A Pragmatic Study of Euphemisms in A Dream of Red Mansions with a Rapport Management Approach: Cultural Independence and Interdependence

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Abstract

As a social and cultural phenomenon, euphemism helps lubricate interpersonal relations and maintain the face of interactants. So euphemism relates closely to face and politeness. Built upon notions of face and politeness, Helen Spencer-Oatey's rapport management (2000) is a theoretical framework for interpersonal relations with face and rights as core components. As facework is typically Chinese conflict-preventive mechanism, the theoretical foundation and core components of rapport management happen to be in concert with Chinese attachment to interpersonal relations and face. As a world-famous classical literary masterpiece, *A Dream of Red Mansions* unfolds a panoramic picture of a highly ritualized and strictly hierarchical feudal society, highlighting the role the traditional Chinese idea of 'harmony and integrity' assumes in interpersonal relations. The complexity of the social and familial relations in the novel lends abundant resources to the study of euphemisms. The present research takes Spencer-Oatey's rapport management as theoretical framework and investigates euphemisms in the character utterances of the novel. Considering the complexity and rigidity of social and familial hierarchy, the study takes power as a major variable. The study has implications in that it has proved a new western theory's capability in governing and explaining the use of euphemisms in a classical eastern novel, which significantly indicates its possible application to the pragmatic analysis of other texts in both English and Chinese languages. Culture, carried and reflected by language, has remained both national and international. A perfect combination of cultural independence and interdependence is what the world is glad to embrace.

Keywords: Euphemism: A Dream Of Red Mansions; Rapport Management; Culture

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Every language has a dual function of transferring information and managing social relations. Basically there are two ways of communicating: literal and indirect. In Blakemore's (1992) words, "Whenever a speaker communicates he must make a decision as to what he chooses to make explicit and what he chooses to leave implicit" (7). Although literalness costs the least linguistic effort, Sperber and Wilson (1986) argue literalness is not necessarily the most communicatively efficient way of saying something. Instead, indirectness is alternatively desirable and efficient in interaction.

Euphemism is characterized with linguistic indirectness. Owing to its relatedness to face and facework euphemism is a communicative strategy in interpersonal relations. Allan and Burridge (1991) put, "A euphemism is used as an alternative to a dispreferred expression, in order to avoid possible loss of face" (18). So euphemism is deemed an effective way of protecting face and managing identity.

Furthermore, euphemism is related to politeness. The primary concern of politeness is the care of face. And the care of face entails language as a means of communication. Leech (1983) believes "If we want to explain why many speakers prefer to use euphemistic words or phrases to substitute for those unpleasant ones in their interpersonal communication or to express their meanings in a roundabout way, the reason is for politeness" (46). So euphemism linguistically actualizes politeness.

The study of face, facework and politeness has been conducted in pragmatics and cross-culture communication. Some specialists like Brown and Levinson (1978) intend their face theory to be universal in interpreting human interactions. Other researchers attach importance to culture specificity and account for human interactions in terms of cultural peculiarities (Matsumoto, 1988; Ting-Toomey, 1988; Gu, 1990; Zhan, 1992; Chang & Holt, 1994; Cupach & Metts, 1994; Penman, 1994; Scollon & Scollon, 1994; Ting-Toomey & Cocroft, 1994; Tracey & Baratz, 1994). Still some scholars take strong interest in Chinese concept of face and work at a theory or principle characteristic of and well-grounded in Chinese culture (Hu, 1944; Ho, 1976; Cheng, 1986; Chang & Holt, 1994).

As for the applicability of Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness or face theory to the Oriental culture, critiques are not few. One criticism is it is a highly rational model rather than a relational one (Matsumoto, 1988; Ting-Toomey, 1988; Gu, 1990; Chang & Holt, 1994; Penman, 1994). Ting-Toomey (1988) argues Brown and Levinson's theory conceptualizes 'positive face' and 'negative face' from the individualistic culture framework. Matsumoto (1988) criticizes the theory in that the negative face want of preservation of individual territories seems alien to Japanese. Gu Yueguo (1990) holds the model does not apply to the Chinese social interaction. Penman (1994) points out both the negative face and the positive face are self-oriented. Chang and Holt (1994) find the Western understanding of facework is a reflection of "the dominant individualistic characteristics of Western cultures. This can be contrasted with the Chinese conception of *mianzi* which places more emphasis on the nature of the relationship (126)".

Another question is raised over its neglect of social identity. Therefore, Brown and Levinson's conceptualization of face is accepted with reservations. Matsumoto (1988), Ide (1989) and Mao (1994) argue for the importance of social identity as a concept, especially in Japanese and Chinese societies. Gu Yueguo (1998) argues it is not that concerns about autonomy, imposition and so on do not exist in Eastern cultures, but rather that they are not regarded as face concerns (qtd. Spencer-Oatey, 2007: 13).

Taking all these arguments into consideration, Helen Spencer-Oatey (2000, 2007) proposes a framework for the conceptualization of face and rapport. She maintains "Brown and Levinson's (1987) conceptualization of positive face has been underspecified, and that the concerns they identify as negative face issues are not necessarily face concerns at all" (13). She proposes that rapport management involve two main components: the management of face and the management of sociality rights.

1.2 Objectives

Guided by Helen Spencer-Oatey's theory, the present study purports to focus on cultural independence and interdependence by investigating euphemisms in the character utterances of *A Dream of Red Mansions*. The study is intended to achieve the following goals:

1) Based on such related notions and principles as indirectness, Goffman's notion of face, Brown and Levinson's face theory, and Gu Yueguo's PP, the necessity and possibility of applying the theory of rapport management to the present research will be put under discussion. The theory's salient emphasis on the 'socialness' of 'face' and 'rights' will merit adequate attention.

2) The study is going to examine the cultural independence and interdependence on the basis of the euphemism. If the theory of rapport management is applicable to a context that is linguistically, culturally, socially and psychologically Chinese, its controlling force and explanatory power will hold water.

1.3 Methodology

A qualitative method is mainly adopted in the demonstration analysis. To facilitate the study, comparison, contrast, illustration, categorization, induction and discussion are supplementary methods.

1.4 Collection of Euphemisms

The study takes as its first-hand source of euphemisms the first eighty chapters (allegedly composed by Cao Xueqin) of *A Dream of Red Mansions* in a Chinese-English format, published by the Foreign Language Press and Hunan People's Publishing House (1999). The English version is provided by the Yangs. Although it is a problem that the English version does not remain an absolute counterpart to the Chinese version, it does not affect the final result of the study.

Generally, the euphemisms can be classified into conventional and situational ones. Conventional euphemisms are standard expression and relatively stable. The

collection and processing of the conventional euphemisms basically follow *A Dictionary of Chinese Euphemisms* compiled by Zhang Gonggui (1996). It is acclaimed as the first dictionary with over 3,000 Chinese euphemisms. Situational euphemisms are not socially conventionalized as they are context-dependent. Some secondary written examples are referred to from sources such as publications, periodicals and PhD dissertations. Samples are provided in both Chinese and English.

2. Fundamentals revisited

Euphemism is associated with face, facework and politeness. The following is a retrospect of face, facework, Brown and Levinson's face theory, and Gu Yueguo's PP.

2.1 Face

People tend to use communicative messages for preserving each other's image or identity. Diachronic study shows 'face' has its origin in Chinese culture. In Thomas' (1995) words, "The term 'face' in the sense of 'reputation' or 'good name' seems to have been first used in English in 1876 as a translation of the Chinese term 'diulian' (丢脸)" (168), meaning 'losing face'.

In Chinese culture 'face' is assumed vulnerable and held dear. As Hu (1944) notices, 'face' connotes two meanings in Chinese context: *mianzi* and *lian*. Here *mianzi* "is a reputation achieved through getting on in life, through success and ostentation" (45). On the other hand, *lian* indicates one's basic moral worth and good quality. So the double-faced 'face' has two opposing but correlated aspects: *mianzi* that is social and *lian* that is personal.

In Goffman's (1972) work on social interaction and facework he takes 'face' as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact" (5).

2.2 Facework

Goffman (1972) defines facework as "the actions taken by a person to make whatever he is doing consistent with face" (5). Taking 'face' as a notion of situated identities, Tracy and Coupland (1990) refer to facework as a set of "communicative strategies that are the enactment, support, or challenge of those situated identities" (210). So facework is the management of identity.

2.3 Brown and Levinson's Face Theory

Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness is identified as the 'face-saving' theory of politeness, for it is built upon Goffman's (1967) notions of face. In their theory every individual has 'face', which is "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" (61). Face is classified into two types: positive and negative. Positive face is one's desire that his/her wants be appreciated and approved of in social interaction, whereas negative face is the desire for freedom of action and freedom from imposition.

2.4 Gu Yueguo's Politeness Principle

Goffman's notion of face and facework is self-directed, so is Brown and Levinson's face theory. Therefore, when it comes to the Chinese culture characterized with collectivism, there's still more to be done. Gu Yueguo postulates politeness principle in Chinese culture, which translates into five maxims: the Self-denigration maxim, the Address-term maxim, the Refinement maxim, the Agreement maxim and the Virtues-words-deeds Maxim (Gu, 1992: 11-14).

2.5 Euphemism

Despite a variety of definitions of euphemism from dictionaries and scholars, the present researcher quite agrees with Shao Junhang (2007) over his definition of euphemism: "Euphemism is the non-direct expressions or utterances for the things which bring information organizer and interpreter pains such as reverence, fear, shame, discomfort, etc. and which is formed by using phonetic, semantic and grammatical methods" (ix). This definition merits attention for its coverage of all the context-related factors that euphemism involves: the context in its broad sense and narrow sense, including topics and talking parties, target, formational devices, accompanying character and motivation.

3. *A Dream of Red Mansions*

As a masterpiece of Chinese literature, *A Dream of Red Mansions* (*DRM* for short) claims a pinnacle of classical novels. The first eighty chapters of the novel were allegedly composed by Cao Xueqin in the mid-18th century. The novel teems with a multitude of characters. There are 774 named characters (Feng Qiyong, 2008: 28), of whom nearly 30 are main ones. The intricate social network and officialdom, intriguing social and cultural norms, entwined family relationships as well as distinctive personality and characteristic language of all the characters boast rich resources for studies from various perspectives.

Literature review evidences an inadequacy of systematic investigation on euphemisms in the character utterances. And such attempt has never been made in light of Spencer-Oatey's theory of rapport management. Now the research aims at a tentative study of the euphemisms in the novel within the theoretical framework of Spencer-Oatey's rapport management.

4. Rapport Management

Spencer-Oatey proposes 'rapport management' over 'face management' owing to the fact that "'face' seems to focus on concerns for self, whereas rapport management suggests more of a balance between self and other" (ibid. 12).

4.1 Quality Face and Identity Face

By quality face, Spencer-Oatey means "We have a fundamental desire for people to evaluate us positively in terms of our personal qualities, e.g. our competence, abilities, appearance, etc." (ibid. 14). By identity face, Spencer-Oatey means "We have a fundamental desire for people to acknowledge and uphold our social identities or roles, e.g. as group leader, valued customer, close friend" (ibid.14). In essence quality face is personal yet identity face social.

4.2 Equity Rights and Association Rights

Equity rights are personal yet association rights social. By equity rights, Spencer-Oatey means "We have a fundamental belief that we are entitled to personal consideration from others, so that we are treated fairly: that we are not unduly imposed upon, that we are not unfairly ordered about, and that we are not taken advantage of or exploited" (ibid. 14). By association rights, Spencer-Oatey means "We have a fundamental belief that we are entitled to an association with others that is in keeping with the type of relationship that we have with them" (ibid. 14).

In conclusion, the management of face and sociality rights has both a personal component and a social component. Therefore, this framework is distinct from Brown and Levinson's (1987) face theory in two ways. On the one hand, Brown and Levinson's model remains personal or individualistic whereas Spencer-Oatey's theory of rapport management is inclusive of the social or relational properties of face. On the other hand, her theory "draws a distinction between face needs (where one's sense of personal/social value is at stake), and sociality rights (where one's sense of personal /social entitlements is at stake)" (ibid. 15). So Brown and Levinson's identification of 'negative face' is not a face want in Spencer-Oatey's rapport but coincides with what she terms as sociality rights.

Table 1 Components of rapport management (Spencer-Oatey, 2007: 15)

	face management (personal/social value)	sociality rights management (personal/social entitlements)
personal/independent perspective	quality face (cf. Brown and Levinson's positive face)	equity rights (cf. Brown and Levinson's negative face)
social/interdependent perspective	identity face	association rights

Spencer-Oatey specifies rapport orientation into four types: rapport-enhancement orientation, rapport-maintenance orientation, rapport-neglect orientation and rapport-challenge orientation. A second set of factors are a number of contextual variables: "participant relations, message content, rights and obligations, and communicative activity" (ibid. 31). A third set of factors are social/interactional roles. Considering the complexity and rigidity of social and familial hierarchy, the study takes power as its major variable. Other influencing factors are analyzed comprehensively with power.

Table 2 Influencing factors

Interactional roles	
Rapport orientation	
Message content	
Communicative activity	
Cost-benefit consideration	

The management of face and rights are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 The management of face and rights

Interactional roles		Face Management		Sociality Rights Management	
Euphemisms		Quality face (personal/ independent perspective)	Identity face (social /interdependent perspective)	Equity rights (personal /independent perspective)	Association rights (social /interdependent perspective)
Conventional euphemisms	Situational euphemisms				

5. Demonstration Analysis

5.1 Power

According to Spencer-Oatey (2007), power has a number of other different labels: "social power, status, dominance, authority" (32). In essence, power means unequal relationship. Social psychologists French and Raven (1959) have identified five forms of power: coercive power, reward power, legitimate power, referent power and expert power.

5.2 Related Characters at a Glance

A Dream of Red Mansion charts two branches of the Jia clan: the Rongguo House and the Ningguo House, which adjacently stand in grandeur and splendor in the capital. Jia Yan and Jia Yuan, ancestors of the two houses, win the royal favour and are made dukes respectively. The Lady Dowager is wedded to Jia Daishan, son of Duke of Rongguo, and gives birth to three children: Jia She, Jia Zheng and Jia Min. The Rongguo House is a growing family. Jia Baoyu, son of Jia Zheng and Lady Wang, is one of the protagonists of the novel. Jia Yuanchun, granddaughter of the Lady Dowager and Jia Baoyu's elder sister, is made Imperial Consort. Wang Xifeng, Lady Wang's niece, is also Baoyu's cousin-in-law. Some of these characters are related to the following demonstration analysis. They and all other characters are entwined in a network of power relations of various types.

5.3 Social Power Relations

The following example shows how monarchal power precedes familial intimacy. Jia Yuanchun is promoted to be Secretary of the Phoenix Palace. Now her Imperial Visitation to her parents' house is royally granted. She is talking to her grandmother, the Lady Dowager [a most respected person of the house], and inquiring about Baoyu, her younger brother.

5.3.1 Imperial Consort-Subject (Jia Yuanchun-the Lady Dowager)

Example 1:
[贵妃]因问："宝玉为何不进见？"贾母乃启："无谕，外男不敢擅入。(*DRM*, Chap. 18: 484)
Then she [the Imperial Consort] inquired why Baoyu had not come to greet her. The Lady Dowager explained that, unless specially summoned, as a young man without official rank he dared not presume. (*DRM*, Chap. 18: 485)

All the influencing factors are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Specification of all the influencing factors

Interactional roles	Imperial Consort-Subject (Jia Yuanchun -the Lady Dowager)
Rapport orientation	The Lady Dowager's rapport enhancement/maintenance with Jia Yuanchun
Message content	The reason for Baoyu's absence
Communicative activity	Answering the Imperial Consort's question
Cost-benefit consideration	Making the reply most beneficial to the Imperial Consort

The nature of the Imperial Consort-subject relations predetermines the nature of the Lady Dowager's utterances as a type of rapport-enhancement or rapport-maintenance orientation. The message content is about why Baoyu is present to greet the Imperial Consort. The communicative activity is for the Lady Dowager to answer the Imperial Consort's question in a most respectful way. As regards the cost-benefit consideration, the Lady Dowager must also make her reply most beneficial to the Imperial Consort. As far as the Lady Dowager, Yuanchun and Baoyu are concerned, Yuanchun's identity is three-fold: the Imperial Consort, the Lady Dowager's granddaughter, and Baoyu's elder sister. Before Yuanchun is married to the emperor, she's been under the care of the Lady Dowager. Needless to say, they are in very close grandmother-granddaughter relationship. As for Baoyu, her younger brother, she has been caring about him dearly. They are on intimate sister-brother terms. However, on this occasion of Imperial Visitation, even the Lady Dowager is very scrupulous with etiquette and wording. Therefore, first consideration should be given to the Imperial Consort's social status as a royal member. Disregarding the sister-brother relations between Yuanchun and Baoyu, the Lady Dowager refers to Baoyu as '外男', which, in this context, is a euphemism that indicates a man other than a member of the royal house. Obviously, the Lady Dowager is trying to maintain Yuanchun's identity face as the Imperial Consort rather than her familial identity as Baoyu's elder sister. In this case, the monarch-subject relations overwhelm kinship and rapport-enhancement or rapport-maintenance orientation is achieved. The management of the Imperial Consort's face by means of euphemism is shown in Table 5.

Table 5 Euphemism used by the Lady Dowager for the Imperial Consort's face

Interactional roles		Face Management		Sociality Rights Management	
the Imperial Consort-Subject (Jia Yuanchun-the Lady Dowager)		Quality face (personal/ independent perspective)	Identity face (social /interdependent perspective)	Equity rights (personal /independent perspective)	Association rights (social /interdependent perspective)
Euphemism					
Conventional euphemism	Situational euphemism				
外男			showing due respect for Jia Yuanchun in terms of her social role as the Imperial Consort		

5.4 Familial Power Relations

The family power relations are further divided into two types: relations between family members and master-servant relations. The following is an example of unequal kinship.

5.4.1 Unequal Kinship

Mother-in-Law-Daughter-in-Law (the Lady Dowager-Lady Wang)
A typical example is an apology euphemistically made by the Lady Dowager to Lady Wang, her daughter-in-law. Jia She (the Lady Dowager's son, Lady Wang's husband) wants to take Yuanyang, the Lady Dowager's maid as his concubine. The news plunges the Lady Dowager into a fit of rage. She blames Lady Wang, who happens to be one of those ladies present but does not venture a word in defence of her own innocence. Now the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law rapport is challenged. Therefore, a certain degree of repair seems necessary. So after the Lady Dowager is made to see her own mistake, she decides to apologize to Lady Wang, but "in a most roundabout and complicated way" (Lan Chun & Zhao Yun, 2010: 82).

Example 2:
贾母笑道："可是我老糊涂了！姨太太别笑话我。你这个姐姐他极孝顺我，不像我那大太太一味怕老爷，婆婆跟前不过应景儿。可是委屈了他。"薛姨妈只答应"是"，又说："老太太偏心，多疼小儿子媳妇，也是有的。"贾母道："不偏心！"因又说道："宝玉，我错怪了你娘，你怎么也不提我，看着你娘受委屈？"宝玉笑道："我偏着娘说大爷大娘不成？通共一个不是，我娘在这里不认，却推谁去？我倒要认是我的不是，老太太又不信。"贾母笑道："这也有理。你快给你娘跪下，你说太太别委屈了，老太太有年纪了，看着宝玉罢。"宝玉听了，忙走过去，便跪下要说；王夫人忙笑着拉他起来，说："快起来，快起来，断乎使不得。终不成你替老太太给我赔不是不成？"宝玉听说，忙站起来。贾母又笑道："凤姐儿也不提我。" (*DRM*, Chap. 46: 1314, 1316)

At once the old lady chuckled, "I'm losing my wits with age," she exclaimed. "Don't laugh at me, Madam Xue. This elder sister of yours is a very good daughter-in-law, not like my elder son's wife who's so afraid of her husband she only makes a show of compliance to me. Yes, I was wrong to blame your sister."

Aunt Xue murmured agreement, then added, "I wonder if you're not, perhaps, rather partial to the wife for your younger son, madam?"

"No, I'm not partial," the old lady declared. She continued, "Baoyu, why didn't you point out my mistake and prevent me from blaming your mother so unfairly?"

"How could I stick up for my mother at the expense of my elder uncle and aunt?" he countered. "Anyway, someone's done wrong; and if mother here won't take the blame, who will? I could have said it was *my* fault but I'm sure you wouldn't have believed me."

"Yes, that's right," chuckled the Lady Dowager, "Now kneel to your mother and ask her not to feel hurt, but to forgive me for your sake on account of my old age."

Baoyu stepped forward and knelt to do as he was told, but his mother instantly stopped him.

"Get up," she cried with a smile. "This is absurd. How can you apologize for your grandmother?"

As Baoyu rose to his feet the old lady said, "And Xifeng didn't pull me up either." (*DRM*, Chap. 46: 1315, 1317)

All the influencing factors are shown in the following table.

Table 6 Specification of all the influencing factors

Interactional roles	Mother-in-law-Daughter-in-law (the Lady Dowager-Lady Wang)
Rapport orientation	The Lady Dowager's rapport maintenance with Lady Wang
Message content	The Lady Dowager's apology to Lady Wang
Communicative activity	Apologizing to Lady Wang in a devious way by talking to Aunt Xue, Baoyu and Wang Xifeng
Cost-benefit consideration	Making the message beneficial to Lady Wang and less threatening to herself

Both the message content and the communicative activity are for the Lady Dowager to apologize to Lady Wang, which is certainly threatening to the apologizer (the Lady Dowager herself) and beneficial to the offended (Lady Wang). According to Spencer-Oatey (2007), "Apologies are typically post-event speech acts, in the sense that some kind of offence or violation of social norms has taken place. In other words, people's sociality rights have been infringed in some way" (18). Apologies can be made in private or in public. If the apology is made in public, it may threaten the apologizer's identity face (ibid. 18). However, in Spencer-Oatey's words, "if no apology is forthcoming, this can be rapport-threatening to the offended person" (ibid. 18).

In fact, the Lady Dowager does not have to apologize to Lady Wang because as matriarch, she has an absolute power and say in the family. If she has done wrong, nobody ventures any comment or criticism. But now several factors might contribute to her apology. First of all, in regard to her relationship with her two daughters-in-law, she favors Lady Wang. Then among those present are Madam Xue (Lady Wang's younger sister) and Wang Xifeng (Lady Wang's niece), who are both kin to Lady Wang. Moreover, Baoyu, an apple in the eye of the Lady Dowager, is son of Lady Wang. And a traditional saying goes, "A mother is prized because of her son." So senior as she is, she wants to appear fair and generous.

The Lady Dowager does apologize but not face to face. Instead, she speaks to all the people that are present other than Lady Wang: Madam Xue, Baoyu and Wang Xifeng. If the Lady Dowager apologized to her daughter-in-law directly that would be more face-threatening to herself. Again in Spencer-Oatey's words, "Rapport-management norms seem to be 'number-sensitive', in that what we say and how we say it is often influenced by the number of people present, and whether they are all listening to what we say" (ibid. 35). Hence the Lady Dowager deviously manipulates the apology in a way that is minimally face-threatening to herself.

In her words with Madam Xue, the Lady Dowager uses "我老糊涂了", which more or less threatens her own quality face (sense of personal competence). Then she maintains Lady Wang's quality face by saying "你这个姐姐他极孝顺我" and apologizes again: "可是委屈了他", which is also meant to maintain Lady Wang's quality face (a woman's absolute submission to her mother-in-law without any means

of self-defence, which was deemed one of the fine qualities of women in old times) as well as her association rights in terms of her entitlements to concerns from others.

After that, she pretends to blame Baoyu for not defending her mother: "宝玉，我错怪了你娘，你怎么也不提我，看着你娘受委屈？" This again can be taken as an apology. "我错怪了你娘" threatens the Lady Dowager's quality face (sense of personal competence) but maintains Lady Wang's association rights in terms of her entitlements to concerns from others. Furthermore, she instructs Baoyu to kneel an apology to his mother: "你快给你娘跪下，你说太太别委屈了，老太太有年纪了，看着宝玉罢。"

Then she pretends to scold Wang Xifeng by saying, "凤姐儿也不提我", which is also threatening to her own quality face in terms of her personal competence (poor judgment) and identity face in terms of her authority in the house.

In the whole course of the conversation, the Lady Dowager makes use of quite a number of euphemisms mainly at the syntactical level to protect her own face and rights and repair those of Lady Wang. In their 2010 article, Lan Chun and Zhao Yun observe,

> This devious way of apologizing by the Lady Dowager is attributable to the extremely asymmetrical relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law in feudal China. To her daughter-in-law, mother-in-law claims absolute authority and dignity. Hence, when an apology has to be made by mother-in-law to her daughter-in-law, it seems most embarrassing to both sides (82).

This apology is finally accepted by Lady Wang. That is, the rapport-maintenance outcome successfully complies with rapport-maintenance orientation. The management of Lady Wang's face and rights by means of euphemisms is shown in the table.

Table 7 Euphemisms used by the Lady Dowger for face and rights of Lady Wang

Interactional roles		Face Management		Sociality Rights Management	
Mother-in-law-Daughter-in-law (the Lady Dowager-Lady Wang)		Quality face (personal/ independent perspective)	Identity face (social /interdependent perspective)	Equity rights (personal /independent perspective)	Association rights (social /interdependent perspective)
Euphemisms					
Conventional euphemisms	Situational euphemisms				
	我老糊涂了！	threatening the Lady Dowager's own self-image in terms of her poor judgment; making her remarks most beneficial to Lady Wang in respect of her innocence			
	你这个姐姐他极孝顺我……	commending Lady Wang for			

		being filial and obedient			
	可是委屈了他。	threatening the Lady Dowager's own self-image in terms of her poor judgment; making her remarks most beneficial to Lady Wang in respect of her innocence			maintaining Lady Wang's rights to care and consideration from other people
	宝玉，我错怪了你娘，你怎么也不提我，看着你娘受委屈？	threatening the Lady Dowager's own self-image in terms of her poor judgment; making her remarks most beneficial to Lady Wang in respect of her innocence	threatening the Lady Dowager's own role or credibility in the family		maintaining Lady Wang's rights to care and consideration from other people
	你快给你娘跪下，你说太太别委屈了，老太太有年纪了，看着宝玉罢。	threatening the Lady Dowager's own self-image in terms of her poor judgment; making her remarks most beneficial to Lady Wang in respect of her innocence			maintaining Lady Wang's rights to care and consideration from other people
	凤姐儿也不提我。	threatening the Lady Dowager's own self-image in terms of her poor judgment	threatening the Lady Dowager's own role or credibility in the family		

The demonstration analysis reveals the important role of euphemisms in rapport management. The use of euphemisms in interpersonal communication can also be explicated by the theory of rapport management.

6. Conclusion

The study is brought to conclusion with findings, implications as well as limitations and suggestions.

6.1 Findings

1) The demonstration analysis of euphemisms in concert with Spencer-Oatey's theory proves that euphemisms can effectively help maintain rapport and conversely, Spencer-Oatey's theory of rapport management is applicable to the analysis of euphemisms in the novel. The theory of rapport management has a controlling force and explanatory power over use of euphemisms under study.

2) The salient emphasis on the 'socialness' of 'face' and 'rights' in Spencer-Oatey's theory is well exemplified in the characters' choice of euphemisms. Identity face and association rights are the social components of rapport. In fact, it is found that great importance is attached to these two aspects in the novel. This complies with the Chinese context of collectivism that attaches importance to socialness.

Stressed and upheld in the Chinese context are relations in which people endeavour to maintain each other's face and establish harmonious rapport. Cao Yingzhe (2004) rightly observes,

> Ever since ancient times the Chinese people have been striving, in every aspect of their life, for integrity with nature and have deemed harmony the supreme realm. In interpersonal relations and speech acts, the Chinese people are inclined to achieve and maintain harmonious and integral social relations and create an intimate atmosphere (106).

Spencer-Oatey's rapport management has a nice ring to the traditional Chinese value of rapport, which can be verbally realized.

6.2 Implications

1) Guided by Helen Spencer-Oatey's theory of rapport management, euphemisms in the character utterances of *A Dream of Red Mansions* have been tentatively investigated. It is assumed that the study has both theoretical and practical implications.

2) The study has taken *A Dream of Red Mansions* as its text and analyzed euphemisms in the character utterances of the novel in light of Spencer-Oatey's theory of rapport management. The theory has proved to be capable of governing and interpreting the euphemisms in the character utterances of the novel. It is thus argued that the theory can also be applied to the analysis of other texts in both English and Chinese languages.

6.3 Limitations and Suggestions

The study suffers two major limitations, which call for attention and appeal to improvement.

1) The study has mainly attempted a qualitative approach to the euphemisms. In spite of a large collection of euphemisms from the novel, the research cannot claim to be quantitative. Hence it is desirable that a quantitative approach be simultaneously adopted to work with the qualitative approach in order for a more objective bird's-eye view of the euphemisms.

2) While Spencer-Oatey intends her formulation of rapport management to be universal, she keeps alert to the fact that culture remains specific. In that sense, stress may be put on different components of rapport management so that communicative strategies can be adopted correspondingly. So there is still much room for an in-depth study of cultural independence and interdependence.

Further attempts are encouraged and friendly suggestions are made in the following aspects.

1) The contextual variable 'power' has been taken as a major influencing factor. Now it is suggested that one or more influencing factors other than 'power' in the theory of rapport such as 'distance' be taken as major variables.

2) A joint approach can also be taken of both Spencer-Oatey's theory of rapport management and Gu Yueguo's PP. Spencer-Oatey's theory of rapport is well-grounded in the notions of face and politeness whereas Gu Yueguo's PP is closely based on the Chinese notion of politeness and critical adoption of Leech's maxims of politeness. In that sense, Spencer-Oatey's theory of rapport might be taken as goal-oriented and Gu Yueguo's PP instrumental. The two might be a perfect example of independence and interdependence by cooperating as a combined means-end approach to the euphemisms in *DRM*.

3) Spencer-Oatey's rapport management is theoretically goal-oriented yet void of its own corresponding maxims. Therefore, an attempt seems most worthwhile to complement the theory by formulating a set of maxims in its own right so that a truly means-end model of rapport management might be built with face and rights appropriately managed.

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