



A Contrastive Study of Euphemistic Death Expressions in Arabic and Chinese

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Abstract

The use of euphemisms arises from language taboos, with “death” being the most taboo word since ancient times. It is customary for individuals to avoid discussions surrounding death and view it as the ultimate misfortune. As a result, substitutes for the word “death” are commonly utilized in communication. Within Chinese and Thai cultures, individuals employ metaphors, metonymy, and other rhetorical devices to indirectly address the topic of “death” with individuals of differing backgrounds. Such euphemisms serve to reflect the emotions and attitudes of those living towards the deceased. This article aims to analyze the differences in the euphemisms used within Chinese and Thai languages by categorizing death objects based on their status, gender, and age. Such categories include the imperial household, monks, elderly individuals, giants, celebrities, talents, heroes, women, and juveniles. Furthermore, this analysis aims to highlight the similarities and differences between Chinese and Thai cultures while accounting for variances in political systems and religious beliefs.

Subject Areas

Linguistics

Keywords

Euphemisms, Chinese, Arabic, Death, Teaching Chinese as A Second Language

1. Introduction

The human attitude towards death is universally present in different times and societies. In fact, people generally do not want to deal with the topic of death using straightforward language in communication. Whether it is superstition, fear, or social respect, the fact remains that when faced with language about

death, people try to soften the effect they really want to communicate (Crespo, 2006: 101) [1]. For this reason, they turn to euphemisms. Euphemism is not only a response to taboo topics; instead, it provides a way of talking about taboos, that is, about the unspeakable, the concepts that are prohibited from entering the public domain and removed from our consciousness.

Euphemisms are created to replace taboo words, and people often express themselves indirectly to ensure smooth communication without offending others. With the progress of time, human communication has made significant breakthroughs in both breadth and depth, and euphemisms have permeated many fields such as politics, economics, culture, military, and diplomacy. Life and death are natural phenomena of life, but people have always had a fear of death, making it one of the topics that people try to avoid discussing directly because it may cause discomfort or pain, especially for those who have lost loved ones. Due to the influence of language magic for thousands of years, people avoid the word “death” and seek alternative expressions to replace direct expressions related to death. These replacements are called euphemisms, such as using “passed away” in Chinese or “tuwuf-fi” in Arabic to replace the direct word “death”.

1.1. Concept of Euphemism

Some scholars have argued that linguistic taboos have led to the production of euphemisms. In this regard, Al-Husseini (2007: 328) [2] believes that “the existence of taboo words or concepts stimulates the production of euphemisms.” However, another group of scholars suggests that euphemisms in language have been developed throughout the course of human social development, and are closely linked to social, cultural, and religious taboos. Importantly, these factors motivate people to maintain politeness and dignity in communication. It is assumed that the more euphemisms used within a society, the stronger the relationships between people become. Therefore, the use of euphemistic expressions can strengthen social unity. Holmes (2001: 1) [3] points out that “sociolinguistics is mainly concerned with the performance of language in different contexts”. Additionally, Holmes explains that sociolinguists study the relationship between language and society, as well as why people express themselves differently in different environments.

Many linguists have defined euphemisms from different perspectives. Allan and Burridge (1991: 11) [4] provide a definition that roughly states: “Euphemisms are used to replace socially unwelcome expressions in order to avoid situations that are embarrassing or shameful for oneself, the other party, or a third party.”

According to Wehr and Crown (1976) [5], similar meanings of euphemisms exist in Arabic. The Arabic root word (luṭf) means to be friendly and kind to someone, and its derivative (laṭāfah) means: 1) kind, delicate, affectionate, elegant, kind-hearted, and loving. 2) to soften, mitigate, ease, relieve. 3) to treat kindly. It is worth mentioning that Allaṭīf is one of Allah’s honorable names.

Lutz (1989: 27) [6] studied euphemisms for death and believed that “people use euphemisms to express sorrow when someone has passed away because we do not want to say directly to a grieving person, ‘I’m sorry your father died.’” He believed that euphemisms not only protect the other party’s feelings but also mean that during the mourning period, we express sorrow for the other party’s loss and wish the family comfort and condolences.

1.2. Theoretical Background

Politeness is a universal phenomenon that plays an important role in people’s social interactions, as it can help maintain good relationships between communicators. Cruse (2006: 131) [7] defines politeness as “how to minimize negative effects of language and maximize positive effects (called ‘negative politeness’ and ‘positive politeness’ respectively).” The theory of politeness was developed by Brown and Levinson (1987) [8] based on Goffman’s face theory. The concept of politeness owes much to Goffman’s original works (1955, 1967) [9]. The main concept of politeness theory is the face, which Brown and Levinson (1987: 61) define as “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself.” They believe that everyone has two faces, a positive one and a negative one. They define positive face as the desire of an individual to have their needs appreciated in social interaction, and negative face as the desire of an individual to have their action freedom and non-imposition.

Based on the above theory, it can be inferred that the relationship between euphemism, politeness, and face is deeply ingrained. Crespo (2005: 78) points out that “euphemism, face, and politeness are interrelated phenomena, and they pursue a common goal: social harmony in communication”. The relationship between euphemism, politeness, and face can be roughly described as follows:

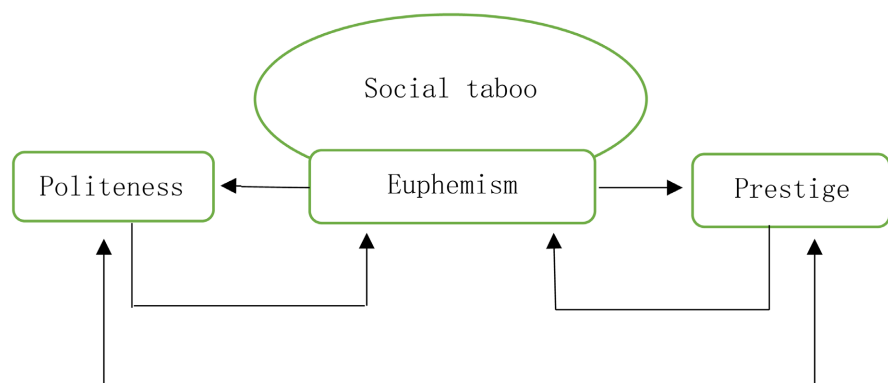


Figure 1. Reflexivity between politeness, euphemism, and face (Crespo, 2005: 85)

According to Crespo (2005), in order to avoid the threat of certain conflictual speech acts, euphemisms respond to two motivations, as shown in **Figure 1**. Crespo assumes that the first motivation is to enhance politeness in social discourse; the second is to preserve the face of the recipient as well as that of the speaker.

The polite function of euphemism mainly refers to using euphemistic language to replace sensitive, awkward, or embarrassing topics, showing respect for the listener, preserving their face, and making communication smoother and more gentle. It mainly refers to using euphemisms to replace taboo language, avoiding the use of language related to awe-inspiring gods, diseases, death, etc., to avoid causing stress to the speaker and listener. Intentionally exaggerating certain things with euphemistic language to cover up their true and objective aspects, especially the negative aspects, is mainly used in politics, military, diplomacy, and other fields. Based on the formation reasons, composition methods, and functional effects of euphemistic words, they can be divided into two categories: one is euphemistic words related to language taboos, which replace easily feared or repulsive words with corresponding synonyms, and the form of this kind of euphemistic words is mostly words; the other is a flexible means adopted based on certain social norms in social communication to pursue communication efficiency, such as changing expressions or vague expressions. This kind of euphemistic expression mostly appears in the form of phrases or sentences and is generally unrelated to language taboos. As the first type of euphemistic words comes from language taboos of different ethnic groups, and the second type of euphemistic words is largely related to the principle of politeness, and the basic principle of politeness in human communication among different ethnic groups is generally the same, we will pay more attention to the first type of euphemistic words when making comparisons.

1.3. Source of Language Data

The Chinese examples used in this paper come from “Dictionary of Applied Euphemisms” [10] is a book published by Shanghai Dictionary Publishing House in 2011, written by Wang Yajun and “Dictionary of Euphemisms” [11] written by Mohammad Bin Naser Shamlan. The selection criteria for these examples were based on their relevance to the topics being discussed, their frequency of use in everyday language, and their ability to illustrate the specific aspects of euphemisms that are the focus of this study.

In selecting examples, I prioritized terms and phrases that are commonly encountered in contemporary Chinese language to ensure the study’s applicability to current linguistic practices. Additionally, I aimed to include a diverse range of examples that span different contexts, such as social interactions, media, and formal communication, to provide a comprehensive understanding of how euphemisms are used in various settings.

The translation approach adopted in this study involved a careful and nuanced process to ensure accuracy and fidelity to the original meaning. Each example was translated with consideration of its connotation, cultural context, and the subtleties of the Chinese language. Where necessary, multiple English equivalents were evaluated to determine the most appropriate translation that captures the intended euphemistic effect.

By providing these detailed criteria and describing the translation methodology, readers can better understand the rationale behind the chosen examples and have confidence in the accuracy of the translations. This thorough approach enhances the credibility and impact of the study, allowing for a more precise analysis of euphemisms in the Chinese language.

2. Euphemistic Death Expressions in Arabic and Chinese

2.1. Similar Expressions

When death is understood as the end point of human life and the predetermined period of survival for each person on earth, euphemistic words indicating death in Chinese usually contain the characters “终”, “End,” “卒” “pass away,” “尽”, “finished,” for example: 长终 (long end), 永终 (eternal end), 考终 (parent’s end), 正终 (proper end), 令终 (virtuous end), 善终 (peaceful end), 临终 (at the end), 寿终 (end of a long life), 无疾而终 (end without illness), 暴卒 (sudden passing), 限尽 (limit reached), and 同归于尽 (end together).

Other euphemisms that refer to the end of one’s life journey or the completion of one’s life include: “毕命” (end of life), “临命” (approaching the end of life), “过辈” (passing from this world), “解驾” (release from the chariot), “就世” (approaching the next world), “大限将至” (the end is near). In Arabic culture, death is understood as the end of life, something that cannot be escaped, and will ultimately catch up with one. For example: completing one’s life plan (استوفى حظه من الحياة), getting the most accurate appointment date (حلّ به أصدق المواعيد), his soul departed (زهقت روحه), reaching his predetermined limit (قضى أجله), Allah turned his page (طويت صحيفته), his death was realized (أدركته الوفاة), the time of return is near (دنو الأجل), his time limit has been fulfilled (استوفى أجله), his time limit has arrived (قضى نحبه), completed his term (استكمل مدته), the day has come (حان يومه).

A euphemistic way of expression is like a kind of “deodorant spray” applied to language (Allan and Burridge, 1991: 25). Euphemisms in both languages can also carefully describe the fate of people after they pass away. The most common euphemisms used to describe phenomena related to funerals and burial include in Chinese: 入土 (entering the earth), 入地 (entering the ground), 进土 (being buried), 掩土 (covering the earth), 掩泉 (covering the spring), 听蟋蟀儿叫 (listening to the crickets chirp), 盖棺 (covering the coffin), 阖棺 (closing the coffin), 葬玉埋香 (burying jade and burying fragrance), 彻席 (unveiling the mat), 易箴 (changing the headdress), 撤瑟 (putting away the zither), 呜呼哀哉 (alas and lament), 一命呜呼 (the last breath). These are various Arabic expressions used to describe burial and funeral rituals:

Carrying the coffin (أودع على النعش), Burial in a tomb (أودع لحده), Wearing funeral clothes (مكفنا), Wrapped in funeral clothes (بات ملفوفا في أكفانه), Laid in the grave (أنزل في قبره), Placed in the grave (أرهن رسمه), Earth piled over the grave (هيل عليه التراب), Soil scattered over the grave (دك عليه التراب), Attending the funeral (ساروا بجنائزته), Covered with soil (أجن في رسمه), The grave

filled with soil (غيبته حفرتة، ضمته الأرض، طوته الغبراء)

In Chinese, the euphemisms that represent death are mostly related to leaving or parting, and in numerous metaphors, death is understood as For “leaving certain people” or “farewell,” the translation would be “告别,” which specifically means saying goodbye to someone or bidding farewell.

The word “世” is the most common term in Chinese used to refer to the place from which the deceased departed. Therefore, the following expressions combine “世” with various verbs indicating “departing” or “bidding farewell,” such as: 去世 (pass away), 逝世 (pass away), 弃世 (abandon the world), 下世 (descend to the next world), 背世 (turn away from the world), 即世 (immediately leave the world), 捐世 (depart from the world), 委世 (entrust oneself to the world), 顺世 (go along with the world), 辞世 (bid farewell to the world), 辞别人世 (bid farewell to the mortal world), 倾世 (devote one’s life), 遗世 (leave the world), 谢世 (leave the world), 过世 (pass away), 绝世 (end one’s life), 离世 (depart from the world), 告别人世 (bid farewell to the mortal world), 弃天下 (abandon the world), 谢尘缘 (leave the dust realm), 离尘 (leave the mundane), 撒手尘寰 (release from the worldly realm), 过身 (pass away), 回首 (look back), 转身 (turn away).

There are also many euphemistic expressions in Arabic that denote leaving and departure in relation to death. For example, “to go” (رحل، ذهب), “to pass away” (فارق الحياة), “to abandon life” (ترك الحياة), “to vacate his place” (خلى مكانه), “to disappear forever” (غاب الى الابد), “the departed” (الراحل), “to leave us” (غادرنا), “to follow his path” (مضى لسبيله), “to be concealed” (غيبه الموت), “to depart” (خلا مكانه), “his shadow has been covered by the sun” (مضى ظلّه), meaning “when a person no longer has a shadow, he no longer exists in nature”).

Euphemisms related to leaving can be described using words containing “eternal,” for example in Chinese: “与世长辞” (depart from the world), “长辞” (bid farewell), “长辞人间” (bid farewell to the mortal world), “永别” (farewell forever), “永诀” (eternal farewell), “永辞” (eternally depart), “长逝” (long departure), “长谢” (long farewell), “长往” (long departure), “长违” (long separation), “长别” (long farewell), “永逝” (eternally pass away), “永迁” (eternal migration), “永隔” (eternally separated), “永绝” (eternally ceased). In Arabic, facing survival is described as “مضى مستقبلا وجه البقاء”, going to the eternal abode is expressed as “انقطع إلى دار البقاء” or “ذهب الى الابد”, meaning forever leaving. Death, to Arabs, is not the end of life, but the beginning of a new phase. The true eternal life begins after death, which is beyond human imagination and rationality.

Descriptive terms or specific details can be used to explicitly refer to death or describe the state of a deceased person: 断气 (cessation of breath), 绝气 (expiration), 气绝 (passing away), 气尽 (demise), 咽气 (breathing one’s last), 气息奄奄 (nearing the end), 瞑目 (closing one’s eyes), 闭眼 (closing one’s eyes), 一瞑不视 (passing away), 弊仆 (collapse). “In Arabic: (absolute gas) انقضت أنفاسه, dead breath (انقطعت أنفاسه), He took his last breath (لفظ أنفاسه الأخيرة), breath exhausted (استوفى أنفاسه), he lost his eyesight (شخصا بصره), rolled his eyes up

(شخص عيناه).

2.2. Dissimilar Expressions

“Euphemisms can be understood as the use of beautiful language to conceal the truth” (Adams, 1986: 45) [12]. there are unique expressions for “death” that reflect the different understandings of death between the two cultures. In Chinese, when death is understood as the voluntary surrender of one’s precious life, euphemisms for death are closely related to sacrifice and loss. In Chinese Most of these metaphors are based on the structure of verb + object, such as: 捐命 (give one’s life), 捐生 (sacrifice one’s life), 遗生 (posthumous life), 舍身 (sacrifice oneself), 舍生 (sacrifice one’s life), 献身 (dedicate oneself), 捐身 (donate one’s body), 授命 (assign a mission), 就命 (accept a mission), 殉身 (martyrdom), 献出生命 (give one’s life), 牺牲生命 (sacrifice one’s life), 捐献生命 (donate one’s life), 致命 (fatal), 没命 (lose one’s life), 捐躯与捐骸 (sacrifice body and bone), 顶踵尽捐 (sacrifice everything), 牺牲 (sacrifice). Specific verb “sacrifice”(殉) can introduce the purpose or situation of a person’s death, “for example: 殉国 (die for one’s country), 殉职 (die in the line of duty), 殉情 (die for love), 殉义 (die for righteousness), 殉道 (die for faith), 殉难 (die in a disaster), 殉财 (die for wealth), 殉物 (die for an object), 殉节 (die for principles), and life for principle can also be expressed through another euphemism, such as 取义 (act for righteousness), 就义 (die for a principle), 赴义 (go to martyrdom), 成仁 (die for benevolence).”

In Chinese, there is a euphemistic expression related to death that is based on the metaphor of transformation. These phrases all contain the morphemes “形” and “化” indicating a physical transformation of the human body, for example: 物化、化形、迁形、散形、迁化、委化、蝶化、化鹤、怛化、临化、化期。

Another type of transformation is related to the passage of time. “作古” means “already dead,” “坐化” refers to the death of a Buddhist, and “遁化” is used for the death of a Taoist. Death can be metaphorically expressed as the transformation of various physical entities. For example, “香消玉殒” refers to the death of a young and beautiful woman, “蕙损兰摧” indicates the premature death of a woman, “兰摧玉折” compares to the death of a woman who upholds her chastity, and “桂折兰摧” refers to the passing of a person with noble character. Euphemisms for death can be expressed through the idea of long-term rest or eternal sleep, “such as: 长眠 (eternal sleep), 永眠 (eternal rest), 长忽 (long sleep), 长寐 (long slumber), 长寝 (long sleep), 永蛰 (eternal hibernation), 沉眠 (deep sleep), 安卧 (rest peacefully), 安眠 (peaceful sleep), 安息 (rest in peace), 长休 (long rest). Darkness and emptiness are euphemisms for death, such as 冥昧 (obscure), 冥漠 (desolate), 冥路 (path of darkness), 幽沦 (lost in darkness), 大夜 (great night).”

There are many euphemistic expressions for premature death, such as “收华” (gathering flowers), “早世” (early death), “短折” (cut short), and for young girls who die tragically, it’s often said “像花一样凋谢了” (withered like a flower). The

euphemistic expressions for the death of an elder generally contain a highly respected connotation, such as “见背” (departing from the world), “倾背” (leaning away), “弃背” (abandoning the world), “辞堂” (retiring from the hall), and “弃养” or “违养” (abandoning parental duties). Children may also lose the support of their deceased parents, so euphemistic expressions like “失怙” (loss of father) are used to refer to the death of a father, and “失恃” (loss of mother) to refer to the death of a mother, and the use of such expressions indicates a sense of loneliness and lack of support.

Death can be understood as abandoning the guest and leaving (捐宾客、谢宾客), or abandoning one’s residence (弃平居、捐馆舍). There are also euphemisms in Chinese specifically used to refer to the death of emperors, such as “晚驾” (late departure), “晏驾” (peaceful departure), “晏归” (peaceful return), “遐弃” (abandoning the realm), “弃朝” (abandoning the court), and “弃群臣” (abandoning the officials).”

There are some expressions in Arabic that have no corresponding or similar words in Chinese, and vice versa. For example: “encountering the place of one’s own destruction” (لقي مصرعه), “licking one’s own fingers” (لعق أصابعه), “yellowing of the fingertips” (اصفرت انامله), “falling into a narrow place” (نزل فلان الجعاجع), “losing the shoelace on one’s foot” (زال الشوك عن قدمه), and “the patient finally found the relief he had been longing for” (وجد المريض الراحة التي ظل ينشدها).

Death is manifested by the cessation of important activities of the deceased in this world, such as drinking water and eating. These are activities that indicate the deceased has given up the sources of earthly life and been released from the material needs and limited means of survival of the body. In Chinese, death can also be understood as a new journey in life, for example: 远行、遐举、上路、神游、黄泉。

The same Arabic language also has expressions that show the cessation of important activities of the deceased in this world, but they are expressed differently. For example, the cessation of important activities can be expressed as the interruption of sound (انقطع كلامه), stopping speaking (خفت فلان), the blocking of one’s echo (صم صده), the faint sound stopping (سكنت نأتمه), and obtaining everything, such as the necessities of life, the means of livelihood, and food and clothing (استوفى أكله: أي رزقه وحظه من الدنيا).

Arabic euphemisms for death are influenced by environmental and cultural factors. The different meanings of Arabic euphemisms are based on the variations in ethnic and geographical environments. For Arabs living in the dry desert environment, there are specific euphemisms for death, such as “biting his own strap” (فرض رباطه), where the strap refers to the rope used to tie the legs of animals; “lifted his feet” (شالت نعامته); “abandoned his sun” (افلت شمسه); “the death noose” (أوهاق المنية), used for capturing animals; “twisted his neck” (عصد), which in Arabic also means a type of porridge commonly eaten in the desert; “dry and devoid of moisture” (والبيوس), expressed as “الميت تارز”; “drank the flowing water of death” (ورد حياض المنية); and “his milk bag is empty” (صفر وطابه). Death is an inevitable end for all things. Whether it is natural death, sudden death, at home,

or on the battlefield, Arabs use colors to represent different outcomes of death in euphemisms, such as red death (موت احمر) indicating violent death, maroon death (الموت الصهابي) indicating sudden death, brownish death (الموت الأغر) indicating a miserable death, and white death (الموت الأبيض) indicating a sudden and unexpected death.

2.3. Expressions with Religious Characteristics

In the euphemistic expressions for “death” in both Chinese and Arabic languages, there are several expressions with religious characteristics:

China has not had a unified religion since ancient times, and different religions have interpreted natural phenomena differently, resulting in various euphemisms. In Chinese, Taoist symbolic thinking and beliefs have generated many expressions metaphorically related to death, such as 驾鹤或跨鹤 “driving a crane westward” or “riding a crane to become immortal.” Traditionally, the term “Western Heaven” is often used to denote the afterlife, and many euphemisms related to death in Chinese include words like “西” (west) and “西天” (Western Heaven). Chinese idioms such as “驾鹤西去” (driving a crane westward), “驾鹤西游” (riding a crane westward), “乘鹤仙去” (riding a crane to become immortal), “跨鹤归西” (crossing the crane to return west), and “跨鹤西归” (crossing the crane westward) signify that death is merely symbolized as riding a crane to heaven.

Death not only signifies entering heaven but can also indicate a person becoming immortal after passing away and traveling the world. In Chinese, for this solemn event filled with sorrow, expressions like “仙驭西驰” (riding to the west as an immortal), “上仙” (ascending to immortality), “羽化” (feather transformation), “登仙” (ascending to immortality), “仙逝” (immortal passing), “升仙” (rising to immortality), “仙化” (immortal transformation), and “仙游” (immortal journey) can be used.

Mount Tai is honored as “岱宗”, the foremost of China’s Five Sacred Mountains. In superstitious beliefs, Mount Tai is considered the grandson of the Heavenly Emperor and the place where souls of the deceased return, a central site for summoning and honoring ancestral spirits. Therefore, “游岱” (journeying to Mount Tai) and “游岱宗” (journeying to Mount Tai as a euphemism) can be used to refer to death respectfully.

In Chinese, expressions for “death” with religious characteristics mostly signify the destination of sentient beings. For example, terms like “归山” (returning to the mountains), “归道山” (returning to Daoist mountains), and “久归道山” (long returning to Daoist mountains) are euphemisms related to mountains indicating death. Other expressions include “归泉” (returning to springs), “归寂” (returning to tranquility), “返真” or “归真” (returning to truth), “归土” (returning to earth), and “回老家” (returning to one’s hometown). Buddhist terms like “入寂” (entering tranquility) euphemistically refer to the passing of monks and nuns. There are also expressions like “见阎王” (meeting the King of Hell), “归西” (returning west), “归阴” (returning to the yin world), “归天” (ascending

to heaven), “上西天” (ascending to the Western Heaven), “上天” (ascending to heaven), “飞天” (flying to heaven), “升天” (ascending to heaven), and “云驭” (riding on clouds). Some euphemisms do not explicitly mention the destination after death, such as “长归” (long returning), “大归” (great returning), “归去” (returning), “归神” (returning to spirits), and “归魂” (returning to souls).

The idea of viewing this life as a temporary prison and the body as a cage for the eternal soul leads to a metaphorical understanding of death as liberation. Those who hold this view see death as a return home, anticipating eternal happiness in the afterlife. Such metaphorical expressions often originate from Taoist language, such as “违世” (departing from the world), “解形” (shedding form), “解骨” (shedding bones), “尸解” (originally referring to achieving immortality in Taoism, later used to mean the death of a Taoist), “谢事” (being released from duties), “解脱” (being liberated), “兵解” (laying down arms), “蝉蜕” (cicada shedding), “蛻化” (moulting), “蛻委” (casting off), and “委蛻” (shedding).

Muslims’ religious beliefs are integrated with their secular lives to a certain extent. Therefore, it is common to use religious language forms to express everyday life phenomena, and “death” is no exception. The number of religious euphemisms for “death” in Arabic is much greater than in Chinese, due to the profound influence of Islam. According to Islamic belief, Allah created humanity, and through death and resurrection, humans transition to another world. All humans and all things will return to Allah to receive just reckoning and recompense for their actions during their lives.

The correct stance on death in Arab culture is the belief that death and its timing and place are unavoidable and unpredictable. A person can live without fear of death only by following Allah’s guidance, embracing death with courage. Muslims practice the well-known and familiar verse from the Quran, which helps them remain calm and maintain a stable mental state, rigorous thinking, and strong character in times of crisis. They stay aware of where they come from and where they are going. Every Muslim, when faced with calamity or upon learning of someone’s death, should recite this verse: “Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return” (انا لله وانا اليه راجعون) (Quran, 2: 156).

“No one will die except by Allah’s permission and at an appointed time.” (Quran, 3: 145) A person’s lifespan is controlled by the Creator. Death is seen as Allah’s mercy towards His believers; it reflects Allah’s will to call them to Paradise. For example: “Allah had mercy on him” (رحمه الله), “Allah chose him” (اختاره الله), “Allah gave him complete relief” (اراح الرجل), “Allah extinguished his flame” (اطفا الله ناره), “the appointed time came” (وافته المنية), “certainty came to him” (ياتيه اليقين). These expressions show respect and reverence for the Almighty Allah and often have a positive connotation. As for the noun “deceased,” in Arabic, it is replaced by terms like “the one who is shown mercy” (المرحوم, meaning “shown mercy by Allah”), “the one who is forgiven” (مغفور له), “the departed” (الراحل), and “the lost” (الفقيد). This life is temporary, while the afterlife is eternal. This life is the place for sowing, and the afterlife is the place for harvesting. The highest value of life lies in defending the truth; dying in the path of truth is the best form

of returning to Allah. In Arabic, those who sacrifice their lives in this world to spread the truth and liberate humanity are called “martyrs” (شهيد).

Willingly surrendering one’s soul to Allah to ascend sooner to a happier world because, compared to the happiness of the afterlife, this world feels like imprisonment and torment. Embracing death brings him eternal happiness in the afterlife. For example, “in the protection of Allah” (في نمة الله), “May Allah grant him peace” (أكرم الله مثواه), “He handed his soul to the Creator” (سلم الروح لخالقها), “His soul returned to the Creator” (فاضت روحه الى خالقه), “His soul overflowed” (فاضت روحه), “Allah took their souls to Him” (توفاه الله إليه), “Migrated to the house of dignity” (انتقل الى رحمة ربه), “Migrated to the mercy of his Lord” (انتقل الى بارئه), “He went to Allah” (أفضى إلى ربه), “Ascended to see the Creator” (اجوار ربه), “Answered the call of his Lord” (لبى نداء ربه), “Went to the side of Allah” (سعد بجوره), “Followed the merciful and all-knowing Allah” (التحق بالرفيق الخبير), “He was invited and he answered” (دعي فاجاب), “Allah preferred him” (انتقل الى العالم الاخر), “Went to another world” (انتقل الى دار كرامته), “He was sent to the abode of delight” (نقل الى رضوانه), “Allah chose for him what He has” (اختار له الله ما عنده).

3. Conclusions

By comparison, it is not difficult to find that both Chinese and Arabic have a large number of euphemisms for “death.” The two languages share more similarities than differences in terms of content classification and expression methods, although there are some aspects where differences outweigh similarities. In terms of forms of expression, these Chinese euphemisms are used for different personal identities, causes of death, occasions, objects, and different styles of speech. In contrast, Arabic is far less varied in this regard. Many of these Arabic euphemisms have evolved under the influence of religion and geographical environment. It is also important to note that these two linguistic cultures differ in the ways they produce many euphemisms.

By comparing the religious euphemisms for “death” in the two languages, it can be seen that in Chinese, such expressions are mostly Buddhist or Taoist terms, generally used for the death of monks or religious practitioners. The deaths of most ordinary people who follow Buddhism do not use such religiously characteristic expressions. In contrast, for Arab Muslims, normal deaths, especially those of relatives or important figures, are generally expressed using religious euphemisms.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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