The Comparisons Between Euphemisms of Chinese and English

—— From Aspect of Greetings and Death Euphemisms

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Abstract: Euphemisms is a kind of language phenomenon evolving from the development and cultural transition of the language, which is essential in our daily life. Euphemisms also exist in Chinese, English and other languages, whose applications are very broad. It can also make the process of communication more colorful. This paper will have an exploration through comparing the expressions, existing reasons and background of greetings and death euphemisms in Chinese and English euphemisms.

Keywords: euphemisms; greetings; death euphemisms; culture in China and English countries

Introduction

Euphemism refers to the process of communication, both sides of the speaker in order to express what they want to say clearly, so as to use some more civilized (civilized) and implicit (implicit) language, to express their own ideas at the same time will not make the bearer of the words feel offended by some negative emotions. In the process of communication, euphemisms can also play a lubricant role, blurring some of the straightforward terms, and saying some words in a roundabout way, which is reflected in both Chinese and English, thus producing some good results and avoiding some awkward atmosphere and unpleasant phenomena in the process of communication. [1] And by comparing the similarities and differences between greetings and death terms in English and Chinese language euphemisms, we can better see the gap in their use and better understand the subsequent cultural and social differences that lead to the differences in their habits of expression.

1. Greetings

In life, greetings are the beginning of communication, and polite and appropriate greetings can make a conversation or a negotiation better, however, the habits of polite expressions between Chinese and Westerners are very different. In English, greetings usually start with "hello" or "hi", but also with some blessings, such as "Good morning ", "Good afternoon", " Good night" and so on. In Chinese, on the other hand, we don't ask this question. We often say, "Have you eaten?" at meal times. In fact, the intention of this sentence is not to care whether the other person has eaten or not, but to start a conversation in a more natural way. The other person may answer "I've eaten" or "I haven't eaten yet", or he or she may respond with the same answer, but in English, asking this kind of question signals that you're suggesting or inviting him or her to join you for a meal, which can lead to unwanted misunderstandings. "Where are you going?" is also a kind of greeting, but in Chinese, people ask each other where they are going, and they don't really want to know where they are going. Whereas in English such an inquiry would be treated as an invasion of privacy and would not convey the appropriate friendly message, because value is the most important element in the Western value system, and privacy is usually associated with personal information, which shows an individual's values and interests. Western society upholds individual privacy and individualism, and when privacy is involved, Westerners usually react more strongly.

At the same time, when addressing greetings, English sometimes adds corresponding titles such as "hello, Lucy", which is also a difference between English and Chinese greetings. Under the deep influence of traditional Chinese culture, there is a strict hierarchy of address related to social status and age. For example, when a subordinate meets a superior, he/she cannot call him/her by his/her first name, but can greet him/her by his/her last name and title; a student cannot call his/her teacher by his/her first name, but is usually greeted by "last name + teacher + good"; a child cannot call his/her elder by his/her first name, but is greeted by him/her according to his/her seniority as "Grandpa "Grandpa", "Grandma", "Uncle", "Auntie" and so on, so as to greet each other, and between the peers is usually with "brother", "sister". It is considered impolite to call people by their first names rather than following the hierarchical rules of the Chinese language. In the West, how-

ever, there are no such strict requirements and no clear hierarchical boundaries. They pay more attention to realizing the intimacy between each other, reflecting the concept of human-centered and equal social relationship, as well as the expression of friendship between members of the society when greeting and addressing each other. As in Chinese, English speakers address their seniors or elders by their social titles, such as "Miss Green" and "Miss Brown". But they think it is impolite to address others by their professions, and they address their superiors directly by their surnames or their first names. For example, in foreign news reports, they use "Mr. Biden" when mentioning U.S. President Joe Biden. [2] In addition, when Chinese people address each other, they sometimes add the word "Lao" in front of their surnames, such as "Lao Wang", "Lao Li", etc. This can show the closeness of the interlocutor's relationship and help to bring the conversation closer. This can show the closeness of the interlocutors and help to bring them closer to each other; however, in Western culture, it is impolite to address others with "old + surname" in a conversation, and it may even be offensive to others. There are two reasons for this, one is that there is no specific expression for "old + surname" in English, so simply adding "old" in front of the surname will confuse the recipients of the message; the other is because of the difference between Eastern and Western cultures, which is contrary to the Chinese expression. Secondly, because of the difference between Eastern and Western cultures, contrary to the Chinese expression, they will feel that the word "old" carries a meaning of its own and is not a separate title, and addressing someone with this word will make the other party have a bad influence, thinking that the speaker is being sarcastic, because in Western culture, people think that "old" in the title has an implied meaning of youth has passed away, uselessness and incompetence. In Western culture, people believe that the presence of "old" in address has the implied meaning of youthfulness and uselessness.

2. Death

In Chinese and Western cultures, there is a general anxiety and fear of death, which is also related to the fact that people do not understand death because of the lack of technological development in the past, therefore, when it comes to the word "death" in the language communication, people tend to avoid saying the word "death" directly, and instead, they tend to avoid saying the word "death" directly. Therefore, when it comes to the word "death" in language communication, people tend to avoid saying "death" directly, and instead use some cryptic words and euphemisms to express it.

2.1 Ancient English-Chinese Differences in the Expression of Death

In the Declaration of Independence, "all men are created equal" and humanism, "people-oriented" point of view, the English-speaking countries to promote democracy, that death is the same for everyone, everyone has to go through death, so the expression of death in the English language in the There is no obvious hierarchical difference in euphemisms. Sometimes the euphemisms for death vary according to the profession. The expression "to be knocked out" is popular in boxing circles and was originally intended to mean that "a boxer who is knocked out and is unable to get back up in the allotted time loses the match", but this expression has been used for many years to describe the loss of a fight. The original meaning of the expression was "a boxer who is knocked down and is unable to get back up within a specified period of time loses the match", but the expression later came to mean "death" in English. In wrestling, "to be thrown for a loss" also means to be bound to the ground by one's opponent, and this phrase is also used later as a euphemism for death.

However, in ancient China, where the monarchy was a feudal dictatorship, there was a strict hierarchy of euphemisms for death. The death of the highest-ranking emperors was expressed in terms of "Daxing", " 驾崩 ", " 弃天下 ", " 宾天 ", etc. The deaths of vassals or officials were expressed in terms of "Daxing", " 驾崩 " and " 宾天 "; For the death of a vassal or an official, "princely" was used; for a low-level official, "death", "no salary", "abandonment of salary", " 彻乐 "; ordinary people use " 走了 ", " 过世 ", " 百年 ", and so on.

Therefore, it can be seen that the democracy of the social system of the British and American countries makes the use of euphemisms for death also reflect equality; while China's feudal society was affected by the traditional feudal hierarchy, its death language focuses on highlighting the differences in the status of the people, so the Chinese euphemisms for death in the ancient times also have a hierarchical definition.

2.1 The development of death euphemisms

With the development of society, language is constantly changing, absorbing new words and new cultures and rejecting old words, thus progressing, and so is euphemism. In the era of globalization, not only between English and Chinese, but also among the cultures of other countries, euphemisms for "death" tend to be simplified and life-oriented. Some euphemisms for "death" in English have gradually disappeared, such as:

To answer the final call, to pass over, to yield up the ghost, etc. At the same time, many new words that are closely related to modern life have come into being and have been adopted by the general public, such as: to pass out of the picture, to run one's race, mercy killing, to pull the plug, etc. In Chinese, the euphemisms used in ancient times to reflect the death of a deceased person have gradually disappeared, such as: to answer the final call, to pass over, to yield up the ghost and so on. In Chinese, the ancient euphemisms for death used to reflect the difference in status and power of the deceased have rarely been used, such as "princely", "daxing", "perish", " 殇 " and " 卒 " are disappearing. In contemporary society, people often use the expressions "passed away", "resigned for a long time", "long sleep", "goodbye forever", etc. to euphemistically express the death of important people. to euphemize the death of important people, and "passed away", "passed away", "end of life" to euphemize the death of ordinary people, these languages are simpler than before, and highlight the progress of social civilization even more! [3].

2.3 Differences in Religious Beliefs Lead to Differences in Euphemisms for Death

The great difference between Chinese and English languages is also due to the different religious and cultural beliefs between China and the West. Most of the English-speaking countries believe in Christianity, so some allusions in the Bible and Christianity have profoundly influenced the expression of death euphemisms. For example, in the Bible, God created human beings out of clay, so when human beings die, they can be regarded as returning to dust, which can be said as: "to return to dust". God is the creator of everything in the world, and when people die, they are called back to God, so death can also be expressed as "to be with God".

In China, Taoism and Buddhism have had a profound cultural influence, but the euphemisms for death are different in these two religions. Taoism believes that there is no extreme difference between "life" and "death" in the world, and that death is seen as a way to get away from the world or to become an immortal, so death is euphemistically called "recluse" or "recluse". Therefore, human death is also euphemistically referred to as "hidden", "recluse", "immortal", etc. But Buddhism pursues the goal of "spiritual enlightenment". But Buddhism is the pursuit of "all the virtues are complete, all the evils are silent and clean," the success of the completion of the perfect, so they do not think that death is a sad thing, and do not think that death is the end, so the emergence of the "round silence," "extinction Therefore, they do not consider death as a sad thing, nor do they think that death is the end, thus the euphemisms of "complete silence", "extinction", "extinction of peace", "demonstration of silence", and "return to silence"[4] appear. It can be seen from different religious and cultural traditions that euphemisms change with different religions. Chinese religions have distinctive regional characteristics and identity characteristics, because this type of euphemisms are generally used only by specific groups of people and audiences, so their frequency of use in people's daily lives is low and people may not be familiar with them.

3. Conclusion

Appropriate use of euphemisms is not only an essential activity phenomenon between people's socialization, but also a compulsory course for our contemporary graduate students, and an important criterion to measure a person's communicative ability. And a proper greeting in euphemisms can give a good beginning and impression to a conversation and add flowers to the whole conversation. Knowing the differences in greetings between Chinese and English can minimize unnecessary misunderstandings in communication. And death is an unavoidable topic of life, both Chinese and English have produced corresponding euphemisms because of its taboo nature, but also due to their religious and cultural differences, understanding it can avoid embarrassment in communication and better improve social skills.

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