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LINGUISTIC MEANS OF FORMING EUPHEMISMS IN THE MODERN CHINESE LANGUAGE

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Abstract

The article discusses the linguistic means of forming euphemisms in the modern Chinese language and the study of the concept of “euphemism” synchronically and diachronically. Authors highlighted and described several linguistic classifications of euphemisms, presenting the historical prerequisites for their appearance in China, analyzing the connection between taboos and euphemistic vocabulary and formulating the main subject-thematic groups of Chinese euphemisms. Attention is paid to the methods of formation of euphemisms in the Chinese language, including the phonetic allusion, antonomasia, euphemization of certain fixed expressions, metaphor, metonymy. With the help of deductive-inductive analysis and a vast set of examples, authors describe how some foundations of Confucious morality and ethical-ritual traditions in Chinese society led to restriction of the usage for some lexical units and resulted in the emergence of a large number of euphemisms in the Chinese language. The study reveals many factors influencing the usage of euphemisms in the modern Chinese language including the development of society. Special attention in the article is given to the role of euphemism as a universal phenomenon, providing an opportunity for better understanding the culture of the Chinese people and their language and widening the field of effective cross-cultural communication. The authors examined the works of prominent Chinese linguists and emphasized some certain differences in their classifications. The conducted study shows that the phenomenon of euphemism exists in all nations of the world and refers to the same origin but differs in the methods of the research and therefore in the ways of forming certain lexical units.

Keywords: Chinese language, euphemism, lexical unit, linguistic means, metaphor, metonymy, taboo.

1. Introduction

In every language there always tends to be a certain number of words, which are instinctively or deliberately avoided due to the fact that the speakers or listeners consider them either unpleasant, rude, or impolite. Therefore, people often use substitutes for such units, and these substitutes are euphemisms. Euphemisms originate from ancient taboos; they evolved along with the development of civilization and have not lost their frequency today.



Euphemization is a structurally heterogeneous significant linguistic phenomenon in the lexical system of the language. Euphemism is not only a trope, consisting of the implicit expression of a negative evaluation, but also an element of language structure, which plays an important role in its historical development. Euphemization is a continuous process of replacing one name with another, based on a person's constant evaluation and reevaluation of forms of expression resulting from a desire for successful communication.

Linguists around the world have covered many structural and functional aspects of euphemisms in the English and Chinese languages, yet one cannot study a particular phenomenon separately from specific interactions with the cultural world. Thus, when we discuss the process of euphemization, we should not exclude its cultural aspect.

Ukrainian linguistics feels an urgent need to study Chinese euphemisms from social and cultural vantage point. It is a vital necessary for Ukrainian scholars and students to conduct research in the field the cognitive-linguistic aspects of the Chinese language. Therefore, the study of this topic provides an opportunity for better understanding the culture of the Chinese people, their language, and their communicative behavior.

The purpose of our research is to study the linguistic means of forming Chinese euphemisms in a social-cultural perspective. To achieve this goal, we will solve the following **tasks**: to define the concept of euphemism; to present the classification of euphemisms in the Chinese language; to analyze the functions and methods of euphemisms formation in the Chinese language; to determine the areas of their use in everyday discourse.

The object of our study is euphemistic vocabulary in modern Chinese. In our article, we have given examples of the most commonly used euphemisms in the modern Chinese language. The *research material* consists of 408 euphemisms taken from the Dictionary of Chinese Euphemisms (Zhang, 1996).

2.Theoretical background and method

The latest studies of euphemization show various approaches, including controversial ones, to this phenomenon, which results from different research frameworks. The dynamic and multifaceted nature of euphemisms is the reason for the great variety of their lexical and grammatical forms, emotional neutrality or stylistic coloring, variability of their euphemistic potential.

These characteristics of euphemisms lead to the fact that the problem of their definition presents certain difficulties for researchers. Thus, Wu and Yang (2009) claim that "(e)uphemisms are emotionally neutral words or expressions used instead of synonymous words or expressions that the speaker considers obscene, rude or tactless" (p. 152).

Another correspondent definition was provided by the researcher (Cao, 2020), who characterizes euphemism as "a softened expression refraining from inappropriate words that serves under certain conditions to replace undesirable, not entirely polite, too harsh designations" (p.1095).

In his dictionary of euphemisms, Holder (2008) notes that euphemisms are emotionally neutral words or expressions used instead of synonymous words or expressions that appear obscene, rude, or tactless. Euphemisms may also replace taboos or archaic names. Euphemisms are occasional individual-contextual substitutions of some words for others with the purpose of distorting or masking the true essence that is being denoted (p. 20).

People use euphemisms to soften what they say or write. According to their functional interpretation, euphemisms serve as hedges: they are "a mitigating designation of any object or phenomenon, a softer expression instead of a rough one" (Wang, Zhang, & Dong, 2012, p.67).

Euphemisms have a softening effect, they are indirect substitutes for names of the terrible, shameful or odious, brought to life by moral or religious motives (Hui, 2002, pp. 76-77). As Qian (2020) puts it, "a euphemism is a word or phrase used to replace an unpleasant word or expression with a relatively more acceptable one" (p. 10). This makes euphemisms an important part of polite discourse.

According to Allan and Burridge (2007), “euphemisms are soft and permitted, meliorational-allegorical, and sometimes simply more acceptable for one reason or another, words or expressions used instead of a thematically stigmatizing or socially incorrect antecedent, instead of words or expressions, which are prohibited, indecent, unacceptable from the point of view of moral standards accepted in society, or even simply rude and tactless” (p. 25).

Beiyong and Jiguang (2022) consider euphemisms as forms of words that (for various reasons) express an idea in a softened, or veiled, or more respectful way. Moreover, this softening sometimes only implied (p. 69).

Li (2009) claims that the euphemisms is the use of a non-offensive or pleasant term instead of a direct, offensive one, with the purpose of masking the truth (pp. 152-53).

Linfoot-Ham (2005) defines a euphemism as “a method of indirect, periphrastic and at the same time mitigating designation of an object, property or action...” (p. 230).

In search of a comprehensive concept that reflects the meaning of all the definitions of euphemisms presented above, we suggest the following: a euphemism is the replacement of any impermissible or undesirable word or expression with a more correct one to avoid directly naming issues that cause negative feelings, as well as in order to mask certain facts of reality.

To generalize, we claim that euphemism performs three main functions:

1. Softening of rude and unpleasant issues for the speaker. At the same time, the speaker evaluates the subject of speech, if the perception of its direct meaning contains rudeness, harshness, obscenity;

2. Softening of rude and unpleasant issues for the interlocutor. The use of euphemism varies in different contexts and speech situations.

3. Hiding reality. Speakers select euphemisms to soften certain unacceptable words or expressions and to mask the nature of the denotation.

Scholars mainly study the phenomenon of euphemism in several aspects: sociolinguistic (taboos, their areas of use), functional (motives of euphemization), grammatical and semantic ones (structure of euphemisms, methods of euphemization).

Many aspects of euphemisms still remain controversial. Thus, the motives of euphemisms are defined and classified in different ways (the reasons for replacing some words and phrases by euphemisms), there are different classifications of the ways of forming euphemisms, there is no consensus about the place of euphemisms among related linguistic phenomena.

Since ancient times, euphemisms emerged from linguistic “taboo”, and followed the development and progress of civilization. In the modern world, euphemisms function in various spheres of social life.

Chinese scholars proved that the verbal taboo in a number of cases is related to the magical function of the Chinese language, which comes from deep antiquity. While studying the national-cultural component in the semantic structure of words, he pointed out the important role of taboos in the implementation of language names – euphemisms Euphemisms have been firstly mentioned in the Book of Songs (诗经), written between the 11th and 6th centuries BC (Wang, Zhang, & Salasiah, 2023, pp. 853-854). These euphemisms used to describe some unfortunate events that were about to happen 习习谷风, 以阴以雨 (“The mountain winds are raging there, and the weather is still bad”).

In this present research, we used, among the general scientific methods, deductive-inductive analysis, which provided for theoretical and practical generalizations and made it possible to draw certain research conclusions and interpret the results of the analysis of empirical material. We also applied the classification method to group lexical material; the descriptive method and the method of comparative analysis to identify distinctive and common features of euphemisms in the Chinese language.

3. Findings and discussion

There are different classifications of euphemisms in modern linguistics. Hui (2002) classifies euphemisms of the general literary language. This group includes “softening” in order not to call too

“rough” words (pp. 76-77). Such euphemisms penetrate the literary language and contribute to the development of its vocabulary: they expand polysemy, increase the number of homonyms.

In addition, Hui Yu points out euphemisms of various jargons. They differ from the general literary language since they are used not only in relation to such subjects and concepts, the exact names of which are sometimes not very convenient to pronounce. Based on various jargons, separate short-lived literary currents developed.

Regarding the next classification, contextual euphemisms make a separate group. They are more complex and determined by the conditions of a special context or the character of the person expressing the thought. These euphemisms obtain all the properties of euphemisms but are hardly reproducible. Contextual euphemisms often convey figurative and metaphorical meaning. The euphemistic substitutions are determined by a consituation, its ethno-cultural orientation, and communicants' characteristics.

There is another classification (Holder, 2008, pp. 56-58), which distinguishes linguistic euphemisms that are fixed in the language but their potential is not quite clear for native speakers of the modern language. Holder singles out historical euphemisms and dysphemisms. Dysphemism is a trope opposite to euphemism; it is the use of a more vulgar word or expression instead of an emotionally and stylistically neutral one.

In fiction and journalism, dysphemism expresses a negative, critical, or contemptuous attitude towards a certain fact, phenomenon, or person. In everyday discourse, dysphemisms mainly serve to make the utterance unpleasant for the recipient, to reinforce its negative aspects. Various means of negative evaluation of behavior or personality can be used as dysphemisms – from expressive words that are within the limits of literary word usage to rough spatial vocabulary.

Dysphemisms comprise a set of sociocultural and psycholinguistic factors, which add a kind of “fashion edge”, new realities or neologisms to speech. Dysphemisms are expressive units used instead of neutral ones, they help more accurately express the speaker's attitude to what is being said. Like euphemisms, dysphemisms quickly wear out due to their widespread use, because over time they lose their negative meaning and begin to be perceived as an acceptable neutral expression.

Over time, occasional speech euphemisms can pass into the category of linguistic ones and significantly lose their euphemistic potential.

Stylistically, Lu and Kong (2006) divided euphemisms into two large groups – positive and negative. Positive euphemisms can also be called stylistic or ‘exaggerating’ euphemisms (Lu & Kong, 2006, pp. 17-20).

Semantically, there are various types of euphemisms (Li, 2009): 1) euphemisms that appeared on the basis of superstition; 2) euphemisms that appear due to a feeling of fear and dissatisfaction; 3) euphemisms based on sympathy and pity; 4) euphemisms caused by shyness; 5) euphemisms generated by politeness (Li, 2009, pp.152-153).

Euphemisms are also classified by their purpose. These groups are: a) euphemisms mitigating various types of discrimination: age discrimination, property discrimination, discrimination of people with physical and mental disabilities, racial and ethnic discrimination; b) euphemisms that reduce superstitious fear of any phenomena; c) euphemisms that increase the prestige of a certain profession; d) euphemisms that distract attention from the negative phenomena of reality, e.g. those that serve as a cover for aggressive military actions, those that mitigate the negative consequences in the socio-economic spheres associated with crime, etc. (Gomez, 2009, pp. 728-729).

The most detailed is the thematic classification of Wang Xiaoling, Zhang Meng, Dong Hailin, in which they singled out sixty lexical-semantic subclasses of euphemisms. Some of them are: premature termination of pregnancy, mistakes, failures, age, bankruptcy, indebtedness, fraud, commerce and banking, industry (Wang, Zhang, & Dong, 2012, pp. 66-70).

In his classification, Luo (2018) distinguishes ten lexical categories of euphemisms according to conceptual areas: names of supernatural forces; names of the concepts of death and disease; names referring to mental and physical disabilities; names referring to sex; names

denoting the concept of poverty; names referring to some professions; names related to the field of physiology, names of clothing items (Luo, 2018, pp. 70-72).

Thus, by the criterion of their linguistic means Chinese euphemisms may be classified:

- structurally (a word, a phrase or a sentence);
- stylistically (elevated, neutral or lowered);
- semantically (metaphor, metonymy, transformation of meaning, etc.);
- phonetically (phonetic distortions);
- morphologically (conversion, affixation, abbreviation, borrowing, etc).

Chinese linguists who study the relationship between intralinguistics and extralinguistics paid attention to the categories of taboos and euphemisms, analyzing them from different angles. Thus, Huang, noted the importance of studying taboos and euphemisms for the theory and practice of translation (Huang, 2019, pp. 103-104). Huang's analysis of taboos and euphemisms revealed their relevance for both native speakers and foreigners.

The origin of euphemism and euphemization lies in the nature of human beings and the dates back to human evolution. In ancient times, primitive man's superstitious fear of direct naming gave rise to a ban (taboo) on certain words, instead of which new names appeared. Thus, primitive superstition gave rise to the oldest layer of euphemisms – permitted names hiding the subject. Historically, these names developed into nominations, whose euphemistic nature in people's minds is preserved as a remnant of ancient magical beliefs.

With the evolution of society and the progress of human civilization, the functions of euphemisms are expanding. In modern society, their use is no longer limited to specific prohibited subjects and ideas, or the need to avoid psychological discomfort (for example, due to shyness) in communication. We claim that the main reason of speech euphemization both in ancient times and in modern society is human psychology.

The word "taboo" is a prohibition to pronounce the direct names of dangerous objects or phenomena, which, according to the idea of a primitive man, can cause danger. The taboo is connected with a custom that existed among many peoples in ancient times, and is still in use among some tribes in Africa, Southeast Asia, and Australia. The superstitious fear of spells, the magical effect of words, the fear of naming of certain objects led to banning of usage of some lexemes. Following the custom, superstitious people did not name the things, phenomena and actions by their real names, but used hints instead. Thus, such taboos, archaic names were gradually replaced by euphemisms.

Taboo as a linguistic superstition is closely related to euphemism. When objects and phenomena are the subject to prohibition, it is quite natural for euphemism to appear. Taboos and euphemisms are widely used in all languages of the world, as well as in Ukrainian and Chinese. The phenomenon of euphemism is based on deep archaic remnants of linguistic taboos.

Taboo as a cultural and ethnographic phenomenon affecting people's mindset, behavior, and everyday life arose in China at an early stage of social development not knowing the laws of nature, being weak and defenseless against the formidable manifestations of its forces, the ancient Chinese worshiped and spiritualized these forces, endowed them with reason for supernatural power. Thus, one of the most important forms of primitive religious ideas —animalism appeared in China. In ancient times, people were pagans who worshiped all natural phenomena: the Sun, the Moon, stars, trees, plants, animals, etc. The ancient Chinese believed that they could not cut down or burn a sycamore; this was a sin and it would harm a person. This comes down to their beliefs: long ago people noticed the main property of many plants —death in winter and rebirth in summer —and saw in this the presence of a certain divine power; plants that most corresponded to these ideas became a totem. People in ancient China had a mixed feeling of worship and fear. Taboos that arose among the Chinese due to the fear of the forces of nature were a means to protect themselves from all kinds of calamity.

At a higher stage of social development, during the era of imperial rule, the taboo reached an unprecedented spread in Chinese culture. The state began to pay attention to taboos during the Zhou

dynasty (III century BC). Later, during the Qin dynasty (201–206 BC), the taboo, established in the form of state law, received systematic development, and in the Tang dynasty (7th – 10th centuries AD), it supported the ideology of Confucianism and reached a high degree of development. The sources of taboos in these periods are prohibitions issued by the imperial palace, superstitions and etiquette rules. Thus, common people were strictly forbidden to wear yellow that was the color of emperor's yellow clothes with the image of a dragon on them. To help the emperor act successfully and his subjects not to violate the prohibitions, the “imperial calendar” was created.

Prohibitions due to various reasons find their reflection in the language. Therefore, in ancient China, it was not allowed to use syllables denoting the emperor's name. Hence the need for euphemisms to indicate the name of the emperor and members of his family: the emperor himself was called 天子 “the Son of Heaven” and 万岁 “Ten Thousand Years” as a symbol of longevity that was used as a respectful address to the emperor. Instead of the name of the empress, the name 东宫 “Eastern Palace” was used, and the second wife of the emperor was called 西宫 “West Palace”: the empress always lived in the main palace, which was located on the eastern side, and the second wife occupied the palace in the western part.

Another reason for the emergence of taboos and, accordingly, the emergence of euphemisms is the need to use decent, polite words and expressions that comply with the rules of etiquette. Many respectable etiquette forms have appeared in the Chinese language since ancient times. For example, instead of 您的女儿 “your daughter”, they said 您的千金 “your preciousness”, and when addressing his father-in-law, the son-in-law called him 泰山 “Mount Taishan”, in this way he expressed his respect because Mount Taishan is was considered the highest and most revered in ancient China. It was considered impolite to say 她怀孕了 “she is pregnant” to a pregnant woman, so people replaced this phrase with 她有喜了 “she has joy”, 她有喜脉 “she has a joyful pulse”.

In ancient China, one of the sources of taboo was the human fear of certain animals, which gave rise to a number of euphemisms: a tiger was called 大虫 “a large insect” or 猛兽 “a beast of prey”, instead of the word 蛇 “snake” they used 长虫 “a long insect” and others.

In Saussurian tradition, the connection of the taboo with socio-cultural, historico-political, and national factors determines its study from the standpoint of external linguistics. The impact of taboos on society and individual life occurs in the form of a change in language names (renames) implemented as euphemisms. As a lexical-semantic phenomenon, euphemism is an object of study in internal linguistics.

The ancient Chinese considered a personal name to be a person's property, they also believed that the soul of each individual was contained in their name. It led to the ban on calling a person directly by a personal name as presumably ‘harmful’ to the person.

Since ancient times, there have been three types of taboo names: state taboo, taboo on the names of famous people and sages, family taboo (Lai & Chen, 2019, pp.190-200). The dominant place in ancient China belonged to the “state taboo”, which must be observed by all subjects and even the emperor himself. The state taboo is a ban on using the name of the emperor and his ancestors, the names of the empress and her ancestors, the names of previous dynasties, the names given to emperors after their death; the names of the graves of the emperors, the surnames of the emperors and their zodiac signs.

According to ancient Chinese law, officials could have several wives at the same time; but, except for the first wife, they did not obtain real power in the family and were called concubines. For the purpose of consoling these women and sounding cuter, the euphemistic name arose – 侧室 (Side room).

The second type of taboo—the taboo on the names of famous people—was widespread in different dynasties. Thus, according to the law of the Qin dynasty (17th – 20th centuries), it was strictly forbidden to use the names of Confucius and Mencius in books out of respect for the personality of these people.

In addition to the above-mentioned taboos, in ancient China there was another type of taboo—the ban on naming officials. Unlike other types of taboos, the taboo on the names of officials has not

become legal despite the fact that it has become widespread among the people.

The third type—the “family taboo” was limited to the circle of relatives, where young people could not use the names of their ancestors and, therefore, call them directly by their names. Let us give as an example the greatest Chinese historian Sima Qian – the author of “史记”, who had never used the word 谈 in this work because this character coincided with his father’s name. Moreover, the scientist renamed all historical figures bearing the same name to 同, which bears the meaning of “the same”.

In communication between different family groups, people had to respect this tradition and observe the relevant prohibitions. The family taboo reflects the social and moral consciousness of ancient Chinese society, and therefore it received state recognition. It should be noted that the same tradition is preserved in modern China.

Taboo in Chinese culture extends not only to names, but also to many other areas of social life. The usage of taboo vocabulary is much narrower in modern China, but some traditions still exist among the people, including a family taboo for using names, restriction on wearing red clothes at a funeral, some taboo numbers.

In the modern Chinese language, there is an expression 永远休息了 “went to eternal rest” or 不在了 or 没了 (may be compared to English “no longer alive”), or some others 逝世了, 过世了, 逝世了 “left the world”. If a person died while performing his duty, then the more prestigious terms 牺牲, 献身, 就义, 捐躯, 殉国, 殉职 are used, meaning “to sacrifice one’s life for the homeland”.

There is a long-standing expression 梁上君子 “to pan on the balcony of the house”, which means “to be a thief”. This euphemism appeared due to the fact that earlier, when the owner unexpectedly returned, the thief often hid on the balcony of the house. This euphemism is also used in modern Chinese. In today’s society, drug addicts are called 隐君子 “master with passion”.

As for numbers, the Chinese believe that they have magical power and can directly affect a person’s life. As a result, people use numbers that can bring a person happiness and luck and avoid numbers that are associated with trouble and misfortune, for example, odd numbers, numbers that are consonant with unpleasant phenomena. Thus, the taboo on numbers, which arose in ancient times, is preserved in modern culture.

There are three types of number taboos:

- Taboo on an odd number. The Chinese consider odd numbers ‘unlucky’: they always have an extra number that does not have a pair, which means that it disrupts the harmony of existence. For the Chinese, a couple is a symbol of happiness. A couple is the harmony of nature like the Sun and the Moon, the sky and the earth, the husband and the wife, the dragon and the phoenix (in an ancient Chinese legend). Mandarin ducks always swim in pairs and symbolize eternal marital love. When lotus flowers bloom in pairs on one stem, it means pure love, inseparable life of a couple.

The Chinese always give something in an even number, trying to avoid an odd number. For example, two vases, two watches, eight goldfish, etc. The Chinese express their sympathy for even numbers when choosing a wedding date, considering even days to be the most suitable time for marriage. Moreover, the symbol of the wedding is two identical joined characters 喜 “joy”, meaning “double happiness”.

- Taboo on the use of numbers consonant with unpleasant nominations. Because homophones are widely represented in the Chinese language, people often associate some words with undesirable phenomena just because of the consonance of the words. This is especially characteristic of some numbers, e.g., the number ‘seven’ is consonant with the word ‘angry’ (气), ‘four’ is consonant with the word ‘death’ (死). In this regard, when choosing a phone or car number, people try to avoid these numbers and strive for those that cause pleasant associations: the numbers ‘168’ in the car plate remind the phrase “to get rich all the way while driving”

一路发; '998' stands for the expression 九九发 "to be constantly rich"; '5878' is consonant with the expression and 我发妻发 "I will get rich, and my wife will get rich" etc.

▪ Taboo on numbers associated with death. These include the following numbers: 73, 84, and 100. Because Confucius died at the age of 73, and his disciple and follower Mengzi passed away at the age of 84, since ancient times the Chinese have believed that these numbers are unlucky, so they try not to use them in conversations. The Chinese, like other nations of the world, have preserved the fear of the name 'death' since ancient times till modern days. 100 years is considered such a rare age for people that when a person turns 100 years old, he can answer the question about his age: "I don't know, I don't remember my age", always hiding his years.

The Chinese, like other peoples of the world, have been afraid to name death since ancient times. This is how the taboo on this word appeared, and the need for euphemisms to name this concept gave rise to a significant number of them. Thus, when naming the death of the emperor, a special expression was used – 崩 (meaning "to collapse"). For other officials of various ranks, the euphemisms 薨, conducting the meaning death, were often used. The people used expressions for the name of this concept: 成仙了 "to become a celestial", 去见老祖宗了 "went to see the ancestors" (to pass away).

Another reason for the use of euphemistic substitutes in the modern Chinese language was the desire to avoid direct concepts related to relationships of families, intimate relationships, etc. Since ancient times, the Chinese could not directly name the above concepts and resort to euphemisms. For example, marital relationship is called 夫妻生活 "married life", 房事 "room on the right", 同房 "being in the same room". It is not customary to say "to go to the toilet", but a euphemistic substitute is used 方便 "to relieve oneself".

We claim that the main *types of euphemism formation* in the Chinese language include:

- phonetic allusion,
- antonomasia,
- euphemization with fixed expressions,
- metaphor.

1. Phonetic allusion. Numerous homophones characteristic of the Chinese language make possible an associative connection based on the consonance of words. The association can be found as positive, pleasant, and negative.

Consonant words are present in various spheres of language nomination. As a result of the fact that people believe in the magic of language, in the possibility of its influence on the surrounding world and the personal life of a person, there was a desire to avoid words and expressions with unpleasant meanings, taboo them and to replace them with appropriate euphemisms.

Thus, because the phrase 福到 in the sense of "happiness has turned over" is consonant with the saying 福倒, which means "happiness has arrived". During the Spring Festival, every family stick on the door the character 福 "happiness" upside down, so that the guests who come, noticing it, can say "Happiness has arrived", which is considered to be the best New Year's greeting.

Since in ancient times students have been very afraid of failing the state exams for the rank of an official, thus the words 落第 "failed to pass the exam" became taboo for them. They even avoided the consonant word 乐 "fun, joy" and replaced the persistent wish in the letter 安乐 "prosperity and happiness" with the expression 安康 meaning "well-being and health".

Merchants never use the word 折 "losses", and even the consonant with this word, 舌头 "tongue, organ" is called 口条 "strip in the mouth". Actors, being afraid of losing the audience, do not use the word 散 "to leave, go" using 伞 "umbrella" instead, with the phrase 雨盖 "rain cover". The most terrifying word for fishermen is 沉 "to get drown", they even avoid the word 乘 "to stick", which has a similar pronunciation, and instead of saying 乘饭 "to place food" they say 添饭 "to add food".

The word 作家 “writer” is a substitute for the word 坐家 “to sit at home”, hence the semi-joking euphemistic replacement 坐家 “to sit at home”, conveying the idea of “being idle”. To conclude, phonetic allusion is one of the most productive ways of forming euphemisms in the Chinese language.

2. Antonomasia. According to its definition, antonomasia is a logical paraphrase in which the name of a famous person is replaced with an expression containing an indication of his main role, function, subject related to it.

Antonomasia is based on a stable association, the source of which is historical, literary, and cultural connotations. In the Chinese language, antonomasia is often used to express the character of a person. Therefore, instead of the description “ugly and stupid girl”, the Chinese say Dong Shi 东施 (Dong Shi is a historical person, an unattractive girl who imitated the facial expressions of the beautiful girl Xi Shi); 刘备 (one of the Chinese emperors liked to shed tears when solving problems and thereby achieved his goals). 陈世美 (about an official in ancient China who abandoned his wife after taking a high position (when she married him, he was poor); a frivolous and evil woman is called 潘金莲 – “the name of a frivolous woman”, who killed her husband with her lover (in ancient Chinese literature); the short man is called 武大郎 in the name of her (潘金莲) husband, who was very short.

3. Fixed phrases as a source of euphemisms. Many fixed phrases of the Chinese language perform the function of euphemisms to soften the harshness of the statement. For example, instead of preventing 献媚, they say 戴高帽子 “to put a high hat on someone”, instead of having received a refusal 遭到拒绝, they use the expression 吃了闭门羹 “ate jelly in a closed courtyard”. 炒鱿鱼 “Fried squid” is said when you lose your job because of being laid off; “he has red eye disease” 他有红眼病 instead he is envious of the good fortune of others 他嫉妒别人. The expression “play Shuang Huang” 演双簧 is used as a euphemism in a situation where two people deceive others by colluding with each other; the expression 染指 (literally “to paint a finger”) is a substitute in a situation when a person is involved in some unpleasant business, crime.

We also claim that there are three main *functions of euphemisms* in the Chinese language: those of etiquette, hiding, and emphasizing.

The etiquette function of euphemisms is of major importance in the Chinese society. A forty-year-old woman is described as 第二春 “to have a second youth”; a person who has recently graduated from university and does not have work experience yet is called 书生气十足人 (typical intellectual).

The function of hiding, masking, or veiling is quite frequent in the Chinese language. For example, an organization that provide jobs for disabled people is called a 福利院 “welfare house”, and institutions where old people without relatives live are called a 敬老院 “a house of respect for the elderly”. A mentally retarded person is said to be a person who 有智力障碍者 “has obstacles in the mind”.

In ancient China, a whore was called 青楼女子 “the woman who lives in the blue temple”.

The use of euphemistic ciphers is especially noticeable in social spheres: illegal income is called 灰色收入 “gray income”, crimes, bribes are 社会灰暗面 “the gray side of society”, and unemployment is called 下岗 “leaving the job”.

The function of emphasizing the prestige of certain professions and organizations is also typical for euphemisms in Chinese culture. For example, in modern Chinese society, cleaners are referred to by the descriptive expression 环卫工上 “a worker who protects the environment”, as well as through positive coloring 绿衣天使 “an angel in green robes”.

In ancient China, the profession of an actor was considered unprestigious and unqualified, so actors were called 戏子 “person who plays”. Furthermore, there was also a euphemistic name 角儿 “role”. Euphemisms in Chinese are used as substitutes when mentioning undesirable phenomena (*to die, perish*), names of unpleasant insects, animals, etc.

Thus, we believe that taboos and euphemisms are an important socio-cultural and linguistic phenomenon both for ancient and modern Chinese societies. They reflect the specifics of Chinese culture and present great linguistic value for foreigners studying the Chinese language and culture.

4. Conclusions and research perspectives

This present study analyzed euphemism as unique linguistic phenomenon that stimulates communication, maintains polite linguistic behavior and goodwill, reflects ethno-cultural specificity. It dates back to ancient times and serves to veil language units that are considered inappropriate in order to avoid negative emotions, images, and misunderstandings and to achieve effective interaction.

The main functions of euphemism are to reduce unpleasant or offensive aspects of denotation, protect against offense, reduce tension and shyness, as well as to perform a stylistic function.

Our paper revealed the underlying mechanisms of euphemization. Historically, euphemisms go back to ancient times when they were closely associated with taboos. Indecent and socially unacceptable words and expressions were included in the taboo vocabulary, which gave rise to the revival of euphemistic language units and the use of more tactful language.

Euphemisms are an important sociocultural and linguistic phenomenon for modern and ancient China, underpinned by its religion, emperor's power, and traditions. This phenomenon reflects the ethno-cultural character of the nation development and its language. We claim that euphemisms function in various spheres of the Chinese world construal, but the most frequent are euphemisms of "death" and "aging".

This present study also demonstrated the relationship of linguistic, social, psychological and pragmatic aspects of euphemisms. It also revealed the difference in European and Chinese research frameworks of euphemism and corresponding methods. Since Chinese is a tonal language, in addition to morphologically universal ways of forming euphemisms, there are many specific Chinese ones. As the same time, semantically euphemization has many universal roots in human evolution.

Our findings open up *prospects* for further analysis of euphemisms. They stipulate the search for new methods of how taboo and euphemisms can be researched, theorized and described in Chinese and in other languages and cultures.

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МОВНІ ЗАСОБИ ФОРМУВАННЯ ЕВФЕМІЗМІВ В СУЧАСНІЙ КИТАЙСЬКІЙ МОВІ

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Анотація

Статтю присвячено дослідженню лінгвістичних засобів утворення евфемізмів у сучасній китайській мові, також увагу приділено дослідженню поняття «евфемізм» у синхронічному та діахронічному аспектах. Авторами дослідження було виділено та писано декілька лінгвістичних класифікацій евфемізмів, представлено історичні передумови їх появи в Китаї, проаналізовано зв'язок табу з

евфемістичною лексикою та сформульовано основні предметно-тематичні групи китайських евфемізмів. Особливу увагу приділено способам утворення евфемізмів в китайській мові, зокрема фонетичній алюзії, антономазії, евфемізації окремих сталих виразів, метафорі, метонімії. За допомогою дедуктивно-індуктивного аналізу та великої кількості ілюстративного матеріалу автори наводять докази того, що основи конфуціанської моралі та етико-ритуальних традицій у китайському суспільстві призвели до неможливості використання деяких лексичних одиниць через невідповідність нормам етики та моралі та сприяли появі великої кількості евфемізмів в китайській мові. Дослідження розглядає вплив багатьох чинників на вживання цих одиниць у сучасній китайській мові, у тому числі як наслідок розвитку суспільства. Особливу увагу приділено ролі евфемізму як універсального явища, що надає можливість для кращого розуміння китайського народу та його мови і розширює поле для ефективної міжкультурної комунікації. Було розглянуто праці таких видатних китайських лінгвістів, де автори підкреслюють певні відмінності у цих класифікаціях. Проведене дослідження показує, що явище евфемізму існує в усіх народів світу і має однакове походження, але відрізняється як певними методами дослідження так і способами утворення окремих лексичних одиниць.

Ключові слова: евфемізм, китайська мова, лексична одиниця, метафора, метонімія, мовний засіб, табу.