

Taboo Words Culture in China and the West

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Abstract: We live in an era where people in the world are increasingly connected. With the development of globalization, cross-cultural communication occurs frequently. When conducting cross-cultural communication, we should pay attention to the differences between Chinese and Western cultures and avoid unnecessary conflicts and troubles caused by the use of taboo words in communication. Taboo words are a kind of taboo culture, which is a common social phenomenon in China and the West. In essence, the emergence of taboo words is that people of different races and nationalities have different cultural backgrounds, religious beliefs, living customs and social ethics. This paper studies the differences between Chinese and Western taboo words by quoting literature, comparative analysis and summary, which is conducive to people's clearer understanding of this kind of culture, thus avoiding conflicts in cross-cultural communication and making a contribution to the peaceful and friendly coexistence of people in the world.

Keywords: Cross-cultural communication; Taboo words; Taboo culture

1. Chinese Taboo words Culture

There are a significant number of taboo words that cannot be used in the realm of religious belief. There is a significant diversity of religious beliefs held by Chinese people, and there are a number of taboo words that are associated with religion in the country. The first and most important thing to remember about the Chinese culture is that they do not use profanity. They worship their own gods and adore them, and they never say anything that could be construed as offensive or disrespectful to their gods or to others who follow gods.

The philosophical school known as Confucianism had a significant influence on traditional Chinese culture. People should be treated with respect, according to Confucius and Mencius, and they should be asked to heed their words on various times, according to Confucius. It is forbidden to speak nonsense or express things that are unimportant, and this rule applies to gods just as much as it does to humans.

People in China believe that gods, such as door gods, wealth gods, and river gods, have the power to bestow blessings on families, thereby allowing them to live their lives in harmony and contentment. People do things to protect themselves from being accused of blasphemy against their gods, such as placing portraits of gods on doors or hanging them in hallways. They also speak in a respectful manner, using phrases like "please god," when they speak^[1].

1.1 Western Taboo words Culture

Many Christians who live in Western countries have a deep devotion to their religion and their God. They believe that it is rude to insult God or to call him by his given name, and as a result, they make every effort to refrain from saying things of this nature. The fact that the vast majority of people in the Western world adhere to Christianity means that the name of God, Yahweh, is considered to be the most offensive to them.

In the third commandment, "Do not call God by his name," it is said that God made a covenant with the Israelites on Mount Sinai through Moses and that the Israelites must abide by this covenant. God, Hell, the Devil, and the word "damn" are all words that many people try to avoid using. Instead, use the phrase "gosh," for goodness' sake, or for crying out loud, among other phrases. They,

like the Chinese, try to avoid demeaning their gods and referring to demons by their proper names. In this regard, both Chinese and Western cultures share the same taboos, which is actually due to people's fear of bringing bad luck upon themselves. The gods are revered by people of all ages, including the current generation.

1.2 Differences Between China and the West

Numbers are taboo in many countries in both China and the Western world, and the taboos in China and the West are different from one another. People in China believe that the numbers 66, 73, and 84 are all "obstacles" in their lives. There is a popular saying among the people that "even if you die at the age of 66, you have to lose a piece of meat," and that "at the ages of 73 and 84, the king of the Underworld does not request that you go." To avoid these so-called "obstacles," the elderly tend to avoid mentioning these three ages and instead say one year more or one year less, depending on the situation. In most parts of China, the number four is considered taboo because it sounds similar to the word for death. As a result, in China, telephone numbers and license plate numbers with the character "4" at the end are generally disliked by the populace in general. Hotel numbers and floor numbers of some buildings do not even contain the character "4", so they can either ignore it or substitute English letters to represent it in these cases.

Some western countries and nations, on the other hand, do not avoid the number "4", but the number "13" is considered unlucky in some cultures. If Friday the 13th occurs on a Friday, it is considered even more unlucky and is referred to as "Black Friday." One of them is derived from two legends: one is derived from the fact that Jesus was betrayed by his thirteenth disciple, Judas, on the thirteenth day of the thirteenth month, causing Jesus to suffer horribly; the other is derived from Greek mythology, when the thirteenth guest Loki was invited to the hafrá banquet, resulting in god's love for the pet Bolte sending life to the pet Bolte. Consequently, the number "13" is considered a bad omen in some western countries, and their house numbers are frequently devoid of the number "13."

Social taboos surrounding personal privacy are frequently reflected when discussing one's age. "Old" is a symbol of wisdom and experience in the eyes of children and teenagers today. It is said that "if you don't listen to the old, you will suffer losses in the near future." This is certainly true. In the event that you have an heirloom in your family, you are a hero of old age, and you are a li-an hero of old age, and you should aim for a long distance. "Heroic martyrs in their old age." All of these are traditional Chinese compliments directed at the elderly. The concept of "youth as capital" is more popular in the western world. Old people do not exist; only "senior citizens" or "the longer-lived" are referred to. Pensioners are frequently used in place of the phrase "retired people."

2. Chapter Two Philosophy beyond Taboo words Culture

2.1 View of Relevant Scholars

A strange phenomenon discovered on the island of Tonga in the South Pacific by James Cook, an Englishman, in 1777 inspired the creation of the taboo on homosexuality. A phenomenon known by indigenous people as taboos, which originally meant "sacred" or "inviolable," is the restriction on the use of certain words outside of specific groups. In English, taboo words are obscene words that can also refer to some derogatory phrases. These languages are not particularly elegant, and as a result, people are hesitant to bring them up in conversation. Despite the fact that they are referred to as "cryptic" or "taboo," they are still considered part of the language (Halliday, 1976).

Taboo words serve the purpose of reflecting a country's cultural heritage. There are numerous aspects to the mapping of taboo words to social and cultural behaviors, such as reflecting social ethics and national thinking modes, that are reflected in this mapping. In accordance with religious beliefs, each ethnic group has developed a distinctive cultural behavior, which is reflected in the existence of religious taboos in the languages of all ethnic groups. When it comes to addressing religious deities in Chinese, there are a number of taboos that reflect the country's multifaceted religious landscape. The simplicity of religious taboos in English reflects the characteristics of religious unification in Britain and the United States, which are both based on the Bible. The cultural mapping function of taboo words is also reflected in their depiction of the social and cultural development process, which is a function of their use in the past (Fu Jie, 2011).

2.2 Comment

The influence of national culture is the primary factor that contributes to the significant differences in taboos that exist between Western societies and Chinese societies. The concept of “courtesy” is at the heart of Chinese traditional culture, and the basic spirit of “courtesy” is that the superior is inferior in relation to the inferior. In China, the moral orientation of “taboo for relatives, taboo for the respected, and taboo for the elderly” has developed as a result of the requirement of “courtesy.” Western national culture, on the other hand, is based on the principle of “equality.” Following the bourgeois revolution that occurred in Britain in the middle of the 17th century, the ideas that “natural human rights” and “all men are created equal” became deeply embedded in the hearts of the general population. It is appropriate to use a person’s first name when addressing them, regardless of whether they are a man or a woman, their age, or their social standing^[2].

3. Chapter Three Conclusion

3.1 Conclusion

Following a close examination of the preceding analysis, it has become abundantly clear that the taboos of Western culture and Chinese culture share a number of similarities; however, there are also a number of significant differences between the two. These differences are attributable to a wide variety of influential factors, such as religious beliefs, cultural traditions, life customs, and ethnic influences, amongst others.

For instance, in Chinese culture, the idea of “face” carries a great deal of weight when it comes to the conduct of social interactions. This is a reference to the significance of guarding one’s reputation and preventing “loss of face” in situations that take place in public. As a result, particular behaviors and actions may be regarded as unacceptable in Chinese society because they have the potential to result in the individual or their family suffering a loss of face.

On the other hand, Western cultures place a high value on personal autonomy and individualism. As a direct consequence of this, the behaviors that are regarded as being disrespectful to other people or as being harmful to them may be more likely to be frowned upon in these cultures. These might include things like using profane language, acting impolitely toward other people, or engaging in inappropriate behavior in public.

Effective communication is becoming an increasingly important tool in today’s increasingly globalized society for the purpose of fostering mutual understanding and cooperation between people of various cultural backgrounds. Communication between cultures has the potential to alleviate needless tensions and misunderstandings, thereby fostering an atmosphere of respect and harmony among all parties involved.

When interacting with people of different cultures, individuals can improve their ability to communicate and decrease the likelihood of misunderstandings if they educate themselves on the cultural differences in taboos and social norms and acknowledge those differences. People from all sorts of different backgrounds can work together to make the world a more peaceful and harmonious place for everyone if they maintain an open mind and show respect for one another.

References:

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