely, Asian civilizations place considerable priority on preserving relationships based on harmony, face-saving and respect since their foundation is religious beliefs and traditional traditions. These cultural differences influence social identities expressed via language and how sensitively sensitive issues are handled. Though euphemisms seek to soften communication, this discrepancy reveals how the East and the West use language differently to negotiate social dynamics and cultural traditions.

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