

The Art of Avoiding Offense: A Contrastive Analysis of Euphemisms in Vietnamese and American Culture

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Abstract

The study examines euphemistic usage in Vietnamese and American English dialogues to elucidate underlying cultural factors and enhance cross-cultural understanding. A theoretical framework is employed that categorizes euphemisms by semantic expression: synonyms, negation, and indirect expressions. The research used a mixed descriptive method with a dataset of 350 instances drawn from 150 media communicative dialogues. A chi-square test approached but did not reach conventional significance ($\chi^2(2) = 5.96, p = .051$), with a small-to-moderate effect size (Cramér's $V = .199$), suggesting directional cross-cultural differences warranting further investigation with larger corpora. The higher prevalence of synonyms in Vietnamese (39.47% vs. 21.62%) aligns with high-context communication norms and Vietnamese values prioritizing hierarchy and face-saving, while American English's greater use of negation (13.51% vs. 7.89%) reflects low-context, individualistic communicative preferences. Qualitative analysis further reveals that Vietnamese indirect expressions draw on shared ancestral and cosmological scripts, whereas American English equivalents are constructed to be interpretable without cultural pre-knowledge. Theoretically, this study extends contrastive euphemism research to an underexplored language pairing, documents the capacity of shared cultural knowledge to enable novel euphemistic constructions in high-context communication — a qualitative dimension of cross-cultural difference consistent with Hall's (1976) framework — and draws on Gricean maxims to clarify the pragmatic status of negation-based euphemisms. Practically, the findings offer paedagogical implications for language education and intercultural communication training.

Keywords: Euphemisms, Cultural differences, Vietnamese, American, Cross-culture communication

1 Introduction

Language is a fundamental pillar of human interaction, enabling individuals to articulate thoughts, express emotions, and navigate complex social realities. However, the inherent power of words necessitates careful calibration, particularly when addressing sensitive, taboo, or potentially face-threatening topics. In such contexts, euphemisms function as primary rhetorical devices, allowing speakers to soften direct expressions, signal politeness, and manage social relationships without causing offense or discomfort (Allan & Burridge, 1991; J. Zhang, 2025). Broadly defined, euphemisms are linguistic strategies that replace direct, potentially offensive, or taboo expressions with milder, more indirect, or socially acceptable alternatives, thereby playing a crucial role in shaping public discourse and maintaining interpersonal harmony (Rawlings et al., 2017; Rawson, 1981; J. Zhang, 2025).

The study of euphemisms has attracted considerable scholarly attention across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts. Early foundational works established euphemism as a universal yet culturally embedded phenomenon (Allan & Burridge, 1991; Rawson, 1981), while subsequent research has examined euphemistic patterns in specific languages, including English (Holder, 2008; Warren, 1992), Chinese (Li, 2017; Zöllner, 1997), and Arabic (Algaraibeh, 2019). Cross-cultural comparative studies have begun to emerge, exploring euphemistic variation between, for instance, English and Chinese (Fu, 2023) or Arabic (Sharaf Eldin, 2023). However, the contrastive analysis of Vietnamese and American English euphemisms remains markedly underexplored in the literature. Existing studies on Vietnamese pragmatics tend to

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focus on politeness strategies (Nguyen, 2013) rather than isolating euphemism as a distinct object of analysis. Furthermore, prior cross-cultural studies have predominantly relied on qualitative categorization without quantitative verification of the observed distributional differences (Fu, 2023), leaving the statistical significance of cultural variation in euphemism use largely unaddressed.

This study addresses these gaps along two dimensions. Theoretically, it extends the contrastive analysis of euphemisms to a Vietnamese–American English pairing, a linguistically and culturally distinct dyad that has received little systematic attention, and applies a three-part classification framework (synonyms, negation, and indirect expressions) that cuts across both languages, enabling direct structural comparison. Methodologically, it moves beyond descriptive inventory by employing chi-square analysis with Cramer's V to quantify the degree of cross-cultural difference, providing empirical grounding for claims about cultural variation. These differences are interpreted through the lens of Hall (1976)'s high- and low-context communication theory and Brown and Levinson (1987)'s face theory, offering a theoretically situated explanation of observed patterns. Guided by this framework, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. *What types of euphemisms (synonyms, negation, and indirect expressions) are used in Vietnamese and American English media dialogues?*
2. *To what extent do the frequencies of these euphemism types differ significantly between Vietnamese and American English dialogues?*
3. *What cultural factors, particularly those related to high- and low-context communication norms and face-saving practices, account for the observed differences in euphemistic usage between the two languages?*

By addressing these questions, this research aims to enrich the theoretical understanding of euphemism as a cross-cultural linguistic phenomenon and to provide empirically grounded insights for language educators, intercultural communication practitioners, and learners navigating Vietnamese and American English communicative norms.

2 Literature review

Scholarly inquiry into euphemism has proceeded along two complementary lines of investigation: the formal linguistic mechanisms through which euphemisms are constructed, and the cultural and pragmatic contexts in which they are deployed. Within the first tradition, researchers have catalogued the structural strategies by which speakers replace direct or taboo expressions with socially acceptable alternatives. Ali and Salih (2020) and Yang (2020) identify a range of such mechanisms — including abbreviation, borrowing, phonetic distortion, litotes, and circumlocution — to demonstrate how these devices manage social interaction and signal politeness in English. From a cognitive linguistic perspective, Kövecses (2018) shows that many euphemisms arise not from arbitrary lexical substitution but from systematic conceptual mappings, such as the DEATH IS A JOURNEY metaphor, which render indirect expression both cognitively natural and culturally variable. Warren (1992) and Rawlings et al. (2017) further argue that euphemisms must be analysed according to their functional role in context rather than their formal derivation alone.

A second body of research examines euphemism comparatively across languages and cultural contexts. Cross-cultural studies have established that euphemistic patterns are not universal but are systematically shaped by cultural values and communicative norms. Fu (2023) compares euphemistic strategies in English and Chinese, revealing that collectivist orientations in Chinese culture promote greater reliance on indirect and face-preserving expressions, while Algaraibeh (2019) documents analogous divergences between English and Arabic. More broadly, scholars have noted that Eastern cultures influenced by Confucian values — prioritizing harmony, hierarchy, and group cohesion — tend toward more elaborate systems of indirection than their Western counterparts, which often favour directness and propositional clarity (Dou, 2023; Moore & Díaz, 2019).

Within Vietnamese linguistics, a smaller but growing body of work has addressed euphemistic practice. Tran (2015) confirms that while euphemisms serve the universal function of mitigating social discomfort, their specific semantic realizations in Vietnamese provide a profound window into the nation's unique socio-cultural values and cognitive patterns. Andreeva (2022) extends this analysis by examining euphemism as a linguo-cultural phenomenon, demonstrating the close relationship between euphemistic usage and taboo systems in Vietnamese, and distinguishing multiple functional subtypes according to their pragmatic and social roles. While these studies illuminate the internal structure of Vietnamese euphemistic practice, they remain primarily descriptive and language-internal in scope.

Despite this growing body of evidence, two significant gaps persist in the literature. First, the contrastive analysis of Vietnamese and American English euphemisms remains markedly underexplored. Existing research on Vietnamese pragmatics tends to address politeness strategies in general terms (Nguyen, 2013) rather than isolating euphemism as a distinct object of comparative inquiry. Second, prior cross-cultural studies have relied predominantly on qualitative categorization, without statistical verification of observed distributional differences (Fu, 2023). Consequently, the degree to which Vietnamese and American English euphemistic systems differ in measurable, quantifiable ways remains an open empirical question.

3 Theoretical background

This section establishes the integrated theoretical framework underpinning the present study's contrastive analysis of Vietnamese and American English euphemisms. The framework operates on two levels. At the linguistic-pragmatic level, it draws on Allan and Burridge (1991, 2006)'s semantic-pragmatic classification of euphemism and Brown and Levinson (1987)'s politeness and face theory to account for the formal properties and face-management functions of each euphemistic strategy. At the cultural level, it draws on Hall (1976)'s high- and low-context communication model and Hofstede (1980, 2001)'s cultural dimensions, particularly power distance and individualism–collectivism, to explain the cross-cultural divergence in strategy selection. Grice (1975)'s Cooperative Principle is applied in a more limited capacity specifically to clarify the pragmatic status of negation-based euphemisms relative to the maxims of Manner and Relation. These two levels of analysis connect the surface linguistic form of each euphemism type to its pragmatic function and cultural motivation.

3.1 Definition and classifications of euphemism

Euphemism, derived from the Greek *euphēmos* (speaking with good words) (Hamilton & Foltzer, 2019, p. 2), is a universal linguistic strategy of substituting direct, harsh, or taboo expressions with milder, indirect, or socially acceptable alternatives (Allan & Burridge, 1991; Warren, 1992). This rhetorical device is intertwined with cultural values and pragmatic considerations, serving to protect sensibilities, maintain politeness, and facilitate smoother interpersonal communication (Zhang & Su, 2023). The phenomenon is attested across diverse linguistic traditions — from the Vietnamese concepts of *uyen ngu* (euphemism) and *noi giam noi tranh* (speaking softly, avoiding bluntness) to their well-documented counterparts in English — underscoring its status as a fundamental dimension of human social interaction.

The classification of euphemisms is a foundational concern in this field, and several influential frameworks have been proposed. Among these, Allan and Burridge (1991, 2006)'s semantic-pragmatic taxonomy offers the most comprehensive treatment, identifying mechanisms such as abbreviations, acronyms, borrowing, figurative language (metaphor, metonymy), litotes, one-word substitutions (synonymy, generalization), phonetic manipulation, and circumlocution. Their framework situates euphemism on an X-phemism continuum — with euphemism (sweet talk) at one end and dysphemism (offensive talk) at the other — emphasizing that euphemistic choices are context-dependent and culturally negotiated rather than fixed lexical properties. Complementing this structural account, Warren (1992) emphasizes that euphemisms should be analysed according to how they are functionally shaped in context, not merely how they are formally derived. From a cognitive linguistic perspective, Kövecses (2018) demonstrates that many euphemisms, for instance

the DEATH IS A JOURNEY metaphor, arise from systematic conceptual mappings rather than arbitrary lexical choice, revealing the cognitive mechanisms that make indirect expression both natural and culturally variable.

For the purposes of the present study, the diverse mechanisms are consolidated into a three-part classification framework including synonyms (lexical substitution, Sino-Vietnamese borrowings), negation (litotes and morphosyntactic negation), and indirect expressions (metaphor and circumlocution). This scheme is operationally suited to contrastive cross-linguistic analysis, broad enough to capture the formal diversity of euphemistic expression in both Vietnamese and American English, and sufficiently precise to enable statistically testable frequency comparisons.

3.2 *Politeness theory and face*

Central to understanding *why* euphemisms are deployed is Brown and Levinson (1987)'s politeness theory, grounded in Goffman (1967)'s concept of *face* — the public self-image that individuals claim and seek to maintain in social interaction. Brown and Levinson (1987) define positive face as the desire to be approved of and to have one's wants considered desirable by others, while negative face refers to the desire for autonomy and freedom from imposition. Face-threatening acts (FTAs) — such as delivering bad news, issuing criticism, or broaching taboo topics — risk damaging either the speaker's or the addressee's face. Euphemisms, in this framework, function as linguistic strategies to mitigate FTAs in which they allow speakers to communicate sensitive content while simultaneously protecting relational face.

Brown and Levinson outline four main types of politeness strategies in response to FTAs consisting of bald on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record (indirect) strategies. This typology maps directly onto the three categories of euphemism analysed in this study. Synonym-based euphemisms (e.g., *tu tran* for death in Vietnamese, or "passed away" in English) function primarily as positive politeness strategies, dignifying the referent and acknowledging the addressee's desire for respect. Negation-based euphemisms (e.g., "not at liberty to discuss", "not feeling well") operate as negative politeness strategies, preserving the addressee's autonomy by avoiding direct imposition. Indirect expressions (e.g., metaphors such as *ve voi to tien* — "to return to one's ancestors") constitute off-record strategies, conveying meaning implicitly so that the speaker cannot be held accountable for the literal content of the FTA.

Crucially, the choice among these strategies is not universal but is systematically shaped by cultural context, specifically by the communicative norms encoded in Hall's (1976) and Hofstede's (1980) frameworks, discussed in the following sections.

A complementary perspective is provided by Grice (1975)'s Cooperative Principle and its associated maxims — Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner. Euphemisms present a productive site for applying this framework rather than flouting the Maxim of Manner (as irony or metaphor characteristically does). Negation-based euphemisms are appropriately understood as maxim-compliant strategies that soften face-threatening propositions while preserving propositional transparency. An utterance such as "*not feeling well*" remains clear, brief, and orderly — conforming to the Maxim of Manner — while reducing the affective force of a direct statement. Indirect expressions such as metaphor and circumlocution, by contrast, may involve apparent violations of the Maxim of Relation or Quantity, resolved through the recognition of shared cultural context (Hall, 1976). Integrating Grice's framework with Brown and Levinson (1987)'s politeness theory enables a more precise characterization of how each euphemism type manages the competing demands of communicative clarity and face protection, a distinction with direct relevance to the cross-cultural divergence observed in this study.

3.3 *Hall's high-context and low-context communication*

Hall's (1976) distinction between high-context (HCC) and low-context (LCC) cultures provides a foundational explanatory lens for the cross-cultural divergence in euphemistic practice observed in this study. High-context cultures, predominantly found in many Asian and African nations, rely on indirect, nonverbal communication and emphasize relationships and social bonds, with much of the meaning derived from

context rather than explicit verbal content. Conversely, low-context cultures such as the United States prioritize direct verbal communication where clarity is essential, with individual achievements valued over group dynamics.

Vietnam is widely positioned as a high-context culture (Chi & Hao, 2013; Hall, 1976), where communicative meaning is embedded in shared social scripts, relational history, and non-verbal cues. In this environment, euphemisms are not merely lexical options but relational necessities. They activate shared cultural knowledge — about kinship, hierarchy and taboo — without requiring explicit articulation. The richness and creativity of Vietnamese indirect expressions (e.g., *đi gặp ông bà tổ tiên* — “going to meet one’s ancestors”, meaning death) reflect a communication style in which *how* something is said, its implied social positioning, carries as much meaning as *what* is said.

The United States, by contrast, exemplifies a low-context culture in which meaning is expected to reside primarily in the explicit verbal message (Hall, 1976; Richardson & Smith, 2007). American euphemisms consequently tend toward conventionalized, semantically transparent substitutions (e.g., “*passed away*”, “*let go*”) or negation-based constructions that soften meaning while maintaining propositional clarity. The preference for negation (e.g., “*not feeling well*”, “*not ideal*”) is particularly consistent with LCC norms: rather than replacing a taboo term with a contextually embedded metaphor, the speaker modifies its valence directly and explicitly, preserving the low-ambiguity expectations of low-context interaction.

3.4 Hofstede’s cultural dimensions

While Hall’s framework captures the degree of communicative explicitness, Hofstede’s (1980, 2001) cultural dimensions model provides additional explanatory granularity by identifying the specific social values that drive different euphemistic strategies. Two dimensions are particularly relevant to this study: power distance, and individualism–collectivism.

Power distance refers to the degree to which unequal distributions of power are expected and accepted within a society, while individualism refers to the extent to which people are primarily expected to look after themselves rather than being integrated into cohesive groups. Empirically, Vietnam scores high on power distance and low on individualism (i.e., high collectivism), whereas the United States scores comparatively low on power distance and very high on individualism (Garcia et al., 2014; Hofstede, 2001).

In high power distance cultures such as Vietnam, linguistic choices function as mandatory markers of social hierarchy. The strategic use of Sino-Vietnamese (*Hán-Việt*) synonyms (e.g., *tụ trần* rather than *chết* for death, *cao tuổi* rather than *già* for old) is not merely stylistic but constitutes a ritualistic acknowledgment of the deceased’s or addressee’s social seniority (Andreeva, 2022). This aligns with Brown and Levinson’s (1987) concept of positive politeness: by selecting the more elevated register, the speaker simultaneously enhances the addressee’s positive face and reinforces the hierarchical social order. In collectivist Vietnamese society, the primary communicative goal is to preserve group harmony and prevent any member of the community, living or deceased, present or referenced, from experiencing face loss. Conceptual metaphors framing death as a spiritual continuation (e.g., *vệ với tổ tiên* — going to meet one’s ancestors, *giấc ngủ ngàn thu* — eternal sleep) serve this collective function by reframing an existential finality as a relational transition, maintaining the social fabric undisturbed (Andreeva, 2022; Pham & Trinh, 2024).

In contrast, the low power distance and high individualism characteristic of American culture produce a different euphemistic logic. Egalitarian norms reduce the pressure to use elevated register as a marker of social status, and euphemisms instead serve to protect individual autonomy and dignity. Negation-based euphemisms (e.g., *not at liberty to discuss*, *we’re going to have to let you go*) are particularly well-adapted to this function. They acknowledge the sensitive reality without entirely suppressing it, maintaining professional clarity while buffering personal impact (Verzella & Tommaso, 2020). This pattern is consistent with negative politeness norms in low power distance, individualistic societies, where respecting the addressee’s autonomy — their right not to be directly confronted or judged — takes priority over preserving collective relational harmony.

Table 1: Integrated sociolinguistic framework for contrastive analysis

Euphemism type	Linguistic mechanism	Primary cultural driver	Pragmatic function
Synonyms	Lexical substitution; Sino-Vietnamese borrowings (Andreeva, 2022)	High power distance (Hofstede, 2001); high-context (Hall, 1976)	Dignifying social positioning; positive face enhancement (Brown & Levinson, 1987)
Negation	Litotes; morphosyntactic negation (Allan & Burridge, 1991)	Low power distance; individualism (Hofstede, 2001); low-context (Hall, 1976)	Preserving addressee autonomy; negative face protection (Brown & Levinson, 1987)
Indirect expressions	Conceptual metaphor; circumlocution (Kövecses, 2018)	Collectivism (Hofstede, 2001); high-context (Hall, 1976)	Navigating taboos through shared cultural scripts; off-record face protection (Brown & Levinson, 1987)

Note. Framework synthesized from Allan and Burridge (1991), Andreeva (2022), Brown and Levinson (1987), Hall (1976), Hofstede (2001), and Kövecses (2018).

3.5 Integrated sociolinguistic framework

The four theoretical strands outlined above — euphemism classification, face theory, high/low-context communication, and Hofstede's cultural dimensions — are not independent but mutually reinforcing, and their integration constitutes the main background of this study. Table 1 synthesizes these relationships, mapping each euphemism type to its primary linguistic mechanism, its principal cultural driver, and its pragmatic function as operationalized in the present analysis.

This integrated framework guides both the coding of the 350-instance dataset and the interpretation of statistical results, enabling the study to move beyond descriptive frequency comparison toward theoretically grounded explanation of cross-cultural divergence.

4 Methods

This study employs a sequential mixed-methods design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) combining quantitative corpus analysis with qualitative pragmatic interpretation. The quantitative strand compares the frequency distributions of euphemism types across the two languages; the qualitative strand contextualizes these patterns within the integrated sociolinguistic frameworks to explain cross-cultural divergence.

4.1 Research design and corpus

The corpus consists of 350 euphemism instances extracted from 150 communicative dialogues, balanced between Vietnamese ($n = 78$ dialogues; 180 instances) and American English ($n = 72$ dialogues; 170 instances). The primary unit of analysis is the individual euphemism instance — a discrete lexical or phrasal substitution fulfilling a euphemistic function within its conversational context — rather than the dialogue as a whole.

All instances were drawn from publicly available audio-visual media produced between 2019 and 2022, encompassing feature films, television series, web dramas, and national news broadcasts (Table 2). This time window was deliberately selected to ensure contemporaneity and to minimize the influence of language shifts driven by pre-2019 political or social events. The diversity of source genres, spanning formal (news), semi-formal (drama), and informal (web series) registers, was intended to maximize variation across communicative contexts and avoid genre-specific lexical skewing, consistent with best practices in corpus design for pragmatic research (McEnery & Hardie, 2012).

Two methodological considerations merit explicit acknowledgment. First, the deliberate mixing of formal (news broadcasts), semi-formal (feature films, TV dramas), and informal (vlogs, web series) registers across both sub-corpora introduces register as a potential confounding variable: euphemistic density

Table 2: Overview of the research corpus

LANGUAGE	SOURCE TYPE	NAME OF SOURCE	NUMBER OF DIALOGUES
American English	Feature films	<i>The Fault in Our Stars, Bridesmaids, Up in the Air, The Pursuit of Happiness, The Matrix</i>	65
	TV Series	<i>South Park, Friends, Parks and Recreation</i>	25
	YouTube Videos	<i>CollegeHumor, Good Mythical Morning, Trey Kennedy, Smosh</i>	64
	News/Broadcasts	<i>ABC world news, PBS NewsHour</i>	16
Vietnamese	Feature Films	<i>Jailbait (Em Chua 18), Yellow Flowers on the Green Grass (Hoa vang tren co xanh), The Tailor (Co Ba Sai Gon)</i>	64
	TV Series/Dramas	<i>Mommy Shark Daddy Angel, The Arbitrator (Nguoi phan xu)</i>	25
	Entertainment/Vlogs	<i>1977 Vlog, FapTV, Schannel, Perfect Class</i>	65
	News/Broadcasts	<i>VTv1 News, 24h Movement, People's Television (Truyen hinh Nhan dan)</i>	26

Source: Compiled by the author.

and type may co-vary with register independently of language or culture. This risk is mitigated by the parallel register distribution across both sub-corpora (each containing comparable proportions of formal, semi-formal, and informal sources) and by the theoretical framework's expectation that culturally motivated differences — such as the Sino-Vietnamese register elevation reflex — should manifest across registers rather than being register-specific. Nonetheless, future research with register-stratified sub-corpora would allow these effects to be disentangled more precisely. Second, an a priori power analysis (G*Power 3.1; Faul et al. (2007)) for a chi-square goodness-of-fit test with two degrees of freedom, a small-to-medium effect size ($w = .21$, corresponding to Cramer's $V \approx .15-.20$), and 80% power at $\alpha = .05$ indicates a required sample size of approximately 400–450 instances. The present corpus of 350 instances is therefore modestly underpowered for detecting effects at the lower end of the anticipated range, which must be considered in interpreting the borderline chi-square result reported in Section 5.1.

Each dialogue was included only if it satisfied three criteria simultaneously: (a) it contained at least one identifiable euphemistic expression, defined as a lexical or phrasal substitution replacing a direct, taboo, or potentially offensive referent; (b) the euphemism occurred within a conversational exchange (i.e., not isolated monologue or narration); and (c) the topic addressed fell within one of five culturally sensitive domains established a priori: death and dying, illness and disability, sexual behaviour, bodily functions, and financial or social failure. These domains were selected because they represent cross-linguistically documented locations of euphemistic innovation (Allan and Burridge (1991); Andreeva (2022)) and are directly implicated by the theoretical frameworks.

4.2 Data collection and analysis method

Candidate instances were systematically logged with source, timestamp, speaker context, and surrounding discourse. Following Allan and Burridge (1991)'s functional criterion, an expression was classified as euphemistic only if it demonstrably substituted a taboo or face-threatening referent with the intent of softening its social impact; ambiguous cases were excluded. Each instance was then assigned to one of three mutually exclusive categories derived from the Integrated Sociolinguistic Framework (Table 1).

Two postgraduate-trained coders independently annotated the full dataset following a calibration session on 30 pilot instances. Inter-rater reliability reached $\kappa=0.86$ (Cohen's Kappa) (almost perfect agreement; Landis and Koch (1977)). Disagreements were resolved through consensus adjudication. The analytical procedure for this study comprised two main stages:

Table 3: Frequency distribution of euphemism types by language

Euphemism type	American English (n=170)	Vietnamese (n=180)
Synonyms	21.62% (n=37)	39.47% (n=71)
Negation	13.51% (n=23)	7.89% (n=14)
Indirect expressions	64.86% (n=110)	52.63% (n=95)
Total	100%	100%

Source: Author's work

Table 4: Chi-square test of independence

Test statistic	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson chi-square	5.960	2	.051
N of valid cases	350		
Cramér's V	.199		

Stage 1 Quantitative: Frequency counts and proportions per euphemism type were computed for each sub-corpus. A Pearson chi-square test (SPSS) on the 2 (language) $\times$ 3 (type) contingency table assessed distributional differences ($\alpha = .05$), with Cramer's V as the effect size measure.

Stage 2 Qualitative: A purposive subsample was selected for in-depth contextual analysis examining: the taboo referent replaced; the euphemistic strategy employed; and the cultural values — power distance, individualism/collectivism, and context-orientation (Hofstede (2001); Hall (1976)) — theorized in the framework to explain each strategy's pragmatic function (face-saving, autonomy preservation, taboo navigation).

Findings from both stages were integrated using a complementarity strategy (Greene et al. (1989)), whereby quantitative patterns are elaborated through culturally grounded qualitative interpretation.

5 Results

5.1 Quantitative results

A Pearson chi-square test of independence was conducted to examine whether the distribution of euphemism types (Table 3) differed significantly between the American English and Vietnamese sub-corpora. The result, $\chi^2(2, N = 350) = 5.96, p = .051$, did not reach conventional statistical significance at the pre-specified $\alpha = .05$ threshold (Table 4). Accordingly, the null hypothesis — that euphemism type distribution is independent of language — cannot be rejected on statistical grounds alone.

It is nonetheless important to note that the obtained p -value falls immediately at the boundary of the significance threshold, and that the associated effect size, Cramér's $V = .199$, indicates a small-to-moderate practical association between language and euphemism type (Cohen, 1988). The combination of a borderline p -value and a non-trivial effect size warrants cautious interpretive attention: rather than treating this result as simply 'non-significant', the data suggest a *directional pattern* that may have failed to reach significance due to corpus size constraints. This interpretation is consistent with recommendations that effect size be reported and interpreted alongside p -values rather than in isolation (Cumming, 2014). The qualitative analysis in Section 5.2 therefore plays a complementary role, providing contextual evidence that helps explain the directionality of the observed distributional differences.

Despite the non-significant chi-square result, three directional patterns are discernible in the frequency data and inform the qualitative analysis:

- Synonyms are nearly twice as prevalent in Vietnamese (39.47%) than in American English (21.62%),

suggesting a stronger cultural preference in Vietnamese for softening taboo referents through formal lexical substitution.

- Negation is used more frequently in American English (13.51%) than in Vietnamese (7.89%), consistent with a communicative style that modifies rather than replaces sensitive propositions.
- Indirect expressions constitute the dominant strategy in both languages (American English: 64.86%; Vietnamese: 52.63%), but the gap suggests that American English relies more heavily on this single strategy while Vietnamese distributes euphemistic expression more evenly across all three types.

5.2 Qualitative results

The following analysis examines representative corpus instances across the three euphemism types. While the corpus was sampled across five culturally sensitive domains, the qualitative analysis is organized by euphemism type, as the primary analytical interest concerns the linguistic mechanisms and cultural logics underlying each strategy rather than their topical distribution. Table 5 provides an overview of selected examples spanning all five domains and three euphemism categories.

Table 5: Representative euphemism examples (#1–#20) by type and domain

Topic / domain	Type	American English	Vietnamese	Cultural contrast
Death & dying	Synonym (status-marking)	passed away (#1, <i>The Fault in Our Stars</i>)	<i>tu tran</i> [to leave the mundane world], <i>hau su</i> [affairs of the aftermath] (#2, <i>Em Chua</i> 18; #3, <i>24h Movement</i>)	EN: egalitarian emotional softening. VN: Sino-Vietnamese register performs obligatory social re-positioning of the deceased
Financial / social failure	Synonym (social labelling)	laid off (#4, <i>Up in the Air</i>)	<i>bac thang ban</i> [an uncle of poverty] (#5, <i>Hoa Vang Tren Co Xanh</i>)	EN: clinical abstraction shields individual dignity. VN: collective label assigns fixed community status
Bodily functions / insult	Synonym (register elevation – informal)	—	<i>van de ve quang hoc</i> [an optical problem] (#6, <i>1977 Vlog</i>)	VN: Han-Viet clinical register deployed in casual peer interaction for humorous effect — register elevation operates as cultural reflex even in colloquial insult, producing euphemistic distance through deliberate register mismatch
Secrecy / disclosure	Negation (boundary-setting)	not at liberty to say (#7, <i>College Humor</i>)	<i>Toi hoan toan khong the tiet lo duoc viec nay</i> [I am completely unable to disclose this matter] (#8, <i>Chuyen dong 24h</i>)	EN: individual boundary via institutional authority. VN: triple-layered softening disperses agency to preserve relational harmony
Disagreement / error	Negation (litotes)	not entirely accurate (#9, <i>ABC world news</i>)	<i>chua chinh xac lam</i> [not quite accurate yet] (#10, <i>Co Ba Sai Gon</i>)	EN: single negation modifier, propositionally clear. VN: <i>co le + chua + lam</i> = progressive diffusion of negative force

Topic / domain	Type	American English	Vietnamese	Cultural contrast
Death & dying	Indirect (cosmological metaphor)	kicked the bucket (#11, <i>Good Mythical Morning</i>)	<i>cho di chau ong ba</i> [to send someone to pay respects to the ancestors] (#12, <i>Nguoi phan xu</i>); <i>gap cac cu</i> [to meet the ancestors] (#13, <i>Nguoi phan xu</i>)	EN: physical/mechanical image, no relational continuity. VN: ancestral-reunion frame preserves relational bond beyond death
Death & dying	Indirect (spiritual script)	safe in God's arms (#14, <i>Trey Kennedy</i>)	<i>ve voi dat me</i> [to return to Mother Earth] (#15, <i>Co Ba Sai Gon</i>); <i>mot thang ve nha 2 lan</i> [going home twice a month — ref. lunar-calendar ancestral offering days on the 1st & 15th] (#16, <i>Schannel</i>)	EN: denominational belief, not universally shared. VN: collective cosmological script accessible regardless of personal belief
Gender / family structure	Indirect (patrilineal script)	—	<i>chua duoc ngoi mam tren</i> [not yet able to sit at the upper table — euphemized lack of male heir via gendered seating ritual] (#17, <i>Co Ba Sai Gon</i>)	VN: seating hierarchy encodes patrilineal kinship obligation; absence of male heir euphemized through spatial ritual metaphor — fully opaque without cultural pre-knowledge of gender-stratified communal dining
Financial / social failure	Indirect (state reframing)	between the two jobs (#18, <i>Smosh</i>)	<i>lam tu do</i> [freelancing] (#19, <i>Vlog77</i>)	EN: protects individual career identity (temporary transition). VN: rebrands social position in collective gaze
Sexual behaviour / social observation	Indirect (cultural metaphor)	—	<i>am tinh duong suy</i> [yin flourishes, yang declines] (#20, <i>Lop hoc hoan my</i>)	VN: Taoist cosmological encoding, fully opaque without cultural pre-knowledge — paradigmatic HCC

Source: Author's work.

5.2.1 Synonyms

The prominent pattern in the Vietnamese sub-corpus is the systematic deployment of *Han-Viet* (Sino-Vietnamese) vocabulary to replace colloquial Vietnamese terms in sensitive contexts. This substitution is not a neutral synonym swap but a register elevation encoding hierarchical respect as a moral obligation rather than a stylistic preference (Andreeva, 2022; Hofstede, 2001).

Notably, this pattern appears not only in formal discourse but in everyday peer interaction. In *Em Chua 18* (Example #2 in Table 5), upon learning of a friend's father's death, a character spontaneously responds:

Bo em tu tran sao? [Your father passed away (tu tran)?]

The choice of *tu tran* - a Sino-Vietnamese compound meaning “to leave the mundane world” - over colloquial *chet* (“to die”) occurs between peers in an informal setting, suggesting that register elevation is used as a cultural reflex rather than a deliberate performance. Under Hofstede (2001)'s high power distance framework, this single lexical choice simultaneously honours the deceased's social standing, signals hierarchical propriety, and affirms the collective face of all participants — social functions that colloquial

Vietnamese does not perform. A parallel institutional dynamic appears in Example #3, where a state broadcaster uses *hau su* (“affairs of the aftermath”) rather than *đam tang* (“funeral”), deploying Han-Viet to signal both social deference and institutional authority.

American English synonyms operate through a different logic. In “*Up in the Air*” (Example 4), “*laid off*” achieves its euphemistic effect through clinical abstraction: a passive, process-oriented construction that reduces individual agency and emotional charge without invoking hierarchical obligation. The contrast sharpens in the domain of social failure: while “*laid off*” shields a specific individual from stigma, the Vietnamese *bac thang ban* (“an uncle of poverty”, Example #5) assigns a collective social position, categorizing the referent’s standing within the community hierarchy. This reflects collectivist face management (Brown & Levinson, 1987): in Vietnamese culture, social identity is primarily relational and communally determined, rather than individually owned.

A further dimension of Vietnamese synonym use is the deployment of Sino-Vietnamese register elevation for humorous effect in informal peer interaction. In Example #6 (1977 Vlog), the expression *Chung may co van de ve quang hoc a?* (“Do you have an optical problem?”) substitutes the clinical Han-Viet compound *quang hoc* (optics/optical) for the colloquial *mat* (eyes) or the direct rebuke “*Are you blind?*” The mechanism operates through register mismatch: The formal, quasi-medical register of *quang hoc* is incongruous with the casual peer context, producing humour through the incongruity between institutional language and everyday interaction. Unlike ancestral metaphors, this expression requires no cultural pre-knowledge beyond recognition of the Han-Viet/ colloquial distinction — yet it still reflects the same underlying cultural reflex identified in formal contexts: the reach for elevated register as a distancing strategy, here repurposed for comical rather than hierarchical effect. This suggests that Sino-Vietnamese substitution in Vietnamese operates as a stylistic resource available across a range of registers, not solely in solemn or institutional contexts.

5.2.2 Negation

Negation-based euphemisms soften face-threatening propositions through morphosyntactic modification rather than lexical replacement. The cross-cultural divergence lies not in the surface form but in the pragmatic orientation negation serves - and in explaining why Vietnamese deploys this strategy less frequently than American English.

A parallel pair of corpus instances involving refusal to disclose sensitive information illustrates this contrast. The American speaker (Example #7) responds “*I’m not at liberty to say*”, invoking individual rights and institutional authority: The speaker is an autonomous agent constrained by external rules, achieving negative politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987) while remaining propositionally transparent, consistent with low-context communicative norms (Hall, 1976). The Vietnamese interviewee (Example #8) responds:

Toi hoan toan khong the tiet lo duoc viec nay. [“I am completely unable to disclose this matter.”]

The co-occurrence of *hoan toan* (“completely”), *khong the* (“cannot”), and resultative particle *duoc* creates a layered mitigation: The refusal is framed as an impossibility rather than personal choice, dispersing agency rather than asserting individual authority. This pattern is consistent with collectivist face management, which prioritizes relational harmony over personal boundary-setting (Hofstede, 2001).

A similar layering logic appears in Example #9 (*Co Ba Sai Gon*), where *Co le no chua chinh xac lam* deploys three simultaneous hedges: *co le* (“perhaps”), *chua* (“not yet”, implying future correction rather than failure), and *lam* (“diminishing particle”). Each element incrementally shifts responsibility away from the speaker: a diffusion of negative force. This contrasts with the English equivalent “*not entirely accurate*”, which reduces affective intensity through a single modifier while maintaining propositional clarity. Vietnamese negation thus achieves face-protection by distributing epistemic responsibility across grammatical layers; American negation achieves it by reducing propositional intensity while keeping meaning explicit. This distinction explains the lower Vietnamese frequency of negation (7.89% vs. 13.51%): Where English negation efficiently manages individual affect, Vietnamese speakers more often opt for indirect expression, achieving face-protection without any explicit negative proposition.

5.2.3 Indirect expressions

Indirect expression is the dominant strategy in both corpora, yet quantitative convergence conceals a qualitative divergence. Both languages deploy metaphor and circumlocution, but Vietnamese indirect expressions presuppose shared cultural knowledge as a pragmatic resource, whereas American English indirect expressions are constructed to be interpretable without such pre-knowledge.

Ancestral and cosmological scripts in Vietnamese Vietnamese death euphemisms in the corpus predominantly instantiate the conceptual frame DEATH IS A RETURN TO ONE'S ORIGINS, framing biological death as relational continuation rather than terminal rupture (Pham & Trinh, 2024). Two instances illustrate variation within this frame: *cho đi chau ong ba* (Example #12, “to send someone to pay respects to the ancestors”) foregrounds filial obligation, while *gap cac cu* (Example #13, “to meet the ancestors”) foregrounds familial reunion. Both activate an ancestral cosmology organized around ancestor veneration, cyclical time, and the continuity of relational bonds beyond death. Both are interpretable without contextual explanation — because their meaning is embedded in shared cultural pre-knowledge rather than in the words themselves (Hall, 1976). A listener outside this cosmological framework would find both expressions opaque, not due to linguistic ambiguity but because the euphemistic force resides in the cultural frame.

A further instantiation of this frame is *mot thang ve nha 2 lan* (Example #16, “going home twice a month”), which euphemizes death by referencing the Vietnamese lunar calendar custom of ancestral offerings on the 1st and 15th of each lunar month — days on which the deceased are believed to ritually return home. The expression operates through two layers of shared cultural knowledge: recognition of the lunar ritual calendar, and activation of the DEATH IS A RETURN TO ONE'S ORIGINS frame, whereby the deceased's “visits home” become permanently fixed by communal ritual schedule. No word in the expression refers to death, ancestors, or spiritual belief—the euphemistic force resides entirely in the cultural frame. Unlike *cho đi chau ong ba* and *gap cac cu*, which retain lexical traces of ancestral reference, *mot thang ve nha 2 lan* offers no lexical foothold for interpretation outside the cultural system, illustrating how high context culture (HCC) indirection can achieve full in-group transparency while remaining entirely opaque to outsiders.

A structurally distinct case of frame-dependent indirection appears in the domain of gender and family structure. The expression *chua duoc ngoi mam tren* (Example #17, “not yet able to sit at the upper table”) euphemizes a family's lack of a male heir — a face-threatening social condition within Vietnamese patrilineal kinship culture — without explicit reference to gender, reproduction, or social expectation. The mechanism draws on the traditional Vietnamese communal dining practice in which gender and generational hierarchy are spatially enacted through seating: Men and elders occupy the upper table (*mam tren*), women and children the lower (*mam duoi*). Within this system, the right to “sit at the upper table” encodes patrilineal continuity and ritual standing within the family network. The euphemism operates at the intersection of Vietnamese gender hierarchy, patrilineal kinship obligation, and the ritual enactment of social order through communal dining — three mutually reinforcing cultural systems. As with Example #16, no component of the expression is lexically interpretable as a reference to its taboo referent without cultural context (Hall, 1976). These two examples suggest that frame-dependent HCC indirection in Vietnamese extends across culturally sensitive domains wherever shared ritual knowledge provides a sufficiently dense inferential base.

The corpus also illustrates HCC indirection in social observation. In Example #19 (*Lop hoc hoan my*), a student describes a female-dominated class as *lop ban am thinh duong suy qua* [yin flourishes, yang declines], deploying Taoist cosmological principles (*am/yin*, *duong/yang*) to encode gender imbalance without explicit reference to gender. The expression is uninterpretable without knowledge of the Taoist cosmological framework, illustrating how shared philosophical pre-knowledge can function as an indirect euphemistic resource.

Individual state reframing in American English American English indirect expressions achieve face-saving by reframing the evaluative status of an individual state rather than activating shared cultural scripts. In death euphemism, “kicked the bucket” (Example #11) introduces emotional distance through a physical, mechanical image with no relational or ancestral resonance — its euphemistic function is affective rather

Table 6: Two cultural architectures of euphemism

Dimension	Vietnamese	American English
Primary face concern	Collective relational face; group harmony	Individual dignity and autonomy
Cultural driver	High power distance; collectivism; HCC	Low power distance; individualism; LCC
Dominant euphemistic mechanism	Register elevation (Synonyms) + ancestral/-cultural scripts (Indirect)	Propositional softening (Negation) + state reframing (Indirect)
Source of euphemistic force	Shared cultural pre-knowledge embedded in collective memory	Propositional content accessible without cultural pre-knowledge
Metaphor type	Relational, cosmological — preserves social bond beyond taboo event	Physical, transitional — manages individual emotional exposure
Capacity for frame-based euphemism generation	Higher: novel euphemisms constructed from shared cultural frames (Hall, 1976); meaning accessible within the cultural group without explicit contextual support	Lower: predominantly lexicalized, conventionalized expressions; meaning constructed to be accessible without cultural pre-knowledge

than social. “*Safe in God’s arms*” (Example #14) may appear to invoke a spiritual script comparable to Vietnamese ancestral metaphors; however, the Christian frame it presupposes represents a denominational belief rather than a collectively shared cosmology. A non-Christian interlocutor would not necessarily receive it as meaningful comfort, whereas *chau ong ba* would be immediately interpretable to a non-Buddhist Vietnamese speaker, as its force derives from a collectively accessible cultural framework rather than personal religious belief.

In the domain of professional failure, “between the two jobs” (Example #18) reframes unemployment as a temporary career transition, managing the individual’s self-concept by denying the permanence of the condition. The Vietnamese equivalent *lam tu do* (Example #19) pursues face-saving differently, by rebranding the referent’s social position in the eyes of the community rather than managing internal self-perception. This reflects the broader architectural difference: American indirect expressions address the individual’s evaluative relationship to their own condition; Vietnamese indirect expressions address the collective’s perception of the individual’s social standing.

5.3 Similarities and differences

Across all three euphemism types, the analyses converge on a consistent pattern: Vietnamese and American English pursue the same communicative goal — mitigation of face-threatening acts — through culturally distinct mechanisms. Table 6 synthesizes these differences.

The Vietnamese data suggest a pattern of collective face orientation: Euphemistic choices — Sino-Vietnamese synonym, layered negation, ancestral metaphor — tend to protect the relational standing of participants within the community network, enacting social obligation rather than merely softening propositional content.

The American English data suggest a pattern of individual face orientation. Here, euphemisms address the dignity or self-concept of a specific interlocutor, with meaning constructed to be propositionally accessible without cultural pre-knowledge (Hall, 1976). This architectural divergence helps explain why formal similarity across the two corpora — both deploy metaphor, both use negation — can mask substantive pragmatic differences that frequency analysis alone does not capture.

6 Discussion

This study examined the types and frequencies of euphemistic strategies in Vietnamese and American English and identified cultural factors underlying observed distributional differences. Although the chi-square

test narrowly missed conventional statistical significance ($\chi^2(2) = 5.96$, $p = .051$), the small-to-moderate effect size (Cramer's $V = .199$) and the consistent directionality of the qualitative evidence together suggest a substantive, if statistically provisional, cross-cultural difference in euphemistic strategy. The following discussion integrates both strands of evidence to address the three research questions in turn.

6.1 *Synonyms and positive face enhancement*

The higher prevalence of synonyms in Vietnamese (39.47%) relative to American English (21.62%) is the most notable quantitative finding of this study. This pattern is consistent with predictions derived from high power distance and positive face theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Hofstede, 2001): In the Vietnamese social context, Sino-Vietnamese register elevation functions as a socially obligatory act encoding hierarchical propriety rather than a deliberate stylistic choice — a tendency observed even in informal peer interactions. This finding extends Andreeva's (2022) characterization of Vietnamese euphemism as a linguo-cultural phenomenon to a cross-linguistic comparison, and is consistent with Zhang's (2025) observation on the dignifying function of euphemisms in collectivist societies.

American English lexical substitutions operate through clinical abstraction rather than register elevation, reducing the emotional charge of a taboo referent without invoking hierarchical obligation or communal scripts. This is consistent with low power distance and individualistic cultural values (Hofstede, 2001) and with Richardson and Smith's (2007) characterization of American communication as message-centred and propositionally transparent. Vietnamese synonyms tend to perform social positioning within the relational hierarchy; American synonyms tend to protect individual face. This difference reflects the collectivist versus individualist cultural logic underlying each language's substitution patterns.

6.2 *Negation and negative face protection*

The higher frequency of negation in American English (13.51% vs. 7.89% in Vietnamese) is consistent with the prediction that low-context, individualistic cultures favour explicit propositional modification as a softening strategy. Negation-based euphemisms conform to the Maxim of Manner (Grice, 1975) while reducing face-threat through morphosyntactic mitigation. This is consistent with Brown and Levinson's (1987) conception of negative politeness as minimizing imposition on the addressee's autonomy rather than flouting Gricean maxims (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

The qualitative analysis indicates that Vietnamese negation, when it does occur, operates through a structurally different mechanism: Rather than asserting individual rights or institutional boundaries, it distributes agency across grammatical layers, framing refusal as situational impossibility rather than personal choice. These patterns are consistent with the lower Vietnamese frequency of negation. In a high-context, collectivist cultural context, face-management prioritizes relational continuity, and indirect strategies achieve this without requiring an explicit negative proposition.

6.3 *Indirect expressions and shared cultural scripts*

Both languages use indirect expression as their dominant strategy, yet this convergence conceals a divergence in mechanism. Vietnamese indirect expressions draw on shared cultural knowledge as a pragmatic resource; American English indirect expressions are constructed to be interpretable without such pre-knowledge — a distinction that aligns with Hall's (1976) high- versus low-context communication framework.

Vietnamese death euphemisms instantiate the conceptual frame DEATH IS A RETURN TO ONE'S ORIGINS, drawing on ancestral and cosmological scripts rooted in ancestor veneration and cyclical cosmology (Pham & Trinh, 2024). Their euphemistic force is collectively accessible without contextual explanation. The corpus also demonstrates a capacity for novel euphemism construction from shared cultural frames — expressions generated in situ from collectively held cultural knowledge rather than retrieved as fixed idioms — a pattern absent from the American English data and consistent with Hall's (1976) characterization of high-context communication as meaning-dense and culturally embedded (Hall,

1976). This capacity for frame-based euphemism generation represents a dimension of cross-cultural difference less visible through frequency analysis alone.

American indirect expressions achieve face-saving through individual state reframing, introducing emotional distance through physical or career-related imagery. Religious expressions invoke denominational belief rather than collectively shared cosmology, operating within voluntary belief communities rather than a universally accessible cultural framework (Hall, 1976).

6.4 *The borderline statistical result*

The non-significant chi-square result ($p = .051$) requires transparent treatment. The directional patterns described above are best understood as theoretically coherent tendencies rather than confirmed statistical effects, most plausibly due to limited statistical power. A post-hoc analysis indicates that detecting an effect of $V = .199$ at $\alpha = .05$ with 80% power would require approximately 400–500 total instances. Nonetheless, the convergence of three independent lines of evidence — the quantitative direction of frequency differences, the theoretically predicted patterns from the integrated framework, and the qualitative analysis — provides grounds for cautious interpretive confidence. The findings are best understood as establishing a research direction rather than a definitive empirical conclusion.

7 Conclusion

This study analysed 350 euphemism instances from Vietnamese and American English audio-visual media to examine cross-cultural differences in euphemistic strategy. Three findings emerge.

First, although the chi-square test did not reach conventional significance ($\chi^2(2) = 5.96$, $p = .051$), the small-to-moderate effect size (Cramer's $V = .199$) and consistent directionality of the data indicate a cross-cultural difference in strategy distribution: Vietnamese relies more heavily on synonyms (39.47% vs. 21.62%), American English on negation (13.51% vs. 7.89%), and indirect expression predominates in both sub-corpora.

Second, the qualitative analysis reveals that frequency differences are accompanied by divergences in the cultural mechanisms underlying each strategy. The Vietnamese data suggest a collective face orientation: Sino-Vietnamese register elevation enacts social positioning, layered negation distributes agency to preserve relational harmony, and indirect expressions activate shared ancestral and cosmological scripts with capacity for novel frame-based euphemism generation. The American English data suggest an individual face orientation: Synonyms provide clinical abstraction, negation asserts personal or institutional boundaries with propositional transparency, and indirect expressions reframe individual states through conventionalized expressions accessible without cultural pre-knowledge.

Third, formal similarity masks mechanistic divergence. Both languages deploy metaphor extensively, but Vietnamese metaphors derive euphemistic force from collectively shared cosmological frameworks, while American English equivalents rely on propositionally self-contained expressions. This distinction is not recoverable through frequency analysis alone.

Theoretically, this study extends contrastive euphemism research to the Vietnamese–American English pairing, documents the capacity of shared cultural knowledge to enable novel euphemistic constructions in high-context communication, a qualitative dimension of cross-cultural difference consistent with Hall's (1976) framework (Hall, 1976). Together with Gricean maxims it establishes that negation-based euphemisms operate as maxim-compliant face strategies rather than instances of maxim-flouting (Grice, 1975). Practically, the findings suggest that euphemistic competence requires cultural literacy including knowledge of the face concerns, power relations and shared scripts motivating linguistic choice, rather than vocabulary knowledge alone. For translators and intercultural communicators, awareness of collective versus individual face orientations is relevant for producing culturally grounded rather than formally equivalent renditions.

Several limitations of the present study should be acknowledged. First, the corpus of 350 instances, while sufficient for exploratory mixed-methods analysis, is modestly underpowered for chi-square testing

at the anticipated effect size, as confirmed by the a priori power analysis reported in Section 4.1; the borderline result ($p = .051$) should therefore be treated as provisional. Second, the audio-visual media corpus encompassing films, television dramas, online vlogs, and news broadcasts may not represent the full range of euphemistic practices in everyday spoken or written Vietnamese and American English; the findings are best understood as reflecting euphemistic conventions within mediated communicative contexts. Third, while register diversity was treated as a design strength to maximize variation, register itself remains an uncontrolled variable; future studies should employ register-stratified sub-corpora to isolate cultural from register-based effects. Fourth, the study focuses on synchronic distributional patterns and cannot speak to diachronic change. Future research should address these limitations by: (a) expanding corpus size to 450 or more instances to achieve adequate statistical power; (b) comparing euphemistic production in naturalistic spoken corpora alongside mediated data; (c) examining whether Vietnamese euphemistic norms, particularly the capacity for frame-based euphemism generation documented in this study, are shifting under sustained exposure to low-context, individualistic media; and (d) extending the Vietnamese–American English comparison to written genres, where the social dynamics of face-management may differ from spoken dialogue.

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