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Université de Montréal

A comparative study of euphemisms in Chinese, English and French

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A comparative study of euphemisms in Chinese, English and French

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Abstract

This thesis statement constitutes an analysis of the use of euphemisms in the three languages, English, Chinese and French. The aim of this study is to analyze the similarities and the differences in the use of euphemisms in English, Chinese and French on the topics of sex, death, and menstruation. In this study, seven reasons for euphemisms are given ranging from political correctness to beautification. Then a description of euphemisms is made in the three main areas, sex, death and menstruation. Finally the formation of euphemisms in the three languages is discussed. This cross-language study reveals that euphemisms in the three main areas of the three languages share some common ground in terms of reasons for euphemisms and formation of euphemisms. However, culture-specific euphemisms exist in each language too. In particular, the differences between Chinese euphemisms and French and English euphemisms are greater than those of English and French, because some euphemisms in Chinese are closely related to the Chinese culture and thus are not found in English and French language.

Key words

Euphemism, French, English, Chinese, culture, taboo, sex, death, menstruation.

Résumé

Ce mémoire de maîtrise examine l'utilisation des euphémismes en anglais, chinois et français. Le but de cette étude est d'explorer les similitudes et les différences d'usage des euphémismes, lorsque sont abordés des sujets tels que le sexe, la mort, les menstruations. Nous exposons en détail les raisons expliquant l'utilisation des euphémismes, les décrivons et analysons leur formation, de manière comparative. Nous montrons, dans cette étude que les euphémismes utilisés pour parler des trois thèmes en question, partagent dans les trois langues certaines caractéristiques :

- Ils sont formés pour les mêmes raisons
- Ils obéissent à des règles de formation communes.

Cependant, chaque langue possède aussi des euphémismes qui lui sont propres, car directement liés à une culture propre. Plus particulièrement, les différences entre les euphémismes chinois et les euphémismes français et anglais sont plus grandes que celles entre ceux de l'anglais et du français car la création de certains euphémismes en chinois dépend entièrement de la culture chinoise et ne se retrouve donc pas en anglais et en français.

Mots clés

Euphémisme, anglais, français, chinois, sexe, mort, menstruations, culture, tabou.

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A comparative study of euphemisms in Chinese, English and French

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Definition of euphemism in the three languages

A euphemism is defined as “an alternative to a dispreferred expression, in order to avoid possible loss of face: either one’s own face or, through giving offence, that of the audience, or of some third party.” (Allan&Burrige 1991: 11) The word ‘euphemism’ is first recorded in English by Thomas Blount (1656) and defined as ‘a good or favorable interpretation of a bad word’. The word comes from the Greek ‘eu’ meaning ‘good’, and ‘pheme’ meaning ‘speech’ or ‘saying’; therefore, it means literally ‘speaking with good words or in a pleasant manner’ (Neaman& Silver 1983).

In dictionaries and encyclopedias, euphemism is defined as a rhetorical device: “a figure of speech in which an unpleasant or coarse phrase is replaced by a softer or less offensive expression. A euphemism has sometimes a metaphorical sense, as in the substitution of the word ‘sleep’ for death (Encyclopedia Britannica); and is defined as “A mild or indirect word or expression substituted for one considered to be harsh or blunt when referring to something unpleasant or embarrassing: ‘downsizing’ as a euphemism for cuts” (The New Oxford American Dictionary, 2001).

Now that we have an idea of what euphemisms are in English, we should take a look at the equivalent for euphemisms in Chinese and French. According to the Dictionary, the Chinese equivalent is ‘委婉的说法, 委婉的话’. In Chinese books of rhetorics, the term ‘委婉’ (literally ‘roundabout, mild’) is defined as “用婉转的语言曲折的表达自己的思想” (literally, using roundabout and mild language to express one’s thoughts in an indirect way). There are other definitions which are also useful to look at. For example, 委婉语最重要的特征就在于运用比

较温和，又不直接的词语或褒义的、比喻的手法，使谈话双方能够采用一种比较间接的方式来谈论不宜直说的事，而且不必为谈论这些事感到内疚，不必为此感到窘迫。(祖大庆&沈从, 2006) (literally, the most important characteristic of euphemisms lies in the using of fairly mild and indirect terms or laudatory and metaphorical structure to enable the speaker and the hearer to discuss the unspeakable things without feeling guilty and embarrassed.) 委婉语的本质就是“拣好听的话说。”(钱冠连, 2004) (literally, The nature of euphemisms is to speak with pleasant words.)

While in French euphemism is defined as *“Expression atténuée d’une notion dont l’expression directe aurait qqch. de déplaisant, de choquant. Handicapé pour infirme est un euphémisme.”* (Le Petit Robert, 2002) In other books of rhetorics of French, euphemism is generally defined as *“une atténuation”* and *“on déguise des idées désagréables, odieuses ou tristes sous des noms qui ne sont point les noms propres de ces idées.”* For example, *“tumeur”* for *“cancer”* (Dupriez, 2006); According to S.Hamon(1996), the word euphemism is *“dire des paroles de bon augure et emploi d’une bonne parole.”* C.Fromilhage(1995) defines euphemism as *“l’atténuation non feinte d’une vérité que l’on déguise parce qu’elle renvoie à des domaines tabous.”* A comparison of the definitions within each language and among the three languages shows that they are very similar. Thus euphemisms can be summarized as mild and roundabout expressions that the speaker uses to avoid being offensive to the hearer or the third party.

1.2 Brief description of reasons for euphemisms

Now that the definition has been established for euphemisms, one may be attempted to ask the following question: Why are euphemisms needed in human interactions with each other? One can find an answer to the question by resorting to sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic aspects of language use. Psycholinguistically, it is common human nature to mention things which cause embarrassment, unpleasantness or offences because these are

what human beings are averse to. From sociolinguistic point of view, people use euphemisms to foster harmony in the course of their social interactions. "To avoid offence, to shun embarrassment, sweet words dance hand in hand with dreadful facts, telling less than the truth to give ugly things a humanistic and cosmetic treatment. Without euphemisms, it is feared, the world would grind, uncoiled, to a halt, and universal animosity and fear would cover all." (Enright, 1985)

All cultures and languages employ euphemisms to avoid unpleasantness, embarrassment, pain and offence. It can be said safely that euphemisms reflect the culture, values, mentality and changes in social and psychological phenomena of a society. It has been long observed that in wartime or during economic depression, people tend to care less for their speech as they are too preoccupied with other important matters such as survival to pay attention to their language; while in time of peace or prosperity, euphemisms tend to abound because they enjoy more stable and prosperous life and they worry less about their livelihood so they can afford to pay more attention to their language, thus people tend to use more polished and refined language in their social interactions, as Enright (1985) sums. Cultures may be different from one to another, but the main areas where euphemisms tend to be used are in general the same: sex, death, body parts, bodily functions, occupations etc. Euphemisms are widely used in our daily life so much as to become part of our life. People use them without being aware of doing so. It is omnipresent around us in spoken form or in written form. However, in different cultures, people may use euphemisms in a similar way or a different way.

For example, when people say 云雨 in Chinese (literally, 'cloud and rain') , they actually mean sexual intercourse; while in English, people would say sleep with and in French *Avoir des rapports sexuels* for the same concept;

From the above example in the three languages, it is evident that the use of euphemisms is a ubiquitous phenomenon in every language and there are similarities and differences in the use of euphemisms and in the reasons and motives and the main areas that are called for it. Quite often, there are metaphorical elements, a bit of mendacity and a flavor of irony involved

in the making of euphemisms. Despite the fact that all the languages have some common ground to share with one another in terms of the employment of euphemisms, however every language does have its own unique reason and way of forming certain euphemisms.

Although euphemisms are such a common and important phenomenon in our everyday life, there are few studies made in this area. Researchers like Allan Keith, Kate Burridge, Enright, D. J., Sagarin Edward, Henry Beard, and Christopher Cerf mainly concentrated their studies on English euphemisms. While Jean-Paul Courthéoux, Pierre Merle, Pierre Hermann, André Santini focused their attention on French euphemisms. Among the fewer studies on the Chinese euphemisms, we find researchers like: 张拱贵, 王雅军, 陈冠连, 祖大庆&沈丛 and 陈雅 &万杰 who wrote mainly about Chinese euphemisms. Moreover, there are even fewer researches done from a cross-language perspective. To my knowledge, there is almost no research that has been undertaken in the neglected area of a comparison of euphemisms in the three languages, namely Chinese, English and French.

It is the humble aim of this study to explore into some similarities and differences of the euphemisms with a focus on the main areas such as sex, death and menstruation where euphemisms are called for and the reason and making of it among Chinese, English and French, three languages that nearly half of the world's population speak.

1.3 Methodology

I shall give a brief description of the methodology and data for this study which is intended to be a description of the phenomenon of euphemisms in terms of sex, death and menstruation in the three languages, Chinese, English and French. This study does not take into account the variations of regional dialects in the three languages. And the lists of euphemisms given in the study are not intended to be exhaustive as languages are in constant evolution. The register of the euphemistic expressions in this study is not indicated because it is too difficult to

do so when the comparison is done across three languages. There are no tests conducted and therefore there are no human subjects involved in this study.

The data are classified as per each language within each point of discussion and a comparative analysis of the data in the three languages is given at the end of the point of discussion. The data given in this study are not intended to be exhaustive, but are considered as representative in the targeted area in the targeted language. The data consist of the three languages in written and spoken, literary and colloquial forms. The data are collected in a period of 8 months and are mainly from dictionaries, literary works, newspapers, internet, real life conversations, TV, and other relevant sources. The data are principally selected according to a couple of criteria: appropriateness and usage. First of all, the data have to be appropriate to the points in discussion and secondly they should be used by at least some native speakers of this language and ideally by all native speakers of this language. One native speaker in each language is consulted to determine the appropriateness of the data. Given the quantity of the data, not every datum is analyzed in depth. The Chinese data are in simplified Chinese without pronunciation given and can be verified in standard simplified Chinese dictionaries. The Chinese data are generally translated with English translation given in parenthesis unless irrelevant to the points under discussion and the reader should be aware that all Chinese euphemisms are translated literally in order to show their original meaning and to facilitate the comparison with those of English and French. The data in French are not translated into English on the ground that the readers of this paper will generally have sufficient knowledge of French to understand them, as the paper is completed in a French-speaking university.

On one hand, societies differ, an analysis of data in the three languages is expected to yield results which show the differences in terms of usage and formation of euphemisms in the three languages, and show that some euphemisms are language-specific or rather culture-specific. On the other hand, taboos are universal; some similarities in euphemisms are also expected in the three languages.

CHAPTER 2

Reasons for euphemisms

2.1 To be politically correct

Political correctness (often abbreviated to PC) is the use of language or behavior that is intended, or said to be intended, to provide a minimum of offense, particularly to racial, cultural, or other identity groups. A text that conforms to the ideals of political correctness is said to be politically correct.

It is observed that that the political correctness, under various pretexts like the decency, the embarrassment, the courtesy and shame prohibits the use of certain words or expressions and moreover it practices a disguised censure which condemns the existence of certain terms which often fall into the following areas: Sex, death, bodily functions and so on where linguistic taboos are so strong that euphemisms are usually called for. The relationship between political correctness and euphemisms is apparent and strong, consequently a large number of euphemisms are coined.

A few examples can illustrate clearly how political correctness affects the use of euphemisms in different areas mentioned above. According to Rawson (2002 46-47), "Afro-American" and "black" were in the process of being superseded by "African-American"[...] now, if one believes the minions of political correctness, "black" is to be avoided in all contexts[...] denounce for blacklist, farrier for blacksmith, ostracize for blackball and outcast for black sheep. « And people of color become skin-color genetically dominant world majority» (BEARD&CERF 1992: 57). « So as far as sex is concerned, a prostitute becomes a sex care provider and rape becomes male-initiated intercourse» (BEARD&CERF 1995: 86).

In French, as Mamejean(2006) puts it, *Le phénomène de politiquement correct qui tient toujours à être irréprochable, n'empêche pas nommément d'évoquer les domaines-cibles. En*

revanche, il préfère les désigner par des termes qui, baignés d'euphémismes, ne disent pas grand chose. Dès lors, chaque société ayant généralement les mêmes modèles, les mêmes règles, les cibles répondant aux exigences du politiquement correct sont souvent identiques : aujourd'hui les domaines tabous de notre société sont suscités par la gêne ou la honte (le corps humain, la scatologie, le sexe...), l'inconnu (les religions, les origines, l'exclusion...), la peur (la maladie, la mort...). Le sexe, qu'il s'agisse de l'organe reproducteur ou de l'idée générale, dérange. Néanmoins, l'histoire de l'évolution des expressions comme « faire l'amour ; coucher ; baiser... » est inévitablement liée au règne du vocabulaire tabou et du phénomène de politiquement correct. Ainsi, on ne « couche » pas, mais on dort ensemble, on ne « désire » pas quelqu'un, on est tout au plus charmé par cette personne. De même, la maladie et la mort, autrefois intégrées à la société des vivants, sont clairement rejetées, puisqu'elles ne sont que l'expression du comble de la souffrance. De même, l'édulcoration de la souffrance qu'on retrouve dans la très convenue paraphrase « décédé des suites d'une longue maladie », se présente également pour le thème du suicide.

In Chinese, the political correctness is very important in guiding the language that people use in social interactions. To avoid unnecessary conflicts, embarrassment and conform to the language policies made by the government, a large number of euphemisms, which are politically correct, are coined. For example, 弱智, 傻子 (idiot) becomes 智力障碍 (intelligence handicap), 残废 (disabled) becomes 残疾 (handicapped), 疯子 (lunatic) becomes 精神病患者 (mental patient), 口吃、大舌头 (stuttering) becomes 语言障碍患者 (linguistically handicapped patient), 反对派、反动派 (rebels) become 政治异见者 (people who are politically different) and 土著 (aborigines) becomes 少数民族 (people of minority), 洋鬼子 (foreign devil) becomes 外籍人士 (foreign people)

2.2 To maintain face

One of the definitions of euphemisms that was mentioned earlier in this study: “an alternative to a dispreferred expression, in order to avoid possible loss of face: either one’s own face or, through giving offence, that of the audience, or of some third party.” is of importance to the understanding one of the principle reasons why euphemisms are used on any occasion of language exchange. Because in any social exchange, there is a presumption that the Speaker and the Hearer should act reasonably and cooperatively and the Speaker’s utterances will be interpreted accordingly. When the Speaker uses one form or one style rather than another, there is a reason behind it. According to Grice (1975), there are four different kinds of cooperation governing the most typical forms of social behavior, which can be described as the following four maxims prescribing the norms of behavior that all participants of a linguistic exchange are expected to observe. First, there is the maxim of quantity: Speaker should make the strongest claim possible consistent with his/her perception of the facts, while giving no more and no less information than is required to make his/her message clear to hearer. Second, there is the maxim of quality: Speaker should be genuine and sincere. Third, there is the maxim of being relevant: in general, an utterance should not be irrelevant to the context in which it is uttered, because that makes it difficult for the Hearer to comprehend. The last maxim of cooperation is manner: Where possible, speakers; meaning should be presented in a clear, concise manner that avoids ambiguity, and avoids misleading or confusing Hearer through stylistic ineptitude.

Whenever we want to say something, we should not only think about the effect of what we say on our own face, but also the effect on the Hearer. What Goffman refers to as face-work is exactly what we should intend to create in our social interactions which are generally oriented towards saving face. Saving face is actually a tacit agreement between the participants which operates during a social interaction. With this agreement in mind, participants of a social interaction will have to try to maintain their own face and others’ face and avoid any potential face affront by various means such as turning a tactful blind eye or telling a white lie. To avoid possible encounters which are potentially face-threatening, every culture has its own strategies.

In Chinese culture, to make a request, the Speaker can minimize an imposition by giving or at least apparently giving the hearer the option of refusal, they would say something such as: “如果您方便的话, 您能把门关上吗? (literally, meaning if it is convenient for you (您 is the polite form of 你), can you shut the door? Compare it with other forms of the same request 关上门! (literally, meaning shut the door); 请关上门! (literally, meaning (please shut the door); 请你关上门! (literally, meaning can you please shut the door?); 请您关上门! (literally meaning can you please shut the door? “You” here is the more polite form) and the more oblique form 我感觉这儿有点冷, 您呢? (literally meaning I feel it is a bit cold here and how about you?)

In response to an invitation, people prefer to use expressions that are less potentially face-threatening. Compare the following possible responses to the offer 今晚有时间跟我一起吃饭吗? (literally meaning do you have time to have dinner with me tonight?)

- a. 没有 (literally meaning No, I don't)
- b. 不好意思, 今晚不行, 我没空. (literally meaning I'm sorry, but tonight is not possible, I don't have time)
- c. 不好意思, 今晚我恐怕不行, 我有个约会, 改天可以吗? (literally meaning tonight I'm afraid it is not possible, I have a rendezvous, is another day ok?)

Any forms of denials and refusals will be regarded as potentially face threatening. The first two responses can possibly offend the offerer and damage the offerer's face while the second one is better than the first one because at least the speaker apologizes and give an explanation. The third one is more considerate of face because it not only offers an apology and reason for inability, but also gives the offerer the option of choosing another date, is thus more polite. As Allan&Burridge (1991) puts it, generally speaking, the greater the oncoming face-affront, the greater is the politeness shown and the greater the degree of euphemisms required. As we can see from the above-mentioned examples, euphemisms are a key player in lubricating

the interpersonal relationship and maintaining face in any social interaction and the principles of cooperation and matters of face work together quietly behind our social interaction to maintain social harmony.

2.3 To avoid taboo

The word *taboo* was borrowed from Tongan, an Austronesian language and derived from the word *tabu*. There are taboo topics and terms in every language. "Language is used to avoid saying certain things as well as to express them. Certain things are not said, not because they cannot be, but because 'people don't talk about those things'; or, if those things are talked about, they are talked about in very roundabout ways. In the first case we have instances of linguistic taboo; in the second we have the employment of euphemisms so as to avoid mentioning certain matters directly." (Wardhaugh 1986: 236). Historically, one of the reasons why taboo topics or taboo terms were prohibited is that it was believed that the mysterious supernatural forces that rule the universe would cause harm to those who dared to violate the taboo. Another reason is the given conventions and customs of a speech community imposed sanctions on those who violate taboo. The sanctions ranged from imputations of immorality, social ostracism and even illness or death. However, nowadays, many of the taboo terms are avoided because their use is regarded as distasteful within a given social context: they are dispreferred, not because of any fear that physical or metaphysical harm may befall either Speaker or Hearer, but lest Speaker lose face by offending Hearer's sensibilities. (Allan&Burridge 1991:12)

Some topics are universally forbidden. However what is taboo in one language may not be so in another. Some linguistic taboos are not arbitrary and mostly related to beliefs and practices that are culturally specific.

Personal names are taboo in some cultures in the world. In some cultures, one's name is regarded as an inalienable part. To say a tabooed name is to assault the owner of the name,

and requires sanctions to be brought against the offender. Punishment for violation of a taboo can be in the form of religious propitiation of an offended spirit, payment of goods to an offended party, exchange of goods to restore harmony between the guilty and the injured. Breaking the taboo can lead to murder, or suicide due to shame. An old man in Waritsian village in the Amari dialect area of Adzera told me that his father had broken a very strong name taboo in front of his father-in-law. The shame caused him to run off into the mountains where enemy groups lived; he deliberately put himself in their way and was killed. (Holzknecht 1988:45) In a lot of other cases, it is fear-based taboo. In English language, the name of the God is taboo because any threat to their power endangers the entire society they dominate. Any form of blasphemy or profanity would arouse the terrible wrath of the God. So to avoid blasphemy, many euphemistic expletives have been invented to avoid mentioning it such as 'Od's life!, by gad!, Gog! Cock! Cod! Gosh!, Golly, Goodness! (good) gracious! For goodness's sake!

Kings, emperors and rulers almost always make sure that their names are surrounded by taboos so that their authority can be respected. Any violation of the taboos will be punished in one form or another. In the past, even one small negligence would spell disaster for oneself. Throughout Chinese history, many scholars and poets had such bad luck simply because the articles or poems they wrote contained text which had been interpreted either phonetically or semantically by the emperor as critical or sarcastic to his government or himself. One of the most famous persecutions in Chinese history due to the violation of such kind of taboo is 文字狱 (Crime of words) Take the following as an example, 1726 年发生了文字狱史上流传最广泛的大案“查嗣庭试题案”。礼部侍郎查嗣庭到江南某省主持科考，试题出的是“维民所止”，出自《大学》。但这句话却被人送到雍正面前，说“维止”二字乃是去“雍正”之首的意思，雍正轻信大怒，令查嗣庭斩首。It can be roughly translated as “ In 1726,the most notorious persecution in the history of the Crime of words happened and is named as the Case of Cha Siting's Examination. Cha Siting, the vice-minister of The Ministry of Human Resources went to one province of Southern China to supervise the national examination of selection of government officials and the title of the examination is 维民所止 (roughly translated as the people live on the vast territory of the country) which is quoted from the book *Daxue*. When

the title was presented to the emperor 雍正, someone told him that the two words “维止” could be understood as the head of 雍正 being cut off, so the emperor was furious and ordered that Cha Siting be beheaded.”

In French, there are euphemisms which are reserved for the Religion; for example, *Son éminence* or *votre éminence* refers to – cardinals of the Catholic Church and *Sa sainteté* or *saint père* is revered for the Pope.

2.4 To avoid offence, unpleasantness or embarrassment

As we all know the importance of maintaining our face, which is self-respect, we should also be considerate of the face-wants of others. Not doing so will make one pay the social price of his being unpopular or unwelcome. Thus depending on the situation and our own social status, we will have to carefully choose our language expressions and adopt different face-saving strategies accordingly. When you are engaged in a conversation with a full-figured (a nice euphemism itself) lady and are asked to comment on her figure, to save hearer’s face, do not say to her:” you are fat”, instead “you are a classic beauty” will be much nicer to the lady. The Chinese would say 富态 (literally appearance of being rich) or 丰满 (literally, harvest and full). She becomes *une femme forte* in French which is less offensive than *une grosse femme*.

In life, people often encounter certain things which provoke unpleasant feelings. Thus on these occasions, other terms need to be coined to make them sound more pleasant. Death is top on the list for which almost every language has a variety of euphemisms. If “anything should happen to me” not only avoids mentioning death, it seemingly states that death is uncertain. 如果我有三长两短的话 (literally, if I have three longs and two shorts) express almost the same uncertainty as its counterpart in English does. In French, there are expressions such as *disparaître*, *s'éteindre*, *s'en aller*, etc. to replace die.

There are often things in life that people generally can not mention or talk about in a direct way without embarrassment. They are mostly related to sex, private parts of the body or bodily functions. Take menstruation for example. Menstruation is regarded as a taboo subject in almost every culture and a wide variety of euphemisms are coined to refer to this bodily function. In French, there are expressions like *Avoir ses anglais* or *les Anglais ont débarqué* while in English people use It's (I have got my period, to have a visitor, the cavalry's here. The Chinese is rich in expressions for the bodily function too. 来事, 例假, 红潮 are among the most popular ones.

2.5 To be superstitious

Where there is superstition, euphemisms come into play. In French, rabbit is one of the many words prohibited on a boat. The legend tells that these rodents are at the origin of shipwrecks because once escaped from their cages, they nibble the packing, making the hull become less air-tight. The name of this animal was banned from marine vocabulary. When talking about them on a boat, people will prefer using *pollop*, *l'animal aux longues oreilles* or *le cousin du lièvre*. In theaters, Macbeth must not be uttered by anyone unless it is necessary to the show. For example, if the company is performing Shakespeare's Macbeth, one says the Scottish Play and refers to the characters as Mackers and Lady Mackers.

In China, people who live in villages along the sea or rivers tend to avoid using the word 翻 (literally, turn over). Therefore, when one side of a fish is finished during a dinner, special care should be taken not to say 翻鱼 (turn over the fish), instead 转一下鱼 (rotate the fish) or 调一下鱼 (move the fish) will be used for this purpose. In Chinese culture, certain numbers are believed by some to be lucky or unlucky based on the Chinese word that the number name sounds similar to. Because of the supposed auspiciousness of certain numbers, some people will often choose, attempt to obtain, or pay large sums of money for numbers that are considered to be lucky for their phone numbers, residence floor (in a multi-storey building), driver's license number, vehicle license plate number. The word for "eight" in Chinese (Pinyin:

bā) sounds similar to the word which means "fortune", "prosper" or "wealth" (发, Pinyin: fā). So it is not surprising to learn that the telephone number 8888-8888 was sold for USD\$270,723 in Chengdu, China.

2.6 To comfort

As Allan and Burridge(1991) puts it, in most societies, death and diseases are spoken of euphemistically because they are supposed to be the actions of a malevolent spirit or person or because of their intrinsic unpleasantness or still because of the cooperative desire not to impose one's trouble on others and not to be seen to whinge. The verbal taboos surrounding death and diseases have led people in most cultures to invent a lot of euphemisms to avoid mentioning them. For example, people talk about being under the weather or unwell instead of being ill or sick.

“Face aux problèmes de santé, la société s’efforce de tranquilliser les patients en parant leurs affections d’un rassurant vocabulaire ...L’homme mort devient un homme sans vie, la crise cardiaque est souvent ramenée au rang de malaise cardiaque, le cancer à celui de lésion infiltrante, la congestion cérébrale ou l’attaque à celui d’accident vasculaire.”(Courthéoux, 2005 : 47). So people having AIDS are considered as *être malade du Sida* or *être une personne touchée*.

According to 张拱贵, 疾病, 伤残方面的委婉与的产生, 也是主要由于避讳心里, 同时也常常顾忌当事者的承受心理。一般来说, 人们总是忌讳生病, 古代人名有‘霍去病’, ‘辛弃疾’就是证明。即使生了病, 也尽量把病情说得清一些, 或者含糊一些。例如说‘不适’, ‘不舒服’, 比说有病语气轻多了, 不但当事者愿意听, 说话人也不致感到大的心理压力。有些疾病, 一时难以治愈, 例如旧时的疟疾, 但代的癌症等, 都是令人谈之色变的绝症, 跟尽可能避免直提。有些疾病, 例如性病, 羞于直言, 也尽量代之以各种委婉说法。

(Roughly translated as the coinage of euphemistic expressions of illness and handicap is due to the taboos and the psychological factors of the participants.) Generally speaking, people

always regard illness as taboo, in ancient times, names of people like 霍去病 (literally, Getting rid of illness) and 辛弃疾 (literally, abandon illness) is a good proof. Even if people fall ill, they will tend to minimize their illness or make it sound vague. For example, unwell, not comfortable sound much less serious to the patient so the Speaker will not feel the psychological pressure of saying it. For some diseases which are hard to cure in short term, such as the malaria in the past and the cancer in the modern time, they are all incurable and unspeakable because of fear, it is better not to mention them directly. Some disease like Sexually transmitted diseases, are embarrassing to talk about and thus should be replaced with other euphemistic expressions. Thus 花柳病 (flower and willow disease) actually refer to sexually transmitted diseases.

2.7 To beautify

To maintain our own and others' face and to avoid deflate our egos and those of others, euphemisms are invented to inflate them by conferring overblown titles on people and their professions. As D.J Enright (1985:97) puts it, since it takes up so much of our time, it's hardly surprising that we wheel out an arsenal of euphemisms to describe what we're up to, and to make ourselves feel more important than we really are. Executives, directors, personal assistants, officers, managers and researchers abound, though the executives may well be in charge of two men as two thousand, director maybe a flattering term for 'stooge', the personal assistant may find her life exactly the same as it had been when she was a secretary, the officer may be responsible for fire drill and little else, the manager(dispatch) may spend his entire career packing parcels and the researcher may never progress much beyond looking up names in Who's Who or addresses in the telephone book.

In French, we see the expansion of the beautification of titles for certain professions too. *Les conducteurs d'engins* become *des opérateurs*, *les chauffeurs* become *des machinistes*, *les mécaniciens* become *des agents de conduite*, *les chiffonniers* become *récupérateurs*, *les bouchers* become *des préparateurs de produits carnés* and *les vigneron*s are promoted to *viticulteurs*. (Jean-Paul Courthéoux 2005: 14)

Throughout the long history of China, we witness the elevation and promotion of certain professions which were traditionally regarded as “dirty and humble”. As 张拱贵 puts it, 对观念中的低贱职业，人们总是尽量避免直称其名，以免自我介绍时的自卑尴尬，谈及他人时也显得文明有礼，减少不必要的刺激。于是许多职业委婉语便因此而产生并被广泛利用。常见的职业委婉语，一种是拔高，美化那些‘低贱’的职业，比如旧时称仆人为亲随，伴当，似乎有了与主人一样的身份；称出家当和尚为避俗，显得很高雅；最起码在从事的职业后加个‘匠’，‘师’之类的，也体现出对人的尊重。另一种是采用含糊，隐晦的说法，如和尚道士为‘出家人’，称太监为‘净身人’等。（张拱贵 1996: 195）（roughly translated as when talking about the traditionally humble occupations , people always avoid as much as possible mentioning them directly in order to avoid feeling inferior and embarrassed when introducing oneself and to appear to be polite and considerate when talking about others. For this reason, many euphemisms for professions are coined and widely used. Among the commonly used euphemisms for professions, one kind is to elevate or beautify these ‘humble’ professions, for instance in the past servants are called attendants or partners as if they had the same status as their master; To become a monk is to ‘evade vulgarity’ so that the profession appears very lofty; or at least ‘artisan’, ‘teacher’ are added after the profession of others to show respect to the Hearer. Another kind is to use ambiguous and vague names, like the home-leaving people for buddhist priests and taoist priests and cleaned person for the court eunuch.)

Now that we have gone through the reasons for euphemisms, it will be fascinating to take a look at the three main areas where euphemism is called for, namely, sex, death and menstruation.

CHAPTER 3

Comparative description of euphemisms in Chinese, English and French

The three main areas in which euphemisms abound are sex, death, menstruation. Euphemistic terms are used to avoid direct mention of a process or object: “the concept is implied, but the harshness is somewhat alleviated by the linguistic form. Euphemisms seem to be an almost universal phenomenon” (Sagarin 1962:46)

3.1 Sex

Invention is the mother of necessity, as the proverb goes. The need for invention of euphemisms is probably greater in the realm of sex than anywhere else. As D.J Enright (1985: 57) puts it; “Sex may be the most important thing in life.” How can we talk about ‘the most important thing’ in life? “Sex may be spoken of tenderly or toughly, lyrically or lasciviously, beautifully or brutally, and in all these various ways by the same person on the same day.”

In western cultures, sex is a no longer secret. The unspeakable is nowadays speakable and spoken. While in Chinese culture, sex is still a taboo subject. 张拱贵 wrote: “比起西方民族，汉民族的传统文化中，性观念更为严肃保守，性心理更为含蓄羞涩，因此在中国，有关性关系（包括两性情爱）的用词，历来讳莫如深，不登大雅之堂的。从另一个角度看，骂人时，常用性器官或性行为的字眼来羞辱对方，说明古时候人们相信这一类词语具有诅咒力，能够毁伤仇人的灵魂或肉体。Roughly translated as compared with western cultures, in traditional Chinese culture, people have more conservative views on sex and psychologically more reserved about sex, thus in China, any terms about sexual relations(including love between two sexes) are carefully avoided and unspeakable in polite society. Viewed from another perspective, when people swear at each other, terms which have something to do with sexual organs or sexual intercourse will often be used to insult ones’ opponent, it shows that in

ancient times, people believed in the magic power of curses contained in those words to destroy or hurt one's enemy's soul or body.

In Chinese, euphemisms with regard to sex can be classified into the following categories.

Natural phenomenon

春风一度 (literally, 'spring wind once')

拨云撩雨 (literally, 'pull cloud and drag rain')

握雨携云 (literally, 'hold rain and bring cloud')

行云 (literally, 'walking cloud')

云情雨意 (literally, 'love of cloud and meaning of rain')

巫山云雨 (literally, 'cloud and rain on the mountain Wu')

雨爱云欢 (literally, 'rain loves and cloud is happy')

雨魂云梦 (literally, 'spirit of rain and dream of cloud')

雨暮 (literally, 'rain dusk')

雨态云踪 (literally, 'rain's form and cloud's trace')

雨意 (literally, 'rain's intention')

云 (literally, 'cloud')

云梦闲情 (literally, 'rain dream and light mood')

云雨 (literally, 'cloud and rain')

云沾雨惹 (literally, 'cloud moistens and rain invites')

朝云暮雨 (literally, 'morning cloud and down rain')

行雨 (literally, 'perform rain')

行云 (literally, 'perform cloud')

春事 (literally, 'spring affair'), and so on.

Botany

沾花弄柳 (literally, 'touch flowers and do willows')

窃玉偷花 (literally, 'steal jades and flowers')

寻花问柳 (literally, look for flowers and ask for willows)

开苞 (literally, 'open the bud'), and so on.

Having fun

男欢女爱 (literally, 'man happy, woman loves')

闺房之乐 (literally, 'boudoir's pleasure')

鱼水之欢 (literally, 'happiness of fish and water')

裘枕之乐 (literally, 'happiness of quilt and pillow')

合欢 (literally, 'unite happiness')

欢会 (*literally*, 'happy union'),

交欢 (*literally*, 'associate with happiness')

枕席之欢 (*literally*, 'happiness of pillow and mat'), and so on.

Animals

燕好 (*literally*, 'good as the swallows')

颠鸾倒凤 (*literally*, 'turn upside down the male and female phoenix')

凤友鸾交 (*literally*, 'female phoenix's friend and male phoenix return'), and so on.

Bed

衽席 (*literally*, 'quilt and mat')

衽席之好 (*literally*, 'good as quilt and mat')

裘裯 (*literally*, 'beddings')

裘裯事 (*literally*, 'the affair of beddings')

附枕 (*literally*, 'add a pillow')

荐枕 (*literally*, 'be close to a pillow')

荐梦 (*literally*, 'be close to dreams')

连床 (*literally*, 'connect beds')

鄂君翠被 (literally, 'Er jun's green quilt')

同席 (literally, 'sleep on the same mat')

枕席 (literally, 'pillow and mat')

枕席之事 (literally, 'the affair of pillow and mat')

床上 (literally, 'in the bed')

床第 (literally, 'bed')

上床 (literally, 'go to bed')

睡/睡觉 (literally, 'sleep')

荐寝 (literally, 'be close to sleep'),

Room

房 (literally, 'room')

房事 (literally, 'room affair')

居室 (literally, 'live in the same room')

同房 (literally, 'live in the same room')

同屋 (literally, 'live in the same room')

行房 (literally, 'perform chamber'), and so on.

Conducting an operation

搓粉团朱 (literally, 'caress powder and rouge')

做爱 (literally, 'do love')

造爱 (literally, 'make love')

打炮 (literally, 'fire a cannon')

办事 (literally, 'do things')

泡妞 (literally, 'soak girls')

发生关系 (literally, 'produce relations')

打井 (literally, 'sink a well')

捣穴 (literally, 'pound a cave')

钻井 (literally, 'drill a well')

钻探 (literally, 'drill and explore')

打洞 (literally, 'drill a hole')

打眼儿 (literally, 'drill a hole')

耕地 (literally, 'till the land')

播种 (literally, 'sow seeds')

整 (literally, 'do')

靠 (literally, 'lean')

切 (literally, 'cut')

办了 (literally, 'do it')

上身 (literally, 'climb the body'),etc.

In this category, the expressions are more or less of slangy nature, which makes them more vivid compared with other categories.

Miscellaneous

伦敦 (literally, 'promote kinship')

人道 (literally, 'man's method')

夫妻生活 (literally, 'life of a couple')

媾合 (literally, 'copulate with')

交感 (literally, 'exchange feelings')

交媾 (literally, 'associate and mate')

交合 (literally, 'associate with')

交会 (literally, 'associate and meet')

交接 (literally, 'associate and connect')

内事 (literally, 'inner affair')

通体 (literally, 'unite as one body')

为人 (literally, 'act as a man')

襄王梦 (literally, 'the dream of king of Xiang')

邂逅 (literally, 'encounter')

行事 (literally, 'act')

隐曲 (literally, 'secret affair')

那什么了 (literally, 'that what')

那事儿 (literally, 'that matter')

野合 (literally, 'wild combination')

日 (literally, 'sun'),etc.

As to the English euphemisms on sex, they can be roughly classified according to the following categories.

Achieving a goal		
get to it	have one's way with	make out
go all the way	make it	possess
score		

Fighting		
batter	give a shot	pound
beat with an ugly stick	give a stab	slam
belt, break a lance with	have bayonet practice	strike
cane	jab	thump

Forcing through		
blow through	drive into	invade
bore	get through	nail
crack it	impale	

Sports and games or instruments		
fiddle	play one's ace	ride the hobby horse
have a ride	play one's ace against jack	roller skate
lose the match and pocket the skate	play the organ	

Conducting an operation		
brush	grind one's tool	pile
caulk	hammer	plough

fix her plumbing	jack	pound the mortar
gas the tanker	lay some pipe	pump
get one's chimney swept	light the lamp	splice
get one's oil change	lubricate	thread the needle
grease the wheel	make the chimney smoke	trim
wind up the clock	nail	whitewash

Having fun		
dance the buttock jig	hanky-panky	make whoopee
do some good for oneself	have a good time with	roll in the hay
do the mattress dance	have fun	slap 'n' tickle
fool around	jigging	tumble

Natural phenomenon		
get hulled between wind and water	hull between wind and water	
Work		
do one's office	go to work with	perform
do the chores	job	serve
go bum-working	on the job	

Human body		
belly-bump	have a bottom-wetter	nail two bellies together
bone	join paunches	play at couple you navels
get a shove in one's blind eye	lay the hip	play at itch-buttocks
get one's hair cut	lie feet uppermost	stab in the thigh
get one's leg lifted	look at the ceiling over a man's shoulder	
get a leg over	make feet for children's shoes	

Botany		
get jack in the orchard	have a banana with	root
get one's greens	have one's banana peeled	take a turn in the parsley-bed
go bush-ranging	plant the oats	

Food and drinks		
beef injection.	have a bit of mutton	hide the salami
get a crumpet	have a cut off the joint	play hide the sausage
give juice for jelly	have a gin on the rocks	sink the pork sword/the sausage
have a bit of fish	have live sausage for supper	take in beef

Bed		
bed	get someone into the cot	lie with
bury face upwards	go to bed	share a pillow with
get between the sheets with	hit the hay	sleep with
get into bed with		

Miscellaneous		
be intimate with	fall to it	hump
be seeing	folk-dancing	make love with
be with	get together with	match with
belly slapping	go with	mingle with
copulate with	have an affair with	play around with
couple with	have coitus with	plough
cuddle	have fun with	prod
dip your wick	have intercourse with	roll
do it	have it away with	shag
doggy-dancing	horizontal jogging	take a roll with
exchange flesh/bodily fluids		
to get		
some	lucky,	laid

on (top of)	in(to)	up
(down) to it	under	over
down with	into the pants of	one's oats
one's rocks off	some nookie	
to have		
a lover	a fuck	a bang
a rattle	screw	sex
a piece of ass	a bit of tail	a beef injection
a naughty	a cuddle	a jump with
carnal knowledge of		

A euphemism occasionally used for both copulation and oral sex is eat, in which vagina is regarded as mouth. Cut yourself a piece of poontang is a comparison to the cutting of pie or cake. When vagina is compared to a fish or a fish pond, euphemisms like go fishing, group for trout, and so on are good examples.

There are a lot of euphemistic expressions in French for sex which can be tentatively classified according to the following categories similar to that of English.

<<Bien que rien ne soit censé être tabou puisque rien n'est caché, notre époque malgré une liberté apparente s'exerce avec brio au règne du tabou. [...] aujourd'hui les domaines tabous de notre société sont suscités par la gêne ou la honte (le corps humain, la scatologie, le sexe...), [...] Le sexe, qu'il s'agisse de l'organe reproducteur ou de l'idée générale, dérange. >>
(Masmejean 2006)

Achieving a goal		
<i>arriver au but</i>	<i>faire mouche</i>	<i>pousser l'aventure à bout</i>
<i>cartonner</i>	<i>mettre dans le mille</i>	

Fighting		
<i>affronter</i>	<i>charger</i>	<i>flinguer</i>
<i>aller à la charge</i>	<i>combattre</i>	<i>jouter</i>
<i>aller aux armes</i>	<i>donner l'assault</i>	<i>passer par les armes</i>
<i>assaillir</i>	<i>entrer en guerre</i>	<i>sabrer</i>
<i>batailler</i>	<i>faire un duel</i>	<i>filer un coup d'arbalète</i>
<i>battre</i>		

Forcing through		
<i>crever l'œil</i>	<i>enfoncer</i>	<i>piquer</i>
<i>défoncer</i>	<i>envahir</i>	<i>pourfendre</i>
<i>embrocher</i>	<i>investir</i>	<i>passer par les détroits</i>
<i>enfiler</i>		

Conducting an operation		
<i>abattre du bois</i>	<i>étriller</i>	<i>planter</i>
<i>affiler le bandage</i>	<i>fabriquer</i>	<i>pomper</i>
<i>aiguiller</i>	<i>faire une mortaise</i>	<i>ramoner la cheminée</i>
<i>astiquer</i>	<i>ferrer</i>	<i>ratisser</i>
<i>baguer</i>	<i>forger</i>	<i>ravauder</i>
<i>baratter</i>	<i>fouler</i>	<i>remmancher le marteau</i>
<i>battre la laine</i>	<i>greffer</i>	<i>saigner</i>
<i>bluter</i>	<i>harponner</i>	<i>savonner</i>
<i>brosser</i>	<i>labourer</i>	<i>semer sa graine</i>
<i>calfater</i>	<i>limer</i>	<i>seringuer</i>
<i>cheviller</i>	<i>marteler</i>	<i>sortir ses outils</i>
<i>coudre</i>	<i>moudre</i>	<i>torpiller</i>
<i>cultiver</i>	<i>nettoyer son verre de lampe</i>	<i>tricoter</i>
<i>donner un clystère</i>	<i>passer par l'étamine</i>	<i>piler son poivre</i>
<i>encadrer</i>		

Sports and games or instruments		
<i>chevaucher</i>	<i>guincher</i>	<i>mener le petit au cirque</i>
<i>caramboler</i>	<i>jouer un air de fifre à moustaches</i>	<i>payer la comédie à fernand</i>

<i>faire une charade</i>	<i>faire fête</i>	<i>prendre charnelle liesse</i>
<i>faire le jeu</i>	<i>festoyer</i>	<i>jouer au bilboquet</i>
<i>accorder sa flûte</i>	<i>se divertir</i>	
<i>jouer</i>		
<i>aux billes</i>	<i>au billard anglais</i>	<i>aux dames</i>
<i>à l'écarté</i>	<i>aux quilles</i>	<i>de la clarinette baveuse</i>
<i>du luth renversé</i>	<i>du cul</i>	<i>à l'homme</i>
<i>au passe-temps des dos</i>	<i>au reversie</i>	<i>au trou madame</i>
<i>aux cailles</i>	<i>ce jeux là</i>	<i>de la braguette</i>
<i>de la flûte</i>	<i>de la marotte</i>	<i>de la saqueboute</i>
<i>des basses marches</i>	<i>des cymbales</i>	<i>des gobelets</i>
<i>des mannequins</i>	<i>des reins</i>	<i>des orgues à la bête à deux dos</i>
<i>du serre croupière</i>		

Work		
<i>besogner</i>	<i>faire un tronçon de bon ouvrage</i>	<i>servir</i>
<i>être de corvée</i>	<i>mettre ses reins en besogne</i>	<i>travailler</i>
<i>faire son devoir</i>		

Human body		
<i>jouer des reins</i>	<i>nager entre deux dos</i>	<i>planter une dent</i>
<i>manoeuvrer du cul</i>	<i>ouvrir les genoux</i>	<i>remuer les fesses</i>
<i>mettre le corps en presse</i>	<i>passer par les mains</i>	<i>passer par le ventre</i>
<i>mettre le doigt au bénitier</i>	<i>saigner entre deux gros orteils</i>	

Botany		
<i>asperger le persil</i>	<i>faire ses choux gras</i>	<i>aller aux fraises</i>
<i>cueillir la fleur/le fruit/la rose</i>	<i>faire la salade</i>	<i>arroser le cresson</i>
<i>cueillir les lauriers</i>	<i>hocher l'arbre pour avoir du fruit</i>	<i>dérouiller son panais</i>
<i>cueillir un bouton de rose sur le nombril</i>	<i>regarder la feuille à l'envers</i>	<i>effeuiller la marguerite</i>

Food and drinks		
<i>aller au beurre</i>	<i>manger de la chair crue</i>	<i>prendre le thé</i>
<i>boire la coupe du plaisir</i>	<i>manger la soupe à la quéquette</i>	<i>prendre ses rafraîchissements</i>
<i>faire bonne chère</i>	<i>mettre l'andouille au pot</i>	<i>prendre un pain dans la fournée</i>
<i>laisser le chat aller au fromage</i>	<i>mettre une brioche au chaud</i>	<i>tâter de la sauce</i>
<i>lier son boudin</i>	<i>prendre le café du pauvre</i>	<i>tremper son biscuit</i>

Bed		
<i>casser le lit</i>	<i>coucher</i>	<i>coucher gros</i>
<i>essayer le lit</i>		

Miscellaneous		
<i>accomplir son désir</i>	<i>chevaucher sans selle</i>	<i>goûter les joies de ce monde</i>
<i>administrer une douche</i>	<i>confesser</i>	<i>grimper</i>
<i>arroser</i>	<i>contenter sa flamme</i>	<i>lever la chemise</i>
<i>avoir</i>	<i>coucher</i>	<i>planter le mai</i>
<i>avoir affaire</i>	<i>dormir</i>	<i>s'en donner</i>
<i>boire</i>	<i>faire bien ça</i>	<i>tirer au naturel</i>
<i>bricoler</i>	<i>faire ça</i>	<i>venir là</i>
<i>casser un œuf</i>	<i>faire la bonne chose</i>	<i>voir</i>
<i>chanter la messe</i>	<i>faire la chosette</i>	<i>zozoter</i>
<i>faire zigzag</i>		

As it can be seen from the above-mentioned examples, euphemisms for sexual activities in English, French and Chinese are quite similar in the following aspects. They are compared to conducting an operation, for example, 播种 (literally, 'sow seeds'), plough, *semmer sa graine* or to activities related to botany for instance, for example, *cueillir la fleur/le fruit/la rose, plant the oats, 开苞* (literally, 'open the bud'). Metonymy is one of the common figures that are used to

form the euphemisms in the three languages. Take the following as an example, 衽席 (literally, 'quilt and mat'), share a pillow with, *essayer le lit*. Furthermore, some general-for-specific terms are used in all the three languages: *faire ça, faire la bonne chose, faire bien ça*, do it, get going, 行事 (literally, 'act'), 那事儿 (literally, 'that matter'). Finally, in all three languages, sexual activities are considered a joy. For example, in Chinese people will say 男欢女爱 (literally, 'man happy, woman loves'), 闺房之乐 (literally, 'boudoir's pleasure'), 鱼水之欢 (literally, 'happiness of fish and water'), the English people will have fun, have a good time with and the French people will *aller au Bonheur, avoir son contentement, boire la coupe du plaisir*.

However, some differences can be observed among the euphemisms in the three languages. In Chinese there are a lot more euphemisms based on natural phenomena than in French and English. Take the following examples, 云情雨意 (literally, 'love of cloud and meaning of rain'), 巫山云雨 (literally, 'cloud and rain on the mountain Wu'), 雨爱云欢 (literally, 'rain loves and cloud is happy'); While in French and English, there are clearly more euphemisms coming from food, drinks, human body and war than in Chinese. For example, in English there are: give juice for jelly, have a bit of fish, have a bit of mutton, belly-bump, bone, get a shove in one's blind eye, batter, give a shot, give a stab, have bayonet practice, jab... and in French there are: *aller au beurre, manger la soupe à la quéquette, jouer des reins, passer par les mains, passer par le ventre, assaillir, batailler, battre, charger, combattre, donner l'assault*. In Chinese culture, generally, sex is not considered as work or duty, therefore there are almost no expressions euphemistic referring to sexual activities as work or duty to accomplish. While in English and French, we can find quite a few euphemisms compared to work or duty. For example, in French there are *besogner, faire son devoir, faire un tronçon de bon ouvrage, mettre ses reins en besogne, servir, travailler* and in English there are do one's office, do the chores, go bum-working, go to work with, job, perform, serve, on the job, and so on.

When it comes to the expressions of sex organs, there are numerous examples in the three languages.

Sex organs in general

In French, some examples may include the following.

<i>affaire</i>	<i>humanité</i>	<i>outil</i>
<i>aimante</i>	<i>machin</i>	<i>parties</i>
<i>boutique</i>	<i>machine</i>	<i>parties honteuses</i>
<i>chose</i>	<i>marchandise</i>	<i>patrimoine</i>
<i>engin</i>	<i>morceau</i>	<i>pièce</i>
<i>fondement</i>	<i>nature</i>	<i>robinet de l'âme</i>
<i>histoire</i>	<i>organe</i>	<i>sixième sens</i>
<i>truc</i>		

In English, some expressions are given below.

affair	mate	rhubarb
area	nakedness	secrets
box	natural parts/places	secret works
canal parts	naturals	stuff

concerns	parts	tail
crotch	parts below	that
flesh	place	thing
gadgets	prides	under parts
gear	private parts	vitals
love muscle	private property	ware
match	privates	works

In Chinese, we find the following expressions among others:

不便处 (literally, inconvenient parts)

丑恶 (literally, ugly and bad)

前阴 (literally, front moon)

情 (literally, feeling)

私 (literally, privates)

私处 (literally, private parts)

下边 (literally, lower parts)

下部 (literally, under parts)

下身 (literally, underbody)

下截 (literally, under half)

下体 (literally, under body)

羞处 (literally, embarrassing parts)

阴 (literally, moon)

阴部 (literally, moon parts)

阴器 (literally, moon container)

隐处 (literally, hidden parts)

那话儿 (literally, that affair) , and so on.

The euphemisms for sex organs in general in French, English and Chinese languages are quite similar in some cases like *affaire/affair/那话儿* (literally, that affair) , *fondement/under parts/下部* (literally, under parts) ; in other cases some differences may be observed like in French *robinet de l'âme, sixième sens, marchandise, aimante, boutique, histoire, humanité* do not have equivalent in the other two languages. The expressions in Chinese and French like 羞处 (literally, embarrassing parts) / *parties honteuses* are the opposite of the English expression prides. The euphemisms for sex in Chinese are more vague and indirect than their equivalents in English and French, for example, 不便处 (literally, inconvenient parts) , 丑恶 (literally, ugly and bad) , 前阴 (literally, front moon) , 情 (literally, feeling) .

Now we will take a closer look at the private parts for both sexes.

The penis

The penis, which is the symbol of fecundity and instrument of sexual activities, give birth to a wide variety of euphemistic expressions in the three languages.

In English, there are expressions like:

abraham	horn	plaything
arm	instrument	plug
banana	John Thomas	plunger
bayonet	John, Roger	pole
bird	joystick	pony
blade	key	prick
blowtorch	lance	pump
bludgeon	little brother	rod
bone	little davy	rudder
bow	lizard	sausage
broom-handle	luggage	slug
bull	machine	spigot
bung	magic wand	spindle
candle	mandrel	spit
cane	man-root	staff
carrot	mate	stallion
chopper	middle finger	stick
clapper	middle leg	sting

club	needle	strap
cock	nose	stump
coral branch	one-eyed monster	sword
dagger	one-eyed-brother	tail
dart	organ	the one-eyed trouser snake
dart	pencil	thing
enemy	pendulum	thorn
fag	perch	tit-bit
firebrand	pestle	tool
fish	pin	twig
flute	pintle	weapon
gadget	pipe	wedge
gherkin	pistol	whip
gun	piston	worm
horn		

In French, euphemisms regarding this include:

<i>aiguilles</i>	<i>clou</i>	<i>mandrin</i>
<i>allumette</i>	<i>coin</i>	<i>massue</i>

<i>animal</i>	<i>compagnon</i>	<i>mât</i>
<i>antenne</i>	<i>corne</i>	<i>membre</i>
<i>arc</i>	<i>cornichon</i>	<i>moule</i>
<i>arme</i>	<i>crayon</i>	<i>nez</i>
<i>asperges</i>	<i>crête de coq d'inde</i>	<i>oiseau</i>
<i>asticot</i>	<i>cyclope</i>	<i>organe</i>
<i>bagage</i>	<i>dard</i>	<i>outil</i>
<i>baguette</i>	<i>doigt</i>	<i>pain</i>
<i>baguette magique</i>	<i>doigt du milieu</i>	<i>pâte</i>
<i>baïonnette</i>	<i>échelas</i>	<i>perche</i>
<i>balançoire</i>	<i>écureuil</i>	<i>perroquet</i>
<i>banane</i>	<i>engin</i>	<i>petit frère</i>
<i>bâton</i>	<i>ennemi</i>	<i>ped</i>
<i>battant</i>	<i>épée</i>	<i>pilon</i>
<i>bête</i>	<i>épine</i>	<i>pipe</i>
<i>bijou</i>	<i>fausset</i>	<i>pistolet</i>
<i>borgne</i>	<i>félix</i>	<i>piston</i>
<i>bouchon</i>	<i>ferdinand</i>	<i>pivot</i>
<i>boudin</i>	<i>flageolet</i>	<i>poignard</i>
<i>bougie</i>	<i>flèche</i>	<i>poisson</i>
<i>bourdon</i>	<i>flûte</i>	<i>pompe</i>

<i>bourse</i>	<i>fouet</i>	<i>pyramide</i>
<i>boutefeuf</i>	<i>friandise</i>	<i>queue</i>
<i>branche</i>	<i>fuseau</i>	<i>racine</i>
<i>branche de corail</i>	<i>fusil</i>	<i>rat</i>
<i>bras</i>	<i>gaule</i>	<i>robinet</i>
<i>bricole</i>	<i>gourdin</i>	<i>sabre</i>
<i>broche</i>	<i>gouvernail</i>	<i>saucisse</i>
<i>canne</i>	<i>hameçon</i>	<i>sceptre</i>
<i>carotte</i>	<i>instrument</i>	<i>seringue</i>
<i>chalumeau</i>	<i>jambe du milieu</i>	<i>sifflet</i>
<i>chandelle</i>	<i>joujou</i>	<i>soulier</i>
<i>charlot</i>	<i>lance</i>	<i>sucre d'orge</i>
<i>cheval</i>	<i>lézard</i>	<i>thermometer</i>
<i>cheville</i>	<i>limace</i>	<i>torche</i>
<i>chopin</i>	<i>machine</i>	<i>train</i>
<i>chose</i>	<i>manche</i>	<i>tringle</i>
<i>cigarette</i>	<i>manche à balai</i>	<i>truc</i>
<i>clé</i>		

In Chinese, expressions referring to the reproductive organ of male abound too. For example,

那话儿 (literally, that affair)

鞭 (literally, whip), which are nice euphemisms themselves,

鸡鸡/小鸡 (literally, little chicken) which are used when addressing to children

牛牛 (literally, bull) which is popular in some dialects

麻雀/雀 (literally, sparrow)

肉具 (literally, meat instrument)

鸟 (literally, bird)

龟 (literally, tortoise)

蛇 (literally, snake)

蛇头 (literally, snakehead)

宝贝 (literally, treasure)

命根 (literally, root of life)

尘根 (literally, root of dust)

男根 (literally, man root)

臊根 (literally, root of embarrassment)

是非根 (literally, trouble root)

丑恶 (literally, ugly and bad)

阳具 (literally, sun tool)

蜗牛 (literally, snail)

玉茎 (literally, stem of precious stone) are also metaphors for penis

肉棒 (literally, meat club)

金枪 (literally, golden gun)

阳物 (literally, sun thing)

命根子 (literally, lifehood)

杵 (literally, pestle)

小弟弟 (literally, little brother)

萧 (literally, flute)

玉尘 (literally, jade fly whisk)

本钱 (literally, capital)

家伙 (literally, guy)

腰间之物 (literally, thing in the middle of waist)

那件东西 (literally, that thing)

物事 (literally, affair)

肾 (literally, kidney)

尘柄 (literally, handle of fly whisk) , and so on.

Some of the above-mentioned may sound slangier than others and some may be used mainly in certain regions of China.

It can be observed from the examples that the similarities among the euphemisms in the three languages about the penis fall into mainly the following areas: comparison to animals, musical instruments, vegetables, tools, treasures, weapons, use of personification, and use of general or vague terms. For instance:

English	French	Chinese
bird	<i>oiseau</i>	鸟 (literally, bird)
man-root	<i>racine</i>	男根 (literally, man root)
carrot	<i>carotte</i>	命根 (literally, root of life)
pestle	<i>pilon</i>	杵 (literally, pestle)
flute	<i>flûte</i>	箫 (literally, flute)
instrument	<i>instrument</i>	阳具 (literally, sun tool)
little brother	<i>petit frère</i>	小弟弟 (literally, little brother)
affair	<i>affaire</i>	物事 (literally, affair)

Differences can also be found in the use of euphemisms among the three languages. For example, in Chinese culture, there is a tendency to regard the genital organs as more or less the

root of trouble and vice, hence the following expression are coined for that mentality, 臊根 (literally, root of embarrassment), 是非根 (literally, trouble root), 丑恶 (literally, ugly and bad) . Some euphemisms in English and French are related to food like *Andouille, boudin, bout de viande*, beef, meat, sausage and so on while it is not the case in Chinese. Nouns can be found in the French and English euphemisms like *Charlot, Félix, Ferdinand, Abraham, little Davy, John Thomas*, and so on, but there are rarely euphemisms of this formation in Chinese. Finally, some French and English euphemisms are compared to a part of the body for example, *bras, doigt, nez*, short arm, little finger, nose, and so on while it is rare to find such euphemisms in Chinese because in Chinese culture, Chinese people are more conservative than western people in terms of discussing genital organs and any comparison to persons or body parts will be considered rude and vulgar in general.

The vagina

In terms of number of euphemistic expressions, expressions for the female reproduction organ are no less than those of male.

In Chinese, examples of euphemistic expressions for vagina may include:

产门 (literally, gate of production)

阴沟 (literally, moon valley)

方寸之地 (literally, square inch place)

阴户 (literally, moon house)

阴门 (literally, moon gate)

阴器 (literally, moon utensil)

皮夹子 (literally, leather purse)

钱包 (literally, purse)

玉门 (literally, jade gate)

花蕊 (literally, pistil)

桃源洞 (literally, cave of the land of blossoms)

小森林 (literally, small forest)

黑森林 (literally, black forest)

无底洞 (literally, bottomless hole)

穴 (literally, cave)

小穴 (literally, small cave)

门户 (literally, gate)

禁地 (literally, forbidden zone)

金沟 (literally, golden valley)

花心 (literally, flower center)

牝户 (literally, female gate)

玉户 (literally, jade gate), and so on.

In English, there are a large number of expressions perhaps over several hundred. For example,

ace(of spades)	fort	paradise
almanac	furrow	parenthesis
ass	gap	part of shame
attic	garden	plaything
bag	gash	pond
basket	gate	pot
boat	grotto	purse
bottle	gutter	pussy
box	hat	ring
breadwinner	hatchway	root(used mainly in Australia)
button-hole	hole	rose
candlestick	horse-collar	shell
carrefour	jewel	slit
case	kettle	split apricot
cat	keyhole	temple
cellar	kitchen	thankless mouth
chimney	lowlands	the Netherlands
circle	melting-pot	toy

clam	moneybox	trap
cleft	mouth	treasury
corner	nature's tufted treasure	trench
crack	nest	tunnel
crevice	orchard	valley
den	orifice	well
donut	oven	wheel
drain	oyster	work-shop
fig	pannier	wound
fly-catcher		

And so on are metaphors for vagina.

For female reproduction organ, there are no less metaphorical euphemisms for vagina than for penis in French. Among them we find the following expressions:

<i>abricot fendu</i>	<i>corbeille</i>	<i>livre</i>
<i>animal</i>	<i>creuset</i>	<i>marmite</i>
<i>anneau</i>	<i>creux</i>	<i>moule</i>
<i>as (de pique)</i>	<i>crevasse</i>	<i>navire</i>
<i>atelier</i>	<i>cuisine</i>	<i>nid</i>

<i>bague</i>	<i>cul</i>	<i>outil</i>
<i>balafre</i>	<i>écoutille</i>	<i>ouverture</i>
<i>basin</i>	<i>endroit</i>	<i>panier</i>
<i>basse-cour</i>	<i>engin</i>	<i>paradis</i>
<i>batterie</i>	<i>étui</i>	<i>parenthèse</i>
<i>bijou</i>	<i>évier</i>	<i>parties honteuses</i>
<i>boîte d'amourette</i>	<i>fente</i>	<i>pays-bas</i>
<i>bonnet</i>	<i>figue</i>	<i>piège</i>
<i>bouche</i>	<i>fissure</i>	<i>plaie</i>
<i>bourse</i>	<i>fontaine</i>	<i>porte</i>
<i>boutonnière</i>	<i>fort</i>	<i>pot</i>
<i>brèche-gap</i>	<i>fosse</i>	<i>rose</i>
<i>cage</i>	<i>four</i>	<i>sac</i>
<i>caisse</i>	<i>fournaise</i>	<i>serrure</i>
<i>calendrier</i>	<i>gagne-pain</i>	<i>sillon</i>
<i>carrefour</i>	<i>gobe-mouches</i>	<i>tirelire</i>
<i>cave</i>	<i>gouttière</i>	<i>tranche</i>
<i>chambre</i>	<i>grenier</i>	<i>trésor</i>
<i>champ de bataille</i>	<i>grotte</i>	<i>trou</i>
<i>chandelier</i>	<i>harnais</i>	<i>tunnel</i>
<i>chapeau</i>	<i>huître</i>	<i>ustensile</i>

<i>chat</i>	<i>instrument</i>	<i>vaisseau</i>
<i>chaudron</i>	<i>jardin</i>	<i>verger</i>
<i>cheminée</i>	<i>jouet/joujou</i>	<i>viande du devant</i>
<i>coin</i>	<i>labyrinthe</i>	<i>vigne du seigneur</i>
<i>coquille</i>	<i>lieu</i>	<i>temple</i>

Some semantically similar expressions can be found in English and French and Chinese.
For instance,

French	English	Chinese
<i>animal</i>	animal	
<i>anneau</i>	ring	
<i>abricot fendu</i>	split apricot	
<i>as(de pique)</i>	ace(of spades)	
<i>atelier</i>	work-shop	
<i>balafre</i>	gash	
<i>bijou</i>	jewel	
<i>bouche</i>	thankless mouth	
<i>bourse</i>	purse	钱包 (literally, purse)
<i>boutonnière</i>	button-hole	

<i>brèche</i>	gap	
<i>caisse</i>	box	
<i>calendrier</i>	almanac	
<i>cave</i>	cellar	桃源洞 (literally, cave of the land of blossoms)
<i>chandelier</i>	candlestick	
<i>chapeau</i>	hat	
<i>chatte</i>	cat	
<i>chaudron</i>	kettle	
<i>cheminée</i>	chimney	
<i>coin</i>	corner	
<i>coquille</i>	shell	
<i>corbeille</i>	basket	
<i>creuset</i>	melting-pot	
<i>crevasse</i>	crevice	
<i>cuisine</i>	kitchen	
<i>cul</i>	ass	
<i>écoutille</i>	hatchway	
<i>engine</i>	engine	
<i>etui</i>	case	

<i>fente</i>	slit	
<i>figue</i>	fig	
<i>fissure</i>	crack	
<i>fort</i>	fort	
<i>fosse</i>	drain	
<i>four</i>	oven	
<i>gagne-pain</i>	breadwinner	
<i>gobe-mouches</i>	fly-catcher	
<i>gouttière</i>	gutter	
<i>grenier</i>	attic	
<i>grotte</i>	grotto	穴 (literally, cave)
<i>harnais</i>	horse-collar	
<i>huître</i>	oyster	
<i>instrument</i>	instrument	
<i>jardin</i>	garden	
<i>jouet</i>	toy	
<i>joujou</i>	plaything	
<i>marmite</i>	kettle	
<i>nid</i>	nest	
<i>ouverture</i>	orifice	
<i>panier</i>	pannier	

<i>paradis</i>	paradise	
<i>parenthèse</i>	parenthesis	
<i>parties honteuses</i>	part of shame	
<i>pays-bas</i>	lowlands the netherlands	
<i>piège/trappe</i>	trap	
<i>porte</i>	gate	玉门 (literally, jade gate)
<i>pot</i>	pot	
<i>rose</i>	rose	
<i>sac</i>	bag	
<i>serrure</i>	keyhole	
<i>sillon</i>	furrow	
<i>tirelire</i>	moneybox	
<i>tranche</i>	trench	
<i>trésor</i>	nature's tufted treasure	
<i>trou</i>	hole	无底洞 (literally, bottomless hole)
<i>tunnel</i>	tunnel	
<i>verger</i>	orchard	

There is little doubt that the euphemisms surrounding female genitalia are more than male's genitalia. Every imaginable aspect of the appearance, location, functions and effects of genitalia have been employed as bases for metaphors from *grotte/ grotto/穴* (literally, cave) to *trésor/ nature's tufted treasure /钱包* (literally, purse). The French and English euphemisms are

apparently more imaginative. It can be observed the number of euphemisms is much less than its counterpart in English and French, which can be attributed to the mentality that Chinese people generally feel very embarrassed in mentioning directly the genital organs even in private. As 张拱贵 puts it, [...] 性器官是人的隐私部位, 有关性器官的字眼是低级的, 下流的, 难以出口和不堪入耳的, 直呼其名往往会令人厌恶, 被认为是缺乏教养, 有失文明... 。 Roughly translated as genitalia is the private part of human body, therefore terms surrounding it are vulgar and obscene, unmentionable and offensive to the ear, saying it directly will often disgust others and consequently is considered ill-bred and uncivilized.

Facing the wealth of terms about sexual organs, and their functions, it is impossible to list them all here, for a more complete list please refer to the appendix.

There are several metaphors for anus:后门 (literally, rear gate), 后窍 (literally, real hole), 后庭 (literally, rear yard). 紫葡萄 (literally, purple grape) is a delicious metaphor for nipples. And 鸡头/鸡头肉 (literally, gordon euryale/flesh of gordon euryale) is a metaphor for breasts. 吹箫 (literally, blow a flute) is a metaphor for oral sex. Rose buds are a metaphor for nipples while bouncers, bulbs, balloons headlights, melons are used to refer to breasts.

3.2 Death

Death is an almost universal taboo subject in every culture from ancient time to modern time. According to Allan and Burridge (1991: 170), death taboos are motivated by fears: fear of severed relationships, fear of the unknown that follows death, fear of the physical corruption of the body, fear of the souls of the dead and fear of an absurd and meaningless death. There are times when everyone would agree that direct mention of death should be shunned with care. It would be particularly cruel to mention directly the word death to a mother whose child has just lost his life in a car accident or to a patient who knows that he has only a few weeks to live. Because of the occasions similar like those mentioned above and the fears, many euphemisms are coined to replace the feared word death and to soften the brutal blow and shock to the

hearer. They can be classified into the following categories: death as a loss, death as sleep or rest, death seen as some sort of journey or destination and as the beginning of a new life. There are terms which do not fall into these categories such as different kinds of death. (Rawson 2002:310)

Below is a sampling of them:

loss	hop the last rattle
answer the last muster or roll call.	kick the bucket
end of the ball game	lay down one's knife and fork
bid farewell	leave
buy the farm	make one's (final) exit
buy it	one's number is up.
call back	pay the debt of nature
call beyond	pass away
call home	pop off
call to God	promotion to glory. For members of salvation army
call to one's reward	release
change one's place of residence	shuffle off or step off this mortal coil
check out	slip one's cable, a sailor's death
close one's eyes	snuff
code out	step into one's last bus
conk off or out	step off

crump	step out
decease	take one's last sleep
depart	take off
diet	take the big jump
fade	take the last bow
give(grant) the quietus	take the last count
go south	thirty
to return to heaven	translate
to go to heaven	turn down one's cup or glass
to get reborn	turn up one's toes to the daisies
to join the immortals	went to one's last roundup. For cowboys
go west	went to the races
ground for good	wink out. What candles do
hang up one's harness	yield up the ghost or breath or soul or spirit.

In Chinese, similar categories can be found in the euphemisms referring to death. As 张拱贵 puts it, 婉指死亡的方式, 也是丰富多样的. 人们或者以生者的行为, 比如睡觉, 休息, 远行等来婉称; 或者把死亡说成是美好的归宿, 诸如成仙, 上天国等; 或采用比喻, 借代等手法或采用迂回, 含糊的说法等等. Roughly translated as there are a variety of ways to refer to death. People either compare the death to the behaviors of the living people such as sleep, rest, long journey and so on or compare it to a nice destination, such as become immortal, go

to the Heaven, and so on or to employ metaphor, metonymy or other indirect and vague terms to refer to it.

The following is a sampling of vocabulary that refers to death in Chinese.

安眠 (literally, sleep soundly)

安息 (literally, rest quietly)

百岁 (literally, a hundred years)

暴崩 (literally, sudden death referring to kings)

背世 (literally, leave the world)

崩 (literally, collapse referring to the death of a king or emperor)

闭眼 (literally, close one's eyes)

毕命 (literally, finish life)

宾天 (literally, become distinguished guest in Heaven referring to the death of kings)

不测 (literally, unforeseen)

不讳 (literally, not to be tabooed)

不幸 (literally, unfortunate)

不在 (literally, no longer exist)

蝉蜕 (literally, cicada exuviates)

长短 (literally, long and short)

长眠/寝/寐 (literally, long sleep)

长谢 (literally, permanent departure)

彻席 (literally, remove the sleeping mat)

沉眠 (literally, sound sleep)

成仁 (literally, achieve kindheartedness)

吹灯 (literally, blow the candle)

辞世 (literally, leave the world)

辞堂 (literally, leave the living room referring to the death of mother or grandmother)

大病 (literally, grave illness)

大归 (literally, ultimate destination)

大去 (literally, permanent leave)

大限 (literally, ultimate deadline)

登莲界 (literally, enter the world of lotus)

登仙 (literally, become celestial being)

凋零/落 (literally, wither)

凋逝 (literally, wither and disappear)

吊颈 (literally, hang the neck)

短长 (literally, short and long)

短见 (literally, shallow knowledge)

短岁 (literally, short-lived in the world)

断气 (literally, stop breathing)

断弦 (literally, the chord breaks referring to the death of one's wife)

风烛 (literally, the flame of a candle in the wind)

赴义 (literally, go for the right cause)

盖棺 (literally, seal the coffin)

古 (literally, old)

故 (literally, incident)

归天 (literally, go to heaven)

归西 (literally, go the West)

裹尸 (literally, wrap the body)

过去 (literally, be gone)

过世 (literally, leave the world)

薨 (literally, shock due to the collapse of a house referring to the death of kings or high rank officials)

回老家 (literally, go back to one's natal town)

讳 (literally, taboo)

蕙损兰摧 (literally, orchid is destroyed referring to the death of a woman)

见背 (literally, see the departure of referring to the death of parents)

驾崩 (literally, collapse referring to the death of a king or emperor)

见阎王 (literally, see the king of hell)

进土 (literally, enter the earth)

就木 (literally, enter the coffin)

就义 (literally, accomplish the right cause)

捐躯 (literally, donate the body)

绝命 (literally, life stops)

绝气 (literally, breath stops)

溘然长逝 (literally, sudden long departure)

兰摧玉折 (literally, orchid is damaged and jade is broken referring to the death of a young woman)

离开 (literally, leave)

临终 (literally, approach the end)

灭顶 (literally, submerge the top of the head)

瞑目 (literally, close one's eyes)

命归黄泉 (literally, life goes to the netherworld)

抹脖子 (literally, cut the neck)

涅槃 (literally, nirvana referring to death of a Buddhist)

气尽 (literally, breath stops)

翘辫子 (literally, raise one's plait)

轻生 (literally, disregard one's life)

取义 (literally, achieve the righteousness)

入土 (literally, enter the earth)

撒手人寰 (literally, leave the world)

撒手西去 (literally, leave for the West)

山高水低 (literally, mountain is high and water is low)

三长两短 (literally, three long and two short)

伸腿 (literally, stretch legs)

善终 (literally, a good ending)

神游 (literally, spirit travels)

升天 (literally, ascend to the Heaven)

升西天 (literally, ascend to the west heaven)

升仙 (literally, ascend to the Heaven and become immortal)

逝世 (literally, disappear from the world)

寿终正寝 (literally, life ends at the master room)

同归于尽 (literally, come to the end at the same time)

亡故 (literally, disappear and be gone)

为国捐躯 (literally, donate the body for the country)

呜呼 (literally, alas)

无常 (literally, not permanent)

牺牲 (literally, sacrifice)

仙逝 (literally, become a celestial being and be gone)

香消玉损 (literally, perfume is gone and jade is broken referring to the death of a beautiful young woman)

玉碎珠残 (literally, jade is broken and pearl is damaged referring to the death of a woman)

玉碎香埋 (literally, jade is broken perfume is buried referring to the death of a woman)

谢世 (literally, take leave of the world)

悬梁 (literally, hang oneself from a beam)

寻短见 (literally, seek shallow knowledge)

殉国 (literally, sacrifice for the country)

殉情 (literally, sacrifice for love)

殉职 (literally, sacrifice for work)

殉难 (literally, sacrifice for the right cause)

咽气 (literally, stop breathing)

厌世 (literally, be tired of the world)

夭折 (literally, young plant breaks)

一命归阴 (literally, one life goes to the netherworld)

一命呜呼 (literally, one life alas)

永别 (literally, a permanent leave)

与世长辞 (literally, a long leave from the world)

遇难 (literally, encounter a disaster)

羽化 (literally, have feather on the body referring to death of a Taoist)

圆寂 (literally, all virtues have been achieved and all vices have been rid of referring to the death of a Buddhist)

陨落 (literally, fall down)

葬身鱼腹 (literally, be buried in the stomach of a fish)

终 (literally, end)

自尽 (literally, terminate one's life)

自寻短见 (literally, seek shallow knowledge by oneself)

In French too, death is a taboo subject which should be avoided. As Mamejean (2006) puts it, *De même, la maladie et la mort, autrefois intégrées à la société des vivants, sont clairement rejetées, puisqu'elles ne sont que l'expression du comble de la souffrance. [...] la mort, ses cérémonies, ses objets, ses professions, sont masqués, rebaptisés.*

Face à ce grand tabou devant l'éternel, les remplaçants sont nombreux. Des euphémismes aux périphrases, nous le verrons, une multitude d'expressions synonymiques est proposée.

Si ce relevé des différentes cibles peut ne pas sembler exhaustif, c'est que le politiquement correct se construit comme une norme universelle qui n'a pas atteint son but. The following is just a sampling of then French euphemisms for death.

<i>avalier son extrait de naissance</i>	<i>filer son câble par le bout</i>
<i>casser son tuyau de pipe</i>	<i>finir</i>
<i>être dans le royaume des taupes</i>	<i>finition</i>
<i>être sur la planche du cuisinier</i>	<i>frapper au monument</i>
<i>Ne plus être</i>	<i>gelé</i>
<i>partir les pieds devant</i>	<i>graisser ses bottes</i>
<i>rendre son âme au diable</i>	<i>grand</i>
<i>s'en aller les pieds devant ;</i>	<i>grand voyage</i>
<i>s'enlever le goût du pain</i>	<i>grande sorgue</i>

<i>aléser son cylindre</i>	<i>sucer les pissenlits par la racine</i>
<i>aller dans le royaume des taupes</i>	<i>indigestion de filasse</i>
<i>aller faire sa révérence au père éternel</i>	<i>la grande en noir</i>
<i>avalé sa canne (se dit d'un tambour-major)</i>	<i>la grande faucheuse</i>
<i>avalé sa chiffe</i>	<i>la grande valdingue</i>
<i>avalé sa cuiller</i>	<i>lâcher la rampe</i>
<i>avalé sa fourchette</i>	<i>lâcher son bâton</i>
<i>avalé sa langue</i>	<i>laisser sa barbaque</i>
<i>avalé ses baguettes mourir (se dit d'un tambour)</i>	<i>laisser ses guêtres</i>
<i>avalé son acte de naissance avalé son bulletin de naissance</i>	<i>laisser ses os</i>
<i>avalé son billet de logement</i>	<i>laver son linge dans la saignante</i>
<i>avoir fermé son vasistas</i>	<i>mange la salade par la racine</i>
<i>avoir la peau de</i>	<i>manger les laitues par la racine</i>
<i>avoir son pain cuit</i>	<i>manger les pissenlits par la racine</i>
<i>baiser la camarde</i>	<i>n'avoir plus d'huile dans la lampe</i>
<i>blafarde</i>	<i>n'avoir plus mal aux dents</i>
<i>boire le bouillon</i>	<i>oublier de respirer</i>
<i>calanché</i>	<i>partir pour la grande gare</i>
<i>cane</i>	<i>passer</i>

<i>cascader</i>	<i>passer l'arme à gauche</i>
<i>casser le grand ressort</i>	<i>passer le pas</i>
<i>casser sa canne</i>	<i>pêcher à la ligne dans le styx</i>
<i>casser sa pipe</i>	<i>pégrenner</i>
<i>celle-qui-se-fout-de-tout</i>	<i>perdre la lumière</i>
<i>changer son fusil d'épaule</i>	<i>perdre le goût du pain</i>
<i>cinquième compagnie</i>	<i>plus de gaz dans son compteur</i>
<i>claboté</i>	<i>prendre la secousse</i>
<i>conne</i>	<i>quimper</i>
<i>coste</i>	<i>raide</i>
<i>coucher avec les poissons</i>	<i>raidir</i>
<i>couper le courant</i>	<i>recevoir sa feuille de route pour l'autre monde, sans billet de retour</i>
<i>couper le sifflet</i>	<i>rejoindre les verts pâturages</i>
<i>crever d'organe mourir de faim</i>	<i>remercier son boucher</i>
<i>crever son pneu</i>	<i>remercier son boulanger</i>
<i>déboucler sa valise</i>	<i>remisé</i>
<i>déboulonner sa colonne</i>	<i>rendre l'âme</i>
<i>décambuter</i>	<i>rendre ses billes</i>
<i>décarrement</i>	<i>renverser sa chaufferette</i>
<i>déchirer son extrait de naissance</i>	<i>renverser sa marmite</i>

<i>déchirer son tablier</i>	<i>rester sur le tapis</i>
<i>décoller</i>	<i>restituer sa doublure</i>
<i>décoller son billard</i>	<i>retourner sa veste</i>
<i>défiler la parade</i>	<i>roide</i>
<i>dégel</i>	<i>roidir</i>
<i>dégonfler sa vessie</i>	<i>sauter le pas</i>
<i>dégringoler</i>	<i>se crever</i>
<i>déménager</i>	<i>se débiter</i>
<i>démonter son chouberski</i>	<i>se faire crever la tomate mourir, se faire tuer</i>
<i>déposer son bilan</i>	<i>se laisser passer</i>
<i>déposer son mandat</i>	<i>se répandre</i>
<i>descendre de la gare</i>	<i>sec</i>
<i>descendre la garde</i>	<i>sèche</i>
<i>dévisager</i>	<i>s'en aller</i>
<i>dévisser sa boussole</i>	<i>s'en aller ad patres</i>
<i>empoigner les haricots</i>	<i>s'ennuyer</i>
<i>enfiler un paletot de sapin</i>	<i>s'évanouir</i>
<i>esbasi</i>	<i>s'habiller de quatre planches</i>
<i>éteindre sa bougie</i>	<i>six pieds sous terre</i>
<i>éteindre sa veilleuse</i>	<i>sortir les pieds devant</i>

<i>éteindre son gaz</i>	<i>souffler la chandelle</i>
<i>éternuer</i>	<i>souffler sa veilleuse</i>
<i>être pris par la rue au pain</i>	<i>sourbe</i>
<i>être refroidi</i>	<i>mourir de faim</i>
<i>être réguisé</i>	<i>tortillé</i>
<i>être sur la planche du coq</i>	<i>tourner de l'oeil</i>
<i>faire le dernier plongeon</i>	<i>tourner le coin</i>
<i>faire le saut</i>	<i>virer l'oeil</i>
<i>faire sa malle</i>	<i>voir les pissenlits pousser par la racine</i>
<i>faire son paquet</i>	<i>y passer</i>
<i>fermer son pébroque</i>	<i>y rester</i>
<i>filer son câble</i>	<i>crever la peau</i>

There are hundreds of other euphemistic expressions for the untoward event and the above lists of euphemisms in the three languages only scratch the surface. Already similarities and differences in the use of euphemisms can be found from the examples in the three languages. For similarities, the following metaphors are used to replace death.

Metaphors related to leave or departure

Leave

s'en aller

partir pour la grande gare

s'en aller ad patres

aller dans le royaume des taupes

辞世 (literally, leave the world)

大去 (literally, permanent leave)

make one's (final) exit

Sleep or rest

close one's eyes

take one's last sleep

安眠 (literally, sleep soundly)

安息 (literally, rest quietly)

闭眼 (literally, close one's eyes)

coucher avec les poisons

Botany

manger les pissenlits par la racine

sucer les pissenlits par la racine

empoigner les haricots

兰摧玉折 (literally, orchid is damaged and jade is broken)

蕙损兰摧 (literally, orchid is destroyed referring to the death of a woman)

turn up one's toes to the daisies

Last or end of something

end of the ball game

went to one's last roundup

大归 (literally, ultimate destination)

临终 (literally, approach the end)

finir

faire le dernier plongeon

Voyage

grand voyage

aller dans le royaume des taupes

回老家 (literally, go back to one's natal town)

归西 (literally, go the West)

go south

step into one's last bus

Actions in daily life

turn down one's cup or glass

lay down one's knife and fork

吹灯 (literally, blow the candle)

翘辫子 (literally, raise one's plait)

avaler ses baguettes

souffler la chandelle

boire le bouillon

Vague or general terms

三长两短 (literally, three long and two short)

不测 (literally, unforeseen)

不讳 (literally, not to be tabooed)

不幸 (literally, unfortunate)

step out

take off

buy it

s'ennuyer

ne plus être

Beatification of death

to join the immortals

promotion to glory

成仁 (literally, achieve kindheartedness)

登仙 (literally, become celestial being)

aller faire sa révérence au père éternel

être dans le royaume des taupes

There are differences between the use of the euphemisms in the three languages. The various usages of the death euphemisms depend on the identity of the specific referenced object. For instance, in the Ancient Chinese, the following euphemisms are used for the death of a king or high rank officials.

薨 (literally, shock due to the collapse of a house referring to the death of feudal baron or high rank officials)

宾天 (literally, become distinguished guest in Heaven referring to the death of kings)

崩 (literally, collapse referring to the death of a king or emperor)

驾崩 (literally, collapse referring to the death of a king or emperor)

For the death of a woman, especially that of a beautiful young woman, the following expression can be found among others and these expressions are closely related to the fact that a woman is compared to jade, flowers, perfume and etc.

蕙损兰摧 (literally, orchid is destroyed referring to the death of a woman)

兰摧玉折 (literally, orchid is damaged and jade is broken referring to the death of a young woman)

香消玉损 (literally, perfume is gone and jade is broken referring to the death of a beautiful young woman)

玉碎珠残 (literally, jade is broken and pearl is damaged referring to the death of a woman)

玉碎香埋 (literally, jade is broken perfume is buried referring to the death of a woman)

3.3 Menstruation

As Allan and Burrige (1991:61) sum it, there is no doubt that more taboos surround the body and its function of women than those of men. There is even a branch of medicine, gynecology, that pertains to the functions and diseases of womankind, but nothing comparable that pertains to the functions and diseases of male human beings. Consequently, there is no wonder that there are a lot of euphemisms coined in the following areas: menstruation, pregnancy and childbearing.

As for menstruation, it is a highly tabooed subject from ancient times to the almost-present. The Latin root of "menstruate" is *mēnsis*, meaning "month". The intensity of the taboo, in fact, varies from culture to culture. For instance, in a tribal community in Africa, menstruation is regarded as a taboo perhaps not so much for its relation to sex as for

superstitious reasons. And a woman in menstruation is treated as unclean and is confined to a hut until she has finished with it.

The strength of the taboo against female bleeding is reflected by the number of euphemisms and circumlocutions for it. Most terms of this sort fall into six somewhat overlapping categories (Rawson, 2002: 274):

The idea of illness or inconvenience:	
Come sick	Female complain or disorder
Cramps	Illness
Curse, curse of Eve	Indisposed
Feeling that way	Problem days
Fall off the roof	Sickness
The color red	
Bloody Mary	Red light
The English have landed	The red sea's in
Flag day	Flash the red flag
Flagging	Have the reds
Red devil	Shed the claret
Periodicity	
Bad time	Old faithful
Calendar time	Period
Courses	That time

Flowers (monthly flowers)	Wrong time
Full moon	Wrong time of month
Monthly blues	
The idea of a visit	
Aunt Flo has come	Grandma's here from Red Creek
Aunt Jody's come with her suitcase	Little sister's here
The colonel's come to stay	The wife's friend
Entertaining the general	
Sanitary measures	
Covering the waterfront	Rag time
Having the rag on	Wearing the rag
In the saddle	Wearing the manhole cover
Riding the white horse	
Sexual unavailability	
Beno	Today I'm a lady
Ice-boxed	Wall flower week
Out of this world	

In French, as Henri Van Hoof puts it (Henri Van Hoof 2003: 148), *les menstrues, bien qu'elles ne soient pas précisément un incident aux jeux érotiques, ont néanmoins développé un vaste champ métaphorique dominé par deux idées maîtresses, la périodicité et la couleur...et par la notion d'indisponibilité due à une visite ou à des travaux, ainsi qu'à celle d'un flux...*

Periodicity	
<i>Avoirs ses lunes, ses mois, ses règles</i>	<i>Ordinaires</i>
<i>Époques</i>	<i>Pluie des mois</i>
<i>Mensualités</i>	<i>Règles</i>

Color	
<i>Avoir ses Anglais</i>	<i>Fièvre rouge</i>
<i>Avoir son cardinal</i>	<i>Fleurs rouges</i>
<i>Avoir ses coquelicots,</i>	<i>Traverser la mer rouge</i>
<i>Avoir ses rougets</i>	<i>Passage de la mer rouge</i>
<i>Anglais</i>	<i>Rouquins</i>
<i>Cardinales</i>	<i>Sauce tomate</i>
<i>Drapeau rouge</i>	<i>Écraser ses tomates</i>

Visit	
<i>Avoir de la visite</i>	<i>Recevoir sa famille</i>
<i>Recevoir ses cousins</i>	<i>Voir Sophie</i>

Work	
<i>Repeindre sa grille</i>	<i>Avoir sa rue barrée</i>

Flux	
<i>Casser la gueule à son porteur d'eau</i>	<i>Perdre ses légumes</i>

In Chinese culture, as 张拱贵 puts it, 妇女来月经, ...都是正常的生理现象, 没有声么不好或不妥, 根本不是该诅咒, 该避讳的事情, 但是由于这是与性机能有关的分泌现象, 处于羞耻心理, 几乎在所有的文化中都属禁忌之列, 都不喜欢直说而是用相应的委婉语. Roughly translated as women's menstruation is a normal physiological phenomenon, there is nothing bad or indecent about it and it should not be cursed or tabooed, however, because it is excretion related to sex, being ashamed, people in almost every culture regard it as a taboo and do not like to mention it directly and replace it with euphemisms. The Chinese euphemisms for menstruation can be classified into the following categories:

Periodicity

潮信 (literally, tide)

初潮 (literally, first tide referring to the first menstruation)

入月 (literally, enter the moon)

月候 (literally, monthly time)

月事 (literally, monthly affair)

月数 (literally, monthly number)

月水 (literally, monthly water)

月信 (literally, monthly letter)

例假 (literally, stipulated holiday)

信水 (literally,)

Illness or inconvenience

不方便 (literally, inconvenient)

不舒服 (literally, indisposed)

程姬之疾 (literally, the illness of lady Cheng)

The color of red

紅 (literally, red)

紅潮 (literally, red tide)

Vague or abstract terms

那个 (literally, that)

来事 (literally, the thing comes)

身上 (literally, on the body)

洗换 (literally, wash and change)

子孙瑞 (literally, sign of fertility)

As it can be seen from the above mentioned examples, there is common ground that the three languages all share regarding the use of euphemisms for menstruation: periodicity, color and visit.

For instance:

Periodicity		
English	French	Chinese
Bad time	<i>Mensualités</i>	月事 (literally, monthly affair)
Calendar time	<i>Pluie des mois</i>	月数 (literally, monthly number)
Courses		月水 (literally, monthly water)

The color red		
English	French	Chinese
Bloody Mary	<i>Cardinales</i>	红 (literally, red)
Red devil	<i>Drapeau rouge</i>	红潮 (literally, red tide)
Red light	<i>Écraser ses tomates</i>	
The red sea's in	<i>Fièvre rouge</i>	
Flash the red flag		

Visit		
English	French	Chinese
Aunt Flo has come	<i>Avoir de la visite</i>	来事 (literally, the thing comes)
Aunt Jody's come with her suitcase	<i>Recevoir ses cousins</i>	
The colonel's come to stay		

In Chinese, the popular euphemism 例假 (literally, stipulated holiday) is quite unique because it mirrors the changes in the social system of China. Thanks to the labor protection policies, women in menstruation can, if the need arises, take several days off their work with full pay.

CHAPTER 4

Formation of euphemisms

From a close examination of the data, a variety of ways of forming euphemisms in Chinese, English and French can be observed. Many euphemisms are figurative; while others have been or are being produced by semantic shift. The formation of euphemisms can be achieved through antithetical means, such as by Use of circumlocutions, clippings, acronyms, abbreviations, omissions and substitutions; by use of metaphor; by synecdoche and metonymy; by use of allusion; by use of elliptical phrases; by use of general and vague terms; by loan terms; by use of negation; by use of remodeling; by use of reduplication; by overstatement and understatement; by use of learned or technical terms.

4.1 Use of metaphor

A metaphor (from the Greek: *metapherein* rhetorical trope) is defined as an indirect comparison between two or more seemingly unrelated subjects that typically uses "is a" to join the first subjects. Examples of euphemisms of metaphorical nature can be easily found in the three languages. Among them, we find euphemistic expressions like the cavalry's come for "I've got period" in which the onset of catamenia is represented as the arrival of the redcoat cavalry.

This way of forming euphemisms is also very popular in the three languages. Thus a lot of expressions of metaphorical nature have been invented.

As it can be seen from the euphemisms in the last chapter in the three languages, they have similarities and differences. The metaphors for these euphemisms are mainly based on appearance or function. Thus we find some common ground in the three languages in terms of metaphors. For example, 蜗牛 (literally, snail) , the one-eyed trouser snake, *poisson* all have physical similarities to a penis while pistol, 枪 (literally, gun) , *arme* have similar functions as a penis does, namely shoot. Food, jewelry, animals, instruments, place, plants, containers and so

on are common things used in euphemisms of metaphorical nature. However, for the majority of Chinese speakers sex is dirty, obscene, therefore there are expressions like 臊根 (literally, root of embarrassment), 丑恶 (literally, ugly and bad) to refer to the male genital organ, which can be regarded as a difference between Chinese cultural and the occidental culture. Another difference is that the genital organs of male animals are generally considered to be a kind of aphrodisiac for males and thus often used to refer to penis because of a popular belief in China that says 以形补形 (roughly translated as food of similar shape to a part of human body strengthens that part) . We find examples like 虎鞭 (literally whip of tiger) , 驴鞭 (literally; whip of donkey) or simply 鞭 (literally, whip) in Chinese, but metaphors based on this belief cannot be found in neither English nor French.

4.2 Use of synecdoche and metonymy

This way of forming euphemisms often involves the substitution of the whole, or a similar generality, for the specific part or of the part for the whole. For example, nether regions for “genitals” invokes the general-area-for-a-specific-area-within-it; go to bed for “fuck” invokes the usual-location-where-a-specific-event-takes-place. In Chinese, euphemisms like 同席 (literally, ‘sleep on the same mat’), 上床 (literally, ‘go to bed’), employ the usual location to where a specific activity goes on to refer to the activity and 下边 (literally, lower parts) ;下部 (literally, under parts) are two other general-for specific examples ; in French, *essayer le lit and casser le lit* are two usual-location-where-a-specific-event-takes-place examples.

4.3 Use of allusion

The third way of forming euphemisms is by using allusions to historical or legendary figures or stories. Take, for example, 襄王梦 (literally, ‘the dream of king of Xiang’) alludes to a king in Ancient china who is called King of Xiang who had a dream in which he met the goddess living in Wu mountain and slept with her.

Another example is to eat forbidden fruit .The term "forbidden fruit" is a metaphor that describes any object of desire whose appeal is a direct result of the knowledge that cannot

or should not be obtained or something that someone may want but cannot have. The phrase refers to the Book of Genesis [1], where it is the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil eaten by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. As a result of eating this fruit, Adam and Eve lost their innocence, began to know good and evil, and were exiled from the garden where they were forced to adopt agriculture under less than desirable circumstances for a living.

4.4 Use of circumlocutions, clippings, acronyms, abbreviations, omissions

The fourth way of forming euphemisms involves the employment of circumlocutions, clippings, acronyms, abbreviations, omissions. For instance, to avoid the direct mentioning of pregnancy, people will say 有了 (literally, already have) instead of saying 有了身孕 (literally, have pregnancy) or 有了孩子 (literally, have a baby). In English, people sometimes will say “I need to go” instead of saying: I need to go to the lavatory”. In French, there is also a variety of euphemisms coined this way. For instance, handicapped becomes *non-performant* or *personne à mobilité réduite* or *une personne exceptionnelle*. More creativity is shown in expressions like *personnes à verticalité réduite, à croissance limitée, verticalement défavorisées*, etc.

4.5 Use of general and vague terms

The fifth way of forming euphemisms is the use of general or vague terms. Take, for example, have sex, in French, there are vague terms like *faire bien ça, faire ça, faire la bonne chose* while in English and Chinese, make it, get to it and 为人 (literally, ‘act as a person’), 发生关系 (literally, ‘produce relations’) refer to the same thing.

4.6 Use of loan terms

The reason is that words borrowed from other languages are less familiar and less freighted with negative association. For example, many bodily parts and functions are in Latin and Greek. The word “enceinte” comes via the French from Latin, probably from *inciens*, being with young. Another example is accouchement. The frenchification is from the French word

accoucher meaning to put to bed. In French, there are also some borrowed terms from other languages. For instance, W.C. comes from the English expression water closet. In Chinese, some loan words can be found too, for example, 卖春 (literally sell spring) refers to prostitution is borrowed from Japanese. 爱滋病 (literally love taste disease) comes from the English term AIDS, which is an acronym for Acquired immune deficiency syndrome and a euphemism by itself. With the development of the internet, some expressions in English have entered into the daily life of Chinese people, for example, PK, which originally comes from “player kill” has been used more and more in expressions like 例如:“我和你 PK”translated as I had a fight with you, “我昨天被 PK 了” translated as I was beaten yesterday.

4.7 Use of negation

This way of forming euphemisms involves the use of an indirect way of speaking, which generally achieves a softening or in some cases, even a surprisingly understating effect, typically through the employment of negative prefixes or antonym or other forms of negation. The antonym of lie is truth. Thus one of many dodges often used by careful speakers and writers is untruth instead of a lie because the use lie or liar is almost guaranteed to evoke libel suits. Similarly, “undocumented person” refers to an illegal alien and “unacceptable activities” is actually spying, which is the standard diplomatic excuse for kicking foreign diplomats out of one’s country. In Chinese, there are a lot of examples which are formed by the use of negative word 不 (no, not, non) such as 不良刊物 (literally no good publications) is a well-known synonym for pornographic publications. 不适 (literally discomfort)referring to minor illness which is similar to the original meaning of “disease” made up of “dis” plus “ease” 不测 (literally unpredictable) for an untoward, usually in a fatal sense, accident, 不举 (literally non-erection) for male impotence. In French, euphemisms coined in this way are numerous, for example, *les aveugles* become *non-voyants*. *Bavure policière* becomes *dysfonctionnement*. *Cadavre* becomes *personne non vivante*. *Immigrés clandestins* become *sans-papiers*.

4.8 Use of remodeling

This way of forming euphemisms involves one-for-one substitution often through phonetic distortion or morphologic change. In this method, the sound of a word is slightly changed in order to avoid the direct reference to the name of certain things or personalities. For example, in English people use sugar, shoot or shucks for shit and tarnation for damnation, darn, dang for damn and cripes for Christ. In Chinese, take for example, 靠 (literally, lean, phonetically kao) is used to replace 操 (literally, fuck, phonetically Cao) 孔丘 the name of Confucius is often written and read as 孔夫子, which experienced both changes in pronunciation and writing. In French, for example, *maudit* is deformed and becomes *mautadi*.

4.9 Use of reduplication

This way of forming euphemisms involves the repetition of a syllable or letter of a word, which is commonly found in children's bathroom vocabulary. For example in English, piss is substituted with pee-pee. In French, *pipi* is euphemism for *uriner*. And in Chinese 尿尿 (phonetically "niaoniao") is often used to refer to urinate.

4.10 Use of overstatement and understatement

The use of overstatement and understatement to coin euphemisms is often seen in our daily life. For example, flight to glory means death and a villa in a premier location by the bay is most likely to be a dilapidated artisan's cottage, five streets away from the bay, or a personal assistant to the secretary (special activities) refers to a cook, which also demonstrates in spades the general bureaucratic rule that the longer the title, the more menial the rank (Rawson 2006:33). There are euphemistic understatements like "sleep" for "die" and "lover" for "regular sexual partner". In French, take for example, *les infirmières* are promoted to *cadres infirmiers supérieurs*, which is an overstatement and *s'en aller* refers to death, which is an understatement.

In Chinese, euphemisms formed in this way abound. For instance, 安眠 (literally, sleep soundly) and 安息 (literally, rest quietly) are understatement referring to death while 取义 (literally, achieve the righteousness) and 登仙 (literally, become celestial being) are overstatement referring to death too.

4.11 Use of learned or technical terms

This method involves the use of learned or technical terms to achieve a euphemistic effect. For example, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome is better known by AIDS, which is also humorously known as Anally Inserted Death Sentence and syphilis is mentioned as treponemal disease, luetic disease (from Latin *lues* meaning “contagion, plague”), spirachtoetal disease by doctors to their patients. In French many euphemisms are created through this method too. As Jean-Paul Coorthéoux (2005:51) puts it, *l'emploi de mots savant peut également être utilisé pour ménager les susceptibilités. Ainsi les céphalées psychogènes (à coloration trop psychiatrique) sont devenues des “céphalées de tension”. Parmi bien d'autres exemples possibles, il en est aussi, le cas échéant, du fois gras(fois stéatosique), des jambes arquées (genu valgum), des genoux cagneux(genu varum), des pieds bots(talipes equinorarus), des oignons(hallux valgus) du mal de tête (céphalgie) ...* Examples in Chinese are 外阴水肿(oedema of vulva) ,分娩阵痛发作(onset of labour), 终止妊娠(termination of pregnancy) , 便秘 (constipation) and etc.

From the description above, it is clear that the three languages have a lot in common in terms of the ways of the forming of euphemisms. However, some differences exist too. For example, the loan terms for forming euphemisms in English and French are mainly from Latin, Germanic languages, Greek or simply from each other while the loan terms in Chinese euphemisms come mainly from Japanese and English.

CONCLUSION

The present study focused on the similarities and the differences in the use of euphemisms in English, Chinese and French on the topics of sex, death, and menstruation. From the preceding chapters, it can be noted that euphemism is a manner of speech that leans toward indirectness in the service of pleasantness. In all the three languages, it is literary, colloquial, written and spoken.

It is evident that the use of euphemisms is a ubiquitous phenomenon in the three languages and there are similarities and differences in the use of euphemisms and in the reasons and motives and the main areas that are called for it. Generally speaking, euphemisms are created due to the following reasons or motivations: to be politically correct, to maintain face, to avoid taboo, to avoid offence unpleasantness or embarrassment, to be superstitious, to comfort and to beautify. Although the reasons and motives for using euphemisms may seem to be similar, examples show the culture-specific aspect of certain euphemisms, for example, the lucky number 8, which could cost a fortune to own as part of one's telephone number or of one's car plate number in China, does not have that value in western culture while the number 13, which is an unlucky number in western culture, does not have any psychologically negative effect on mandarin speakers. Furthermore, even the same word may have negative or positive connotations depending on cultures. In one language it may need to be replaced by a euphemism while it may not necessarily be the case in another language. Take for example, the word "sweat" has negative connotation of punishment and redemption and consequently have the following euphemisms as moisture, facial dew, glow or perspire while in Chinese, sweat is closely related to diligent work or honor and thus the expression 汗马功劳 (literally translated as sweat horse merits) can show how the word demonstrates the positive connotation in Chinese culture.

Speaking of the three main areas where euphemisms are called for, namely, sex, death and menstruation, some similarities and differences can be observed among the three languages. In terms of sex, euphemisms for sexual activities in English, French and Chinese are quite similar in the following aspects. They are compared to conducting an operation, for example, 播种 (literally, 'sow seeds'), plough, *semmer sa graine* or to activities related to botany for instance, for example, *cueillir la fleur*, *plant the oats*, 开苞 (literally, 'open the bud'). Metonymy is one of the common figures that are used to form the euphemisms in the three languages. Take the following as an example, 衽席 (literally, 'quilt and mat'), share a pillow with, *essayer le lit*. Furthermore, some general-for-specific terms are used in all the three languages: *faire ça*, do it, 行事 (literally, 'act'). Finally, in all three languages, sexual activities are considered a joy. For example, in Chinese people will say 男欢女爱 (literally, 'men happy, woman loves') , have fun and *boire la coupe du plaisir*.

However, some differences can be observed among the euphemisms in the three languages. In Chinese there are a lot more euphemisms based on natural phenomena than in French and English. Take the following examples, 云情雨意 (literally, 'love of cloud and meaning of rain'); While in French and English, there are clearly more euphemisms coming from food, drinks, human body and war than in Chinese. For example, in English there are: give juice for jelly, and in French *battre*. In Chinese culture, generally, sex is not considered as work or duty, therefore there are almost no expressions euphemistic referring to sexual activities as work or duty to accomplish. While in English and French, we can find quite a few euphemisms compared to work or duty. For example, in French there *faire son devoir* and in English, do the chores, job, and so on. The euphemisms for sex in Chinese are more vague and indirect than their equivalents in English and French, for example, 不便处 (literally, inconvenient parts) .

As far as death is concerned, similarities can be found in the following categories where death is compared to leave, sleep, botany, voyage, end of something, actions in daily life, and where vague or general terms are used to refer to death and where death is beatified or

glorified. For example, *grand voyage*, *aller dans le royaume des taupes*, 归西 (literally, go the West), go south.

There are differences among the euphemisms in the three languages. Particularly in Chinese, some euphemisms for death are closely related to the Chinese culture. For example, in the classical Chinese, the following euphemisms are used for the death of a king or high rank officials, 薨, 宾天. For the death of a woman, especially that of a beautiful young woman, the following expression can be found among others and these expressions are closely related to the fact that a woman is compared to jade, flowers, perfume and etc. 蕙损兰摧 (literally, orchid is destroyed referring to the death of a woman), 兰摧玉折 (literally, orchid is damaged and jade is broken referring to the death of a young woman) and 香消玉损 (literally, perfume is gone and jade is broken referring to the death of a beautiful young woman).

There is common ground that the three languages all share regarding the use of euphemisms for menstruation: periodicity, color and visit. For instance:

For periodicity, there are expressions such as Calendar time, 月事, and *Pluie des mois*.

As far as the formation of euphemisms is concerned, in general, it can be achieved by use of circumlocutions, clippings, acronyms, abbreviations, omissions and substitutions; by use of metaphor; by synecdoche and metonymy; by use of allusion; by use of elliptical phrases; by use of general and vague terms; by loan terms; by use of negation; by use of remodeling; by use of reduplication; by overstatement and understatement; by use of learned or technical terms in the three languages, however, some differences do exist, for example, the loan terms for forming euphemisms in English and French are mainly from Latin, Germanic languages, Greek or simply from each other while the loan terms in Chinese euphemisms come mainly from Japanese and English.

For future researches, it would be important and interesting to take a look at the opposite side of the coin, namely the use of dysphemism in the three languages. Dysphemism refers to the substitution of a disagreeable, offensive or disparaging expression to replace an

agreeable or inoffensive one. There is little systematic and in-depth study on it across the three languages although it is a linguistic phenomenon as ubiquitous as euphemisms in our daily life. Such a study would certainly help to shed some light on the universality and culture-related specificity of this forgotten area of language.

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