

Euphemism Urgency in Multicultural Education of Indonesian Schools in Malaysia

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Abstract: This article aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the significance of euphemism in multicultural education in Indonesian schools in Malaysia. A qualitative method employing a case study approach was used in this study. The findings highlight the incorporation of euphemism in multicultural education through teaching materials and spoken learning strategies. The imperative lies in establishing an inclusive educational community that embraces differences and fostering mutual respect within the school community through the use of subtle language. By integrating euphemisms into multicultural education, this article underscores the necessity of creating an educational community that prioritizes not only academic achievements, but also the development of character values that appreciate cultural diversity. Therefore, the adoption of a refined language has emerged as a pivotal factor in establishing an inclusive Indonesian school community, laying a robust foundation for understanding, tolerance, and mutual respect within the Malaysian context.

Keywords: euphemism, multicultural education, Indonesian schools in Malaysia

Introduction

Indonesian schools have emerged in Malaysia as platforms to facilitate access to education for children with Indonesian citizenship. The Indonesian government, with a focus on preserving cultural identity, endeavors to provide equitable education for Indonesian children residing in Malaysia. These schools, operating based on the Indonesian national education system, offer education ranging from kindergarten (TK) to high schools (SMA). Indonesian schools also serve as a crucial platform for nurturing nationalism among the offspring of Indonesian citizens abroad (Fitriati et al., 2014).

Primary Indonesian schools in Malaysia are categorized into two institutions: the Kuala Lumpur Indonesian School (Yuliani, 2023; Luthfiyana, 2022) and the Kota Kinabalu Indonesian School (Masturoh & Ridlo, 2020; Sari & Waluyo, 2021). Furthermore, the Indonesian government has established Community Learning

Centers (CLC) for teaching and learning activities throughout various regions in Malaysia to extend educational outreach to more Indonesian children (Jatmika, 2023).

Indonesian schools in Malaysia exhibit distinctive characteristics compared to their Indonesian counterparts. The student body comprises the children of Indonesian migrant workers who hail from diverse regions within Indonesia. A significant proportion of these students were born and raised in Malaysia, leading them to acquire substantial social, cultural, and linguistic knowledge specific to Malaysia (Dikdas, 2021). The central concern addressed in this article is the question of what the problem is. Notably, children of Indonesian migrant workers enrolled as students in Indonesian schools in Malaysia often grapple with a limited understanding of the Indonesian language and culture. This issue underscores the necessity for multicultural education, which can facilitate students'

comprehension of linguistic and cultural diversity, thereby preventing conflicts in their daily lives.

The multicultural education presented in this paper revolves around euphemism-based education. Euphemism involves the utilization of milder or more delicate words or expressions to substitute harsh, contentious, or more direct language. This linguistic concept is frequently employed in communication to alleviate the tension, discomfort, or unkindness that may arise from the use of more assertive words. Euphemisms have applications in various contexts, including everyday conversations, literature, politics, and diverse fields (Allan and Burrige, 1991).

Multicultural education has found extensive application across various countries, such as the monolingual ideology inherent in South Korean multicultural education (Jang, 2023), multicultural education within the framework of teacher education laws in Norway (Benediktsson, 2022), school-based multicultural education curriculum in China (Wang & Gao, 2023), multicultural education practices in Arabia (Masry-Herzallah & Amzalag, 2021), multicultural education within teacher education in Israel (Paul-Binyamin & Haj-Yehia, 2019), empowerment pedagogy and critical multicultural education in African American schools (Wiggin & Watson-Vandiver, 2019), and the personification of multicultural education in Russia (Gabdulchakov, 2014). To the best of our knowledge, there seems to be a gap in research specifically addressing the implementation of multicultural education in Indonesian schools in Malaysia. Prior studies have provided a broad overview acknowledging the great potential of multicultural education in a pluralistic society. However, a comprehensive analysis exploring the imperative of employing euphemisms in the context of multicultural education in Indonesian schools in Malaysia appears to be lacking.

This study endeavors to bridge the existing research gap by delving into the significance of employing euphemisms in the realm of multicultural education within the school environment. Euphemisms, serving as a communicative tool to substitute words that might be perceived as impolite or inappropriate, can prove highly valuable in fostering harmonious

dialogue and mutual understanding among students from diverse cultural backgrounds in Indonesian schools in Malaysia. The objective of this study is to elucidate the critical role of euphemisms in constructing inclusive relationships and mitigating potential conflicts arising from cultural differences. This study discusses the urgency of euphemisms in multicultural education, focusing on two key aspects: (1) the imperative of incorporating euphemisms in teaching materials and (2) the urgency of integrating euphemisms into learning strategies.

Materials and Methods

This study employs a qualitative method with a case study approach to comprehensively investigate the conditions of schools in Indonesia within the realm of multicultural education and explore the imperative role of euphemisms in this educational context. The selection of the case study approach aligns seamlessly with the research focus, aiming to depict the intricate landscape of Indonesian schools and delving into the urgency of incorporating euphemisms in multicultural education. This method facilitates a nuanced understanding of the potential obstacles to implementing multicultural education and seeks to propose viable solutions. The case study approach enables researchers to delve into detailed and in-depth information through meticulous observation. These observations transpired organically during on-site and online visits to the selected schools, namely Kuala Lumpur Indonesian School and Kota Kinabalu Indonesian School. Additionally, qualitative methods will be employed to gain a profound understanding of the urgency of euphemism within the context of multicultural education. Through the analysis of qualitative data, the researchers aimed to unravel the dynamics of how euphemisms are either employed or avoided in diverse multicultural educational settings and explore their impact on intercultural communication and understanding within the school environment. By intertwining qualitative methods with a case study approach, this research makes a valuable contribution to the

comprehension of multicultural education in Indonesia and the pivotal role played by euphemisms. Beyond that, the study aims to offer insights into the potential challenges encountered in implementing multicultural education within Indonesian schools and strives to present pragmatic solutions to overcome these challenges.

Results and Discussion

Through observations at the Kuala Lumpur Indonesian School, Kota Kinabalu Indonesian School, and the Community Learning Center (CLC) in Malaysia, the author has unearthed compelling insights pertaining to educational practices within these Indonesian schools. First, it was noted that the curriculum and instructional materials were aligned with those utilized in Indonesia. Second, the teaching staff comprised development and tutor teachers. The guidance teachers, directly appointed by the Indonesian Ministry of Education, are complemented by local tutor teachers who exclusively teach at the Teaching and Learning Activity Center or the Community Learning Center.

It can be asserted that the educational approach to Indonesian schools in Malaysia has not fully embraced a multicultural education framework. While adhering to Indonesia's established educational patterns is not inherently problematic, introducing educational diversity for Indonesian children in Malaysia would be beneficial, enriching their learning experiences in multicultural settings. By integrating a multicultural approach into the learning context, Indonesian Schools in Malaysia can evolve into educational platforms that not only foster academic intelligence, but also instill a profound understanding of the intricate and diverse world surrounding them. Consequently, the author advocates the implementation of multicultural education based on euphemism within Indonesian Schools in Malaysia.

Can Euphemisms Find a Place in Multicultural Education?

Euphemist practices can indeed be incorporated into the learning environment of Indonesian

schools in Malaysia as part of multicultural education. Multicultural education within Indonesian schools in Malaysia extends beyond teaching cultural diversity; it encompasses euphemist practices as an integral element of the learning process. In this context, the utilization of euphemism has emerged as a potent tool for establishing a learning environment characterized by profound respect for cultural differences. Teachers can employ softer, more affirmative languages to convey concepts related to cultural diversity, thereby mitigating the potential for conflict or discomfort among students.

The use of euphemisms contributes to cultivating a mindset that is more open and attuned to diversity, fostering an atmosphere in which every student feels esteemed regardless of their cultural background. This practice of euphemism extends beyond the language used in teaching; it also involves communication strategies that support cross-cultural understanding and nurture interpersonal skills that are crucial in our increasingly global society. Consequently, euphemism-based multicultural education not only molds students who are more empathetic and accepting of diversity but also nurtures individuals capable of effective communication in our progressively complex global context.

The integration of euphemisms within the realm of multicultural education is an essential component of efforts to materialize the concept of inclusive education. Multicultural education transcends the imparting of academic knowledge and actively promotes mutual respect for differences among students. Values such as tolerance, mutual respect, and the cultivation of mutual understanding are central to the learning process. Beyond merely understanding ethnic, racial, cultural, and religious diversity, multicultural education embraces openness as its foundation. In the curriculum, the amalgamation of multicultural education with other subjects is a crucial step toward creating a holistic learning environment and ensuring profound comprehension of the intricacies of societal diversity (Aakhiruddin, 2021).

The author proposes the integration of euphemism into multicultural education for Indonesian schools in Malaysia, focusing on two key aspects:

1) Euphemism in Teaching Materials

Euphemism can be seamlessly incorporated into the teaching materials of Indonesian schools in Malaysia. A creative infusion of euphemisms into educational resources serves as an effective means of imparting lessons on language diversity and meaning. This approach allows euphemism to play a role in discussions addressing sensitive or taboo issues related to the cultural diversity of Indonesia, Malaysia, and other nations. Moreover, euphemisms can serve as engaging elements in vocabulary acquisition. By introducing euphemisms into teaching materials, students not only broaden their vocabulary, but also acquire a profound understanding of the nuanced selection of words for subtle communication of meaning. For instance, euphemistic contexts may involve the use of words or phrases to replace direct expressions that may come across as impolite or rude. Equipped with vocabulary inclusive of euphemisms, students are better equipped to communicate with sensitivity in everyday situations, fostering the development of more sophisticated language skills. Prior research has demonstrated the feasibility of incorporating additional elements into teaching materials to support multicultural education (Azkiya et al. 2022; Kamil et al. 2022).

2) Euphemism Integrated Into Speaking Skills

Euphemisms have proven to be a highly effective communication strategy for students across diverse contexts. First, they uphold honor and sensitivity by conveying messages or information that might be perceived as unpleasant or sensitive in a more nuanced manner. This not only preserves honor but also diminishes the potential for conflict or discomfort. Second, euphemisms function as a means of

sidestep discomfort or conflicts. In social and professional settings, they are frequently employed to steer clear of potential discomfort or conflict arising from the use of overly sharp or direct language. Third, euphemisms facilitate empathetic communication, contributing to the creation of a warmer and better understanding of the communication atmosphere. Their usage reflects a consideration of others' feelings, fostering a space for open dialogue. Finally, euphemism plays a role in delivering unfavorable news. When conveying bad news, euphemisms soften the emotional impact, rendering the message palatable. Employing euphemisms as part of a language skills strategy aligns with Puspidalia's (2018) research, which emphasizes the importance of politeness. In communication, language users frequently resort to euphemisms to respect other parties and avoid communication taboos because euphemisms generally carry multiple associative meanings. Even in language activities, individuals need to be mindful of the politeness aspects to minimize misunderstandings and ensure that communication partners feel at ease and comfort.

What Drives the Imperative of Euphemisms in Multicultural Education?

The incorporation of euphemism into the framework of multicultural education for Indonesian schools in Malaysia is driven by the urgent need to foster an inclusive and respectful learning environment. Considering the multicultural context of Indonesian schools in Malaysia, the application of a more subtle and sensitive language allows students to cultivate positive dialogue among diverse cultures coexisting in the school environment. Choosing soft and polite words with a focus on respecting diversity enables students to circumvent potential conflicts or discomfort stemming from variations in cultural backgrounds and values. Furthermore, euphemism plays a pivotal role in establishing a

better understanding between students and teachers, creating an environment conducive to the exchange of ideas and experiences. Consequently, a profound understanding of the urgency of euphemisms can serve as the foundation for constructing an inclusive educational community that upholds differences and nurtures mutual respect between students and educational staff.

The significance of euphemism in multicultural education within Indonesian schools in Malaysia aligns with the essence of euphemism itself. Rooted in Greek, euphemism translates to 'Wellspeaking,' signifying the practice of using language that sidesteps rudeness, taboo, impoliteness, and instead engages in pleasant, polite, and gentle discussions. Euphemisms are crafted to foster a positive communication image that is intricately linked to social karma (Khairani, 2023; Fatahilah, 2023). The use of euphemisms holds particular importance in daily life, especially in language usage, as many individuals may struggle to discern the boundaries between languages considered soft or rude, particularly among children who might inadvertently use impolite language towards their parents and others. The adoption of euphemisms helps to designate certain words as taboo or harsh (Winata & Nasihin, 2023; Puspitasari et al., 2019). Euphemisms serve multiple functions, including protective euphemisms that shield and prevent offense; cunning euphemisms designed to perplex and mislead; enthusiastic euphemisms that incite passion and exaggeration; provocative euphemisms expressing ideas and inspiring; cohesive euphemisms demonstrating solidarity and helping define groups; and ludicrous euphemisms intended for enjoyment and entertainment (Burridge, 2012).

Integrating euphemism into multicultural education within Indonesian schools in Malaysia is imperative, aligning with the enhancement of interpersonal skills. One crucial interpersonal skill contributing to multicultural competence is the ability to partake in constructive discussions with individuals with divergent perspectives (Borge, 2022). Notably, multicultural education extends beyond linguistic considerations, intertwining various facets, including culture (Tien, 2023). Moreover, multicultural education plays a pivotal

role in enhancing students' comprehension of the intricate dynamics within diverse cultures, encompassing the intersectionality of race, gender, class, and exclusion. This multifaceted approach aims to emancipate students from oppressive structures prevalent in society.

Conclusions

Indonesian schools in Malaysia require enhancements in the realm of multicultural education, particularly given the inherently multicultural context of the educational setting. These schools ought to take proactive measures to enhance multicultural education by developing a more inclusive curriculum, facilitating interactions among students from diverse cultural backgrounds, and integrating euphemism to cultivate a tolerant learning atmosphere. Consequently, the author introduced the concept of euphemism-based multicultural education, which can be integrated into two key facets: teaching materials and speaking skills. The urgency of incorporating euphemisms in multicultural education serves as a foundational element in constructing an inclusive educational community, fostering respect for differences, and nurturing mutual respect within the school community through subtle nuances of language. Through the prioritization of multicultural education, Indonesian schools in Malaysia have the potential to emerge as pioneers in nurturing a generation that not only excels academically, but also possesses a profound understanding and respect for cultural differences.

It is crucial to note that this study does not aim for generalization, but endeavors to provide a broad overview of the imperative of euphemism in multicultural education within Indonesian schools in Malaysia. Consequently, the author encourages other researchers to explore and develop multicultural education based on euphemisms and other aspects to support Indonesian schools in Malaysia. As an initial step, this study underscores the urgency of integrating euphemisms as a fundamental element in creating an inclusive learning environment attuned to cultural diversity.

However, the author acknowledges the existence of numerous other facets of multicultural education that necessitate further exploration and development. Therefore, recommendations have been extended to reviewers and researchers to broaden the scope of the study to encompass various dimensions. The aspiration is that these collective efforts will establish a more comprehensive and effective foundation for the advancement of multicultural education in Indonesian schools in Malaysia, fostering a learning atmosphere that champions an understanding, tolerance, and respect for cultural differences.

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