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Euphemism Enigma:
Unravelling Euphemism Functions in Understanding the Bidayuh Biatah Cultures in Sarawak

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[*Abstract*]

Euphemism, as a linguistic and cultural phenomenon, serves as a reflection of the values and norms within a specific language community. Understanding the functions of euphemisms provides valuable insights into a culture's belief systems, social structures and historical contexts, shedding light on the intricacies of language, culture and beliefs. This paper explores euphemism functions among the Bidayuh Biatah speakers, utilizing Burridge's (2012) framework of six euphemism functions. Through an in-depth examination of euphemisms, this study aims to elucidate aspects of the Biatah culture. The data was gathered through interviews with eight Biatah informants aged 55 to 79 who are residing Kampung Quop, Padawan, Sarawak in Malaysia. The findings unveiled five euphemism functions within the Biatah dialect: Protective euphemism, Underhand euphemism, Uplifting euphemism, Cohesive euphemism and Ludic euphemism, providing a better understanding of the Bidayuh Biatah language and culture.

Keywords: euphemism, euphemism functions, Bidayuh Biatah, culture, beliefs

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Ⅰ. Introduction

Euphemism is a unique and fascinating linguistic phenomenon. Willis and Klammer (1981: 192) defined euphemism as "a mild or roundabout word or expression used instead of a more direct word or expression to make one's language delicate and inoffensive even to a squeamish person" while Allan and Burridge (1991) defined euphemism as the alternative for a *dispreferred* expression to avoid the possibility of losing face and deleting the bleakness of taboo words. Euphemisms may also be regarded as a cultural phenomenon (Qi 2010) whereby what is deemed taboo and needs euphemistic terms in a particular language and culture may not be so in other languages and cultures. For instance, the term "old" is used in both Chinese and English. While the Western community displays displeasure at being addressed as "old," the Chinese community, on the other hand, does not seem to care too much as the aged are respected in their culture (Qi 2010). Euphemism, which is often too visible in oral communication, reflects the difference in levels of culture and patterns of culture; hence, euphemism acts as a mirror of culture (Hai-Long 2008).

A cultural community shares common values, taboos and practices. Le and Le (2006) mentioned that the extent of taboo avoidance in a language is culture-specific, as taboo is established according to the values and beliefs of a particular cultural community towards certain topics. Burridge (1996) stated that the attitudes of the speakers towards taboo matters such as bodily effluvia, body parts, death, disease, dangerous animals and the supernatural vary immensely between cultures. Even so, these are often the constant parameters that persist in every culture and subculture that encourages euphemism and dysphemism. According to Allan and Burridge (1991), there are nine aspects where euphemisms are most commonly used: bodily parts, gender, sex, anger, hatred, illness, death, fear and referral to gods. Studies conducted utilizing the nine aspects of euphemism identified the presence of each aspect in most languages and communities (Daud, Wahid and Gedat 2017, 2018; Ritos and Daud 2020). Different cultures may view things differently; what is perceived as positive in

a particular culture could be perceived differently in others. Since euphemisms are very much culturally related, studying euphemisms within a particular cultural community may help to provide an understanding of the cultural sensitivities and beliefs of that community.

The cultural community in this study, the Bidayuh of Biatah, is one of the many Bidayuh ethnic groups in Sarawak. Sarawak is said to have about ethnic groups and the Bidayuh is the fourth largest ethnic group in Sarawak, Malaysia, with a population size of 205,900, approximately 8% of the total population in Sarawak (Riget and Campbell 2020; Coluzzi, Riget and Xiaomei 2013; Rensch C. R., Rensch C. M, Noeb and Ridu 2006). The Bidayuh itself, although only accounts for 8% of the total population, has subgroups within itself based on their language variation. Bonggara, Kayad and Campbell (2017) identified six variations of the Bidayuh dialects—Salako, Rara, Bidayuh Bau, Bidayuh Biatah, Tringgus/Sembaan and Bidayuh Serian, and a total of 25 sub dialects according to the areas where the dialects and sub dialects are spoken (Rensch et al. 2012), with the largest number of speakers is the Bidayuh Biatah. Thus, the study focuses on the euphemisms of the Bidayuh Biatah. Its main purpose is to explore the functions of euphemism among the Bidayuh Biatah speakers based on the six functions of euphemism suggested by Burridge (2012). This paper also provides insights into the Bidayuh Biatah culture, which are mirrored through the functions of their euphemism.

Ⅱ. Background

The Bidayuh are believed to be one of the original inhabitants of Sarawak (Geddes 1954; Stall 1940; Roth 1869). Formerly known as “Land Dayak,” to differentiate them from the Ibans, which was known as the “Sea Dayak” (St. John 1863; Payne 1986; Ave and King 1986; Barley 2002; Runciman 1960; Atar, Ansley and Bala 2017), the Bidayuh originally lived in rural areas, usually near flat land areas along the river valley, hillsides and foothills. The term “Bidayuh” is derived from the prefix “*Bi-*“ which means “the people of” and

"Dayuh" in the Bidayuh language means "Land." Therefore, the term "Bidayuh" refers to "the people of the Land."

It is believed that the Bidayuh spread to areas known as the Bidayuh Belt and included districts like Serian, Siburan, Padawan, Samarahan, Kuching, Bau and Lundu after moving from Mount Sungkung in West Kalimantan (Dealwis and David 2007).

The traditional Bidayuh lived in longhouses and were an agricultural community, mainly planting rice and crops, rearing domestic animals as well as hunting for wild animals and crops in the jungle (Coluzzi et al. 2013). Their belief system centered around the old tradition or *adat oma*, which involved the spirit of the rice as well as the spirits of the ancestors and nature (Maginam and Salleh 2017; Minos 2000). Nowadays, most Bidayuh are Christians, and most have moved away from their villages to reside in cities for better career and education opportunities.

The Bidayuh Biatah is one of the major Bidayuh sub groups in Sarawak. They are mainly found in the Padawan and Penrissen area and there are altogether 96 villages (Chang 2002). This study focused on one of the earliest and largest Biatah settlements in Padawan, Kampung Quop, alternatively known as Kampung Kuap. Kampung Quop is the first settlement established by the Bidayuh Biatah of Siburan (Chang 2002). The Bidayuh Biatah speakers residing in Kampung Quop share a common dialect and accent with their counterparts in adjacent settlements like Kampung Duras, Kampung Tijirak and Kampung Seratau. These locations represent significant branches of the Bidayuh Biatah settlement areas, with Kampung Quop as the first and largest settlement, all conversing in the Bidayuh Biatah Siburan dialect. Kampung Quop has a significant population of Bidayuh Biatah speakers, which is 4,490 according to the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) as of 2019. Kampung Quop is located approximately 24.2 km from Kuching City, the capital city of Sarawak. Kampung Quop is located near the 10th Mile Bazaar, with the 10th Mile Bazaar being the nearest town to Kampung Quop, which is at 7.9km away.

Ⅲ. Literature Review

The study of euphemisms has sparked interest among scholars due to its role in communication, namely in addressing matters that are considered sensitive or taboo. Although generally, euphemisms are used to disguise negativity within a language, they serve many different functions according to Burridge (2012). For instance, there are euphemisms that are used to avoid offense, to disguise a topic, to downplay negativity, to uplift, to reveal, to inspire, to show solidarity, as well as those that are used for fun. The functions of the euphemisms may well be revealed by not only the context in which they are used but also the cultural community in which they come from.

Numerous studies conducted on euphemisms relate that culture is indeed reflected in euphemisms as well as the belief system of that particular community. Thus, the study of euphemisms also plays a significant role in understanding cultural and societal norms, values and beliefs.

A majority of studies on euphemisms have focused on the death euphemisms. One example is the study of death euphemisms in EkeGusii language, a Bantu language spoken in the Western part of Kenya (Nyakoe, Matu and Ongarora 2012). Euphemisms are used to talk about death because direct discussion of the deceased is often avoided due to cultural expectations and deviating from these is perceived as disrespectful. Euphemisms in the form of metaphors are used to help the bereaved to accept death with the belief that the deceased is on a journey to heaven, providing consolation to Christians. EkeGusii's euphemisms are seen to prioritize portraying life rather than focusing on death, where death is associated with getting rest from worldly responsibilities. Often death euphemisms are rooted in conceptual metaphors such as “DEATH IS A JOURNEY” and “DEATH AS REST,” carrying religious connotations.

Another study was done on the Nzema and the Akan language and culture of Ghana (Cecilia and John 2019). Direct references to sexual organs using plain terms are discouraged and individuals using such terms are perceived as shameless and amoral. Instead, sexual organs in Nzema and Akan languages are euphemized as

"inside of a man" and "man" respectively, as according to the speakers, one of the qualities of a man is that a man is being connected with his penis; hence, the euphemisms "inside of a man" and "man." Thus, euphemisms were described as "taboo preventers" in these two languages. Another role of euphemisms in these two languages is as a stylistic marker which is mainly to maintain politeness in conversations. For example, instead of using "cripple," the terms that translate into "difficult to walk" is used instead. In this sense, euphemism functions by "clothing," a vulgar language to maintain politeness and not embarrass others.

Studies on euphemisms in Malaysia also show how euphemism serves as a reflection of the socio-cultural values within Malaysian society. A study by Zulkifli et al. (2019) revealed that Malays use euphemisms to express shame, respect and language courtesy. This study shows that language politeness reflects the thoughts and behaviors of speakers influenced by time and space, highlighting the Malay language's role as the official language in developing Malaysian civilization. The connection between euphemism, politeness and etiquette in conversations, which aims to prevent misunderstandings among speakers.

In the context of Sarawak, some research has been conducted in exploring euphemisms in the ethnic languages spoken in Sarawak, such as Sarawak Malay, Iban and Bidayuh. Wahab, Salehuddin, Mis and Abdullah (2016) discussed death euphemisms within the Sarawak Malay community and discovered that euphemisms describing death in Sarawak Malay are shaped by the Malay culture, where soft expressions are employed to convey courtesy and emphasize politeness in communication, influenced by their Islamic beliefs. Daud et al. (2017) focused on euphemism in the Iban language in Kampung Lebor, Serian, and concluded that euphemisms used by the Iban community stem from the influence of customs and beliefs passed down through generations.

These studies showed that euphemism plays a crucial role in communication, where it addresses sensitive topics and understands cultural aspects, highlighting the richness of euphemistic language use across different languages and cultural settings. However, there

remains a noticeable gap in the research concerning the Bidayuh language, where only one study was conducted on the Bidayuh euphemism by Ritos and Daud (2020). Nevertheless, the study specifically focused on Bidayuh Bau, a dialect prevalent among Bidayuh speakers in the Bau area. The study aimed to examine the existence of dysphemism and its replacement with euphemism in oral communication within the Bidayuh community. The findings revealed five categories of replacement, encompassing topics such as referencing limbs, femininity, hygiene, diatribes and matters related to death. Moreover, the study also identified the multifaceted functions of euphemism within the Bidayuh Bau, which is to soften speech, to be respectful and conceal elements perceived as embarrassing or shameful, to respect and comfort others in particular discourse, to protect the feelings of other speakers and to avoid taboos.

Studies were also conducted to identify the functions of euphemism in different languages worldwide, whether spoken or written. Studies on euphemism were widely conducted in different contexts, studying the functions of euphemism in various settings and cultures. Majeed and Mohammed (2018) studied euphemism functions in a newspaper written in Bahdini, a Kurdish dialect spoken in Northern Iraq by the Iranian language group. They discovered that the newspaper in Bahdini contained the highest percentage of Protective euphemisms, while Ludic euphemisms had the lowest percentage. The high percentage of Protective euphemisms is due to the need of the writers to censor themselves from impoliteness, disrespect and offense while attempting to sound more academic in their articles. Sahnaz (2018) analyzed euphemisms used in a TV Series called *Izombie* and revealed that all six functions of euphemism suggested by Burridge (2012) occurred in the scripts and were used by the characters. Although it is well suggested that euphemisms are often used in everyday language and communication, these studies have focused on written language in newspapers and scripts.

Sari (2020) stated that the purpose of euphemism in both spoken and written language is to make hearers and readers feel pleasant and not be embarrassed. However, in written language,

writers tend to use more formal language to express their ideas, thoughts and feelings while choosing more appropriate figurative language to give strong statements and avoid misunderstanding with the readers (Beizaee and Mirza 2016; Sari and Al-Hafizh 2013). Ofoegbu and Okoli (2018) added that written language is often more conservative than spoken form. Meanwhile, spoken language is often used in a freer manner to convey ideas, feelings and thoughts in communication (Beizaee and Mirza 2016). According to Crystal (2002), there are more euphemisms used in spoken English than in written English, as written language does not deal with slang or obscene vocabulary.

A study by Ardhan and Syukri (2018) identified the functions of euphemism that occurred in an election debate by two speakers which concluded that both debaters chose their euphemism styles differently from each other, where the first speaker showed a higher usage of Underhand euphemisms Provocative euphemisms and Cohesive euphemisms while the second speaker shows a higher usage of Provocative and Uplifting euphemisms. Although spoken, debate usually includes writing before and during the debate, especially during speech preparation and note-taking that often occur in an ongoing debate. Different from daily oral communication, a debate is often a structured argumentation where debate topics or themes are set beforehand, and in the case of Ardhan and Syukri's (2018) study, political election debate. Therefore, these studies have shown that context, motivation and intention are the essential determinants of euphemism usage, as Allan and Burridge (1991) stated, regardless of the setting and genre.

The functions of euphemism suggested by Burridge (2012) are utilized by a few studies (Majeed and Mohammed 2018; Sahnaz 2018; Ardhan and Syukri 2018). However, studies on the functions of euphemism used in verbal communications, particularly among indigenous languages and communities, are still lacking. Studies on euphemism, particularly in Asia, often focus on the dominant language or the language of the majority, such as the vast studies on Saudi Arabic euphemism (Al-Azzam, Al-Ahaydib, Alkhowaiter and Al-Momani 2017; Al-Khasawneh 2018; Al-Haq and Al-Smadi 2020) and in Malaysia, often focused on the euphemism translation

in al-Quran into Malay (Abdullah and Rahman 2019; Sa'ad and Halim 2021); however, there is not many studies on minor ethnic languages such as the Bidayuh language.

Within the Bidayuh language, existing research by Ritos and Daud (2020) described euphemism's functions in the Bidayuh Bau dialect. However, comprehensive research on the functions of euphemism within the Bidayuh language, akin to the six functions of euphemisms identified by Burridge (2012), is lacking. The fact that Bidayuh comprises four distinct dialects, with Ritos and Daud (2020) focusing specifically on the Bidayuh Bau dialect, adds another layer to the existing research gap. Moreover, each dialect may or may not exhibit variations in the usage and functions of euphemism. Hence, studies on other dialect variations could potentially reveal variations in the functions of euphemism across different linguistic and cultural contexts within the Bidayuh community.

Ⅳ. Theoretical Framework

Burridge (2012) defined euphemisms as sweet-sounding or at least harmless substitutes employed to replace avoided terms with six different functions which are 1) the Protective euphemism to shield and avoid offense, 2) the Underhand euphemism to mystify and misrepresent, 3) the Uplifting euphemism to talk up and to inflate, 4) the provocative euphemism to reveal and inspire, 5) the Cohesive euphemism to show solidary and to help define the gang and 6) the Ludic euphemism to have fun and entertain. <Table 1> shows the six functions of euphemisms suggested by Burridge (2012) and examples of each function.

<Table 1> Six functions of euphemisms suggested by Burridge (2012)

Function	Description
The Protective euphemism	To shield and avoid offense: created when facing tricky problems on how to talk in different contexts about things that for one reason or another one would prefer not to speak of unrestrainedly in the prevailing context; euphemism as verbal escape hatches created in response to taboo Examples: *thing* means "penis" or "vagina"

Function	Description
The Underhand euphemism	To mystify and misrepresent: euphemism is used not so much to conceal offense but to disguise a topic deliberately and to deceive or to play down the negativity of something; double-speak or dishonest euphemism Examples: *get snotty* means "to use heroin," *lipton tea* means poor quality drugs
The Uplifting euphemism	To talk up and to inflate: euphemistic expressions presumably have more pleasing connotations than alternative ways of speaking simply by virtue of their being jargon; euphemisms that are used to promote something by saying good things Examples: *person* means "penis," *pre owned cars* means "used cars"
The Provocative euphemism	To reveal and to inspire: euphemistic expressions that are more involved than straightforward politeness and the maintenance of face, however, even the more mainstream face-saving euphemism often do more cover-up abhorrent reality; euphemism not to disguise or conceal the unpleasant reality
The Cohesive euphemism	To show solidarity and to help define the gang: taboos and euphemisms become a sign of social cohesion and only people of the group would know and understand the euphemistic expressions Examples: *the 100-year betrayal* is a term understood only by the Kurdish people despite sharing geographical overlap with the Arabs or Turks
The Ludic euphemism	To have fun and entertain: euphemism mainly created to amuse and as a part of everyday verbal play Examples: *belly laugh* and *hysterical* means "laughing loudly and deeply"

This study employs a descriptive-qualitative research design in studying the euphemism functions among the Bidayuh Biatah speakers of Sarawak. Eight informants of the age between 55 to 79 years old from Kampung Quop, Kuching, were interviewed using an in-depth, open-ended interview method. The informants were chosen according to the criteria suggested by Chambers and Trudgill (1980), which is the NORM/NORF criteria: non-mobile, older, rural, male and female. As a guide for the interview, a wordlist was constructed from the nine aspects of euphemism suggested by Allan and Burridge (1991) in identifying the euphemistic expressions used by the Biatah speakers. These aspects are bodily parts, gender, sex, anger, hatred, illness, death, fear and referral to gods. Based on the wordlist and the information provided by the informants, the data is then analyzed according to the six functions of euphemism suggested by Burridge (2012).

Ⅴ. Analysis and Discussion

This section discusses the functions of euphemisms within the Bidayuh Biatah community based on Burridge's (2012) framework. The findings of this study indicated that only five out of the six functions of euphemism as stated by Burridge (2012) were identified which are (1) Protective, (2) Underhand, (3) Uplifting, (4) Cohesive and (5) Ludic euphemism.

5.1. The Protective Euphemism

According to Burridge (2012), Protective euphemism is used to shield and avoid offense. In languages, there are always matters that the speakers, for one reason or another, would prefer to avoid saying unrestrainedly, creating euphemisms as "verbal hatches" to these unspeakable tabooed matters. This can be found in a number of Biatah euphemisms. <Table 2> shows the Protective euphemisms found in Biatah:

<Table 2> Protective euphemisms in Biatah dialect

Euphemism (Biatah)	Literal meaning (English)	Euphemistic meaning
Manuk	Bird	Penis
Buat dari, buat dayung	Property of the male, property of the female	Penis, vagina
Kăyuh dari, kăyuh dayung	Thing of the male, thing of the female	
Manŭg buran	Come Moon	Menstruating
Rabù, bubù	Fallen	Miscarriage
Dog ndai dayà	Made by people	Getting ill from mystical causes
Tebŭn asŭng	End of life	Dying
Teris sinjang	Trousers' rope (belt)	Snake
Kăyuh	Thing	Animal or spirit
Ngera	They or them	
Pengaso	Disturber	

For the Bidayuh in general, sexual organs are tabooed subjects to be mentioned directly and are considered vulgar and offensive if they are mentioned directly. However, when there is a need to mention them, euphemistic expressions are often used instead such

as *manuk, buat* and *kăyuh. Manuk* literally means "bird," while *buat* and *kayuh* both mean "property" and "thing" respectively. Therefore, when referring to the male sexual organ, *dari,* which means "male," is added to the word. Meanwhile, when referring to the female sexual organ, *dayung*, which means "female," is added instead.

Death is another aspect of which Protective euphemism is found. In Biatah, the term *tebŭn asŭng* is used to describe someone who is on the verge of death—dying. *Tebŭn* means "the end," not of a period but of a thing and *asŭng* means "life." Although life itself is not a palpable thing with a discernible physical "end," being on the verge of death is described as such. The abstract concept of life is metaphorically conceptualized into a tangible concept with an "end," almost too similar to the end of a string. Keyes (2010) described Protective euphemism as "comfort words," showing that the Biatah speakers find it rather comforting to perceive life as a tangible concept where an "end" is inevitable to things that have its "start," like life. Therefore, instead of describing someone as *mbŭh rè kebŭs*, meaning "almost die," they used a more comforting term instead, *di tebŭn asŭng-i.* Sentence 1 shows how the term *tebŭn asŭng* is used in a sentence.

(1)	*sedia*	*adŭ*	*atà*	*amai*	*ayŭh*	*mbŭh*	*di*
	ready	just	we	because	he/she	already	at
	tebŭn	***asŭng-i***	*madin*				
	end	**his/her life**	now				

"Let us just be ready because he/she is already at the **end of his/her life** now."

Other than that, the Biatah speakers also believed that names of people, animals and spirits are prohibited from being mentioned in certain circumstances. The Bidayuh in the olden days worked in various parts of their settlements, including forests, farms, orchards and paddy fields. Thus, there was a belief in the older Bidayuh communities where names are invocative. Therefore, unfavorable beings were prohibited from being mentioned directly or explicitly lest they feel invited. This has evolved to be a taboo and thus required a Protective euphemism to act as verbal escape hatches

(Burridge 2012) from directly mentioning these names, which were believed to threaten the wellbeing of the one who uttered it if invoked. Although often avoided, when these names must be uttered to warn others about their presence, the speakers use more general terms, such as referring to animals or spirits as *ngera, kăyuh,* or *pengaso.* In similar cases, some speakers prefer to use metonymy, where they use another word or phrase with similar characteristics or attributes as the animals, such as *teris sinjang,* instead of *jipŭh,* when referring to a snake. When the speakers attempt to be more specific, physical description delivers the message better than being vague by using a general term to refer to the threats.

5.2. The Underhand Euphemism

Underhand euphemism acts to mystify and misrepresent, whereas euphemism is not so much concealing offense but rather advertently disguising a topic to serve the purpose of deceiving or playing down the negativity of a particular topic (Burridge 2012). <Table 3> shows the Underhand euphemisms identified in the Biatah dialect.

<Table 3> Underhand euphemisms in Biatah dialect

Euphemism (Biatah)	Literal meaning (English)	Euphemistic meaning
Mbŭh berisi	Already with flesh	Pregnant
Reŭ buran	Stop Moon	
Beyuh	Sterile (for plants)	Infertile
Mbŭh bu	Already left	Divorced
Asà	Disappointed	Miscarriage
Mbŭh sadì	Already alone	Widow or widower
Bisamah	Together	Sexual intercourse
Bŭŭs samah	Sleep together	
Scandal	Morally wrong act	Sexual intercourse outside of marriage
Neku	Stealing, doing something in secret	
Ndai arap	Do bad	
Ngen mengŭh	Giving shame	
Susah	Difficult	Poor
Dŭh tungang	Unable	
Tedah	Pitiful	
Dog ngurì	Given medication	Mystical illness
Rusak piker kira	Damaged mental faculties	Crazy
Dŭh sehat akal	Unhealthy mind	
Tingge ōng	Left the world	Died
Me'ad ke sembu	Return to above	
Mbŭh dŭh tui	Already not too long	Dying

The data shows that the most prominent subject that requires Underhand euphemism in the Biatah dialect is sexual intercourse outside of marriage. The Biatah speakers used various euphemisms which do not directly describe sexual intercourse outside marriage but rather to provide more "acceptable" terms. The act of having sexual intercourse with people other than their spouse is considered a shameful act among the Biatah speakers, hence the euphemism *ngen mengŭh*, meaning "giving shame." There are euphemistic terms that the speakers often resort to when going into the matter, such as *scandal, neku* and *ndai arap.* The term *scandal* is derived from English, which means "a morally wrong act." Among the Bidayuh speakers, it refers to a person having an affair with a married person. However, the same term is also used as a reference to the sexual relations of two people who are not married. In English, *scandal* is a noun, but it has been adapted in Bidayuh to become a verb that insinuates sexual relations outside marriage.

Another term that describes sexual relations outside marriage is *neku,* which means "stealing." According to an informant, in this context, *neku* means to steal the "joy" discreetly with someone who is not their spouse—the act of cheating or sexual relations before marriage. In this sense, the term *neku* acts as the misrepresentation of the concept, hence, an Underhand euphemism. Although cheating is not equivalent to "stealing," it is misrepresented as such due to the "joy" gained through the act of cheating which should be gained by the married couple. The term *neku* is used in a sentence, as in Sentence 2.

(2)

ayŭh	*puan*	*săwŭn-i*	***neku***	*ayo*	*dari*	*anù*
he	knows	his wife	**stealing**	with	man	that
pak	*ayŭh*	*abah*	*bego*			
but	he	does not want	noisy			

"He knows that his wife is **stealing** (joy) with that man, but he does not want to be noisy (about it)."

Among the Biatah speakers, a pregnancy is often a piece of good news, but not when it is not a marriage. According to the context of a conversation, euphemisms used for pregnancy can also be used in this sense, where news of the pregnancy conceived from

an unofficial relationship is delivered to others. The terms *reŭ buran* and *mbŭh berisi* indicate pregnancy, with the literal meaning being "already with flesh" and "stop Moon" respectively. The concept of pregnancy, in general, misrepresenting pregnancy outside marriage is common among the Biatah speakers, attempting to play down the negativity of it. Therefore, among the Biatah speakers, the terms *mbŭh berisi* and *reŭ buran* connote positive emotions when the subject is a married couple, but they are immediately negative when the subject is someone who is not yet married; consequently, serving the Underhand euphemism purposes.

Biatah speakers also used Underhand euphemisms in delivering the news of a miscarriage pregnancy, whereas the Biatah speakers described miscarriage as *asà.* This term does not mean "disappointed," but disappointment as an effect of almost reaching something but being unable to, the feeling between tantalizing and disappointed. Miscarriage is unfortunate among mothers who are hoping for a child. Therefore, as miscarriage could cause an emotional stir in the mother, the Biatah speakers prefer to doublespeak when describing the miscarriage. The term *asà* is used in a sentence, as shown in Sentence 3.

(3)	*ayŭh*	*rè*	*branak*	*njong*	*sawà*	*atì*	*pak*
	she	going to	give birth	end	year	this	but
	ayŭh	***asà***					
	she	**disappointed**					

"She was going to give birth by the end of this year, but she got **disappointed**."

In Sentence 4, the term *asà* is a way to doublespeak, which implies that a mother has lost her pregnancy despite hoping to give birth by the end of the year.

5.3. The Uplifting Euphemism

The Uplifting euphemism is the expression that allegedly has more gratifying connotations as a way to talk up and inflate, where it is often used to promote something by saying something good (Burridge 2012). <Table 4> shows the Uplifting euphemisms in the Biatah dialect.

<Table 4> Uplifting euphemisms in Biatah dialect

Euphemism (Biatah)	Literal meaning (English)	Euphemistic meaning
Jadi pŭrŭng	Body growing well	Fat
Sehat	Healthy	
Dari tibŭn, dayung tibŭn	Unblemished man, unblemished woman	Unmarried man, unmarried woman

Uplifting euphemisms in the Biatah dialect are found in insults. There are many ways to insult the physical of someone who is considered overweight in Biatah, such as *berisì* "with flesh," *bagà pŭrŭng,* "big body," or just saying *bagà,* which means "big" is also a way to express hatred towards someone overweight. However, there are also variations of this insult that perform the Uplifting function, such as *jadi pŭrung* and *sehat.* The term *jadi pŭrŭng* means that the body is growing well. The word *jadi* is a Biatah word used when something is successful or has been completed and *pŭrŭng* means "body." *Jadi pŭrŭng* is used to compliment someone whose body is in good shape and healthy, however, it is also often used when describing someone who has gained weight or fat, which is considered as unhealthy. In a conversation discussing someone who has gained weight while adhering to the concept of politeness in speech, Uplifting euphemism is used as in Sentence 4.

(4) *makin* ***jadi*** ***pŭrŭng*** *ayŭh* *mbŭh* *ayŭh* *benan*
getting **growing well** **body** her after she married
"Her **body has grown well** after she got married."

Likewise, the term *sehat* means "healthy" is also used similarly. Although being overweight is unhealthy and should not be advocated, it is also a sensitive topic to discuss. It is important to note that the perception of health differs in cultures. Although some Biatah speakers perceived a "bigger body" as being healthy compared to those who have skinny bodies, in the modern days, the Biatah speakers are also aware that being "big" or overweight is also associated with having an unhealthy Body Mass Index (BMI) and being the core cause of multiple health problems such as obesity. Regardless, weight is a sensitive topic to discuss, and one should not address others' weight thoughtlessly. Hence, in this context, the

need for Uplifting euphemisms to preserve the speaker's and the hearer's dignity through the favorable connotations used in the euphemism (Sari 2020).

According to the euphemism aspects suggested by Allan and Burridge (1991), insults are under the aspect of anger and hatred. Uplifting is also used to insult individuals who are not married. The terms *dari tibŭn* or *dayung tibŭn,* "unblemished man" or "unblemished woman," are used to describe someone who is not married at an older age. The term *tibŭn* is used to describe something brand new; therefore, regardless of their age, which is considered "old," but as they are yet to marry at that old age, they are described as "new." Although *dari tibŭn* and *dayung tibŭn* sound to have pleasing connotations, these terms are often used as insults in a gossiping manner when talking about someone who is not married when they are already past the age of marrying according to the speakers' community. It is identified that Uplifting euphemisms have pleasant connotations but are often used in the opposite context such as in the Biatah dialect, where Uplifting euphemisms are used as insults towards one's body weight or unmarried status.

5.4. The Cohesive Euphemism

Burridge (2012) defined Cohesive euphemisms as the euphemisms that function to show solidarity and define the gang, also known as the "insider language" (Hamilton & Foltzer 2021). <Table 5> shows the Cohesive euphemism in the Biatah dialect.

<Table 5> Cohesive euphemism in Biatah dialect

Euphemism (Biatah)	Literal meaning (English)	Euphemistic meaning
Bu badeng	Went away like a beetle	Divorced
Bitè sebak	Wind's pregnancy	Pregnant before marriage
Anak sebak	Wind's child	Child out of wedlock
Mendam sebak	Wind's illness	Mystical illness
Dog sebak	Hit by the wind	
Apù terun	Belonging of the forest Ambience or the general sense of the forest	Animals or spirits

A *badeng* is an insect, a type of small black beetle that can fly, known to the Bidayuh people. When a couple has parted ways from each other, never to reconcile, this act is described as *bu badeng,* meaning "to go away like a *badeng*." There are two understandings to this expression; one is that when a *badeng* comes to a place, and once they go away, they never come back. Another understanding is that all *badeng* look the same; therefore, it is never known whether the *badeng* they are seeing is the same one they saw previously. Consequently, they interpreted that they only saw the *badeng* once, and once it goes away, it is going away forever, like the person that divorced their spouse. Although the beetle is a common insect, the association of the beetle and being divorced is only understood by the Biatah speakers, hence, serving the Cohesive euphemism function. Only the community members, in this case, the Biatah speakers, understand what *bu badeng* is associated with due to their shared beliefs and understanding of the representation of *badeng,* an example of what is described as the "insider language."

Based on the recurring and identifiable patterns, the Biatah speakers also displayed an adherence to the belief that the wind acts as a conduit or "carrier" for various things. Many of these things bear an apparent negative connotation or at least a sense of uncertainty or the unknown. According to an informant, long ago, the Bidayuh people moved away from the higher lands due to a "mystical" illness that was believed to be brought by the wind, later identified as cholera. When the cause of an illness is a mystery, the person is described as *dog sebak,* which means to "get hit by the wind"; meanwhile, the illness itself is called *mendam sebak,* the "wind's illness." The term *dog sebak* is used in a sentence, as shown in Sentence 5.

(5)

an	*ayŭh*	***dog***	***sebak***	*din*	*mai*	*sepitar*
want	he/she	**get hit**	**wind**	maybe	because	hospital
duh	*guh*	*puan*	*ani*	*kendam-i*		
no	also	know	what	his/her illness		

"He/she is probably **getting hit by the wind** because the hospital does not also know what his/her illness is."

Correspondingly, pregnancy before marriage is also described as *bite' sebak,* which means the "wind's pregnancy" as the person is known to have no matrimonial spouse. Therefore, the pregnancy is said to be caused by the wind. Then later, when the child is born, the child is referred to as *anak sebak,* which means the "wind's child." Often, the community disregards the father's presence, causing the child to be associated with being brought by the wind to the mother. Burridge (2012) stated that Cohesive euphemism is when an object in language becomes a "recognition device" to the speakers' community, as such in the Biatah community that Cohesively understood the term *sebak* connotes source's anonymity, whether in illness, diseases, pregnancy and other things as long as the source is unknown to them.

The term *apù terun* can be interpreted as the "belonging of the forest" as *apù* can mean the owner or the belonging and *terun* is a forest that can be used to refer to the animals living in the forest or the spirits of the forest. Another understanding provided by an informant is that *apù terun* is something that *"cannot be seen, cannot be heard, but can be felt,"* which can be interpreted as the ambience or the general sense of the forest. The Bidayuh people held strong onto their belief that the forest is "owned" by the spirits and animals living in the forest. This belief that nature does not belong to them has caused them to be mindful not to encroach on what they deemed as "properties" of "others." When going to their farms, orchards, paddy fields, or any lands they worked on, they would warn others to be careful of their speech and actions, so as not to offend anyone or anything living in the *terun*. However, the consequences of offending the *apù terun* are often mishaps and sicknesses. Sentence 6 shows the usage of the term *apù terun* when describing someone who got sick because of their offensive behavior in the forest.

(6) *dayà* *anŭ* *mandam* *amai* *dog* *ngaso* ***apù***
person that sick because got disturbed **belonging**
terun
forest
"That person is sick because he/she got disturbed by **what belongs to the forest.**"

However, this phrase is understood only by the Biatah speakers, an "insider language," which they Cohesively use to remind others of the importance of being careful in the forest and not offending the *apù terun* to avoid harm towards themselves or their community.

5.5. The Ludic Euphemism

Burridge (2012) listed Ludic euphemism as the sixth euphemism function. Ludic euphemism is often created to have fun and entertain, meaning that euphemism is primarily formed to amuse and be a part of daily verbal play in communication (Burridge 2012). <Table 6> shows the Ludic euphemism found in the Biatah dialect.

<Table 6> Ludic euphemisms in Biatah dialect

Euphemism (Biatah)	Original word (Biatah)	Euphemistic meaning
Lelew	*Turoi*	Penis
Tatè	*Dambè*	Vagina
Momong	Muod	Ghost
Bakŭ	Bakò	Stupid
Bàŭ	Bakò	

Ludic euphemisms in Biatah are more a play of ryhmes or dysphemistic words. Directly, *turoi* and *dambè* are often avoided being mentioned by the Biatah speakers as the direct words sound vulgar. However, when there is a need to mention sexual organs, especially in educating children about hygiene, the older speakers prefer to use playful terms such as *lelew* and *tatè* instead. The Biatah speakers believed it preferable to attempt teaching their children the terms as closely as to be direct when talking about their private parts. Using other unrelated lexical to euphemize the sexual organs, such as *manuk,* "bird," or *kăyuh,* "thing," would cause confusion among children, thus deriving the playful term.

Similarly, *momong* is also a playful term used to refer to ghosts. The Bidayuh people often use the presence of ghosts to instil fear in children, usually to warn them from doing something unfavorable. However, there is an overlap between their spiritual belief system and the attempt to discipline, causing the instillation

of fear to be diluted to a more playful tone while avoiding the actual terms in fear of invoking them. This shows that Ludic euphemism in Biatah dialect is not only to have fun and entertain but to educate and discipline children while sounding fun and entertaining.

In a similar sense, insults were also derived through a rhyming play of the original direct word, such as the terms *bakŭ* and *bàŭ*, which are variations of the word *bǎkò*, "stupid." While the direct term could sound harsh and condescending, the terms *bakŭ* and *bàŭ* soften the harshness by sounding playful. These terms are derived from the sound of the direct term, *bakò,* where in the euphemistic term *bakŭ,* the last vowel sound is changed and the glottal stop at the end of the direct term is removed. Similarly, the term *bàŭ* has also undergone similar alterations with an extra alteration to the plosive velar consonant /k/ in the middle where it was changed into a glottal stop. While the alterations to the rhyme of the terms are minor, the alterations, however, managed to play down the seriousness of the direct term and are accepted as playful when used among the Biatah speakers. These terms are often used in a less severe tone, in situations where the speakers meant to joke or gossip without offending interlocutors using the harsher term, as shown in Sentence 7.

(7) *meting* *kăyuh* *puan-i* *puan* *ndai* *urah* ***bakŭ-i***
no thing he/she knows knows do behaviour **his/her idiot**
adŭ
only
"He/she knows nothing other than being an **idiot**."

Ⅵ. Conclusion

Through each euphemism provided by the informants, the definition, function and placement of the euphemism in a sentence and context provided insights into the culture of the Biatah speakers, which are embedded in their language and euphemism. For instance, the function of Cohesive euphemisms is defined earlier as euphemisms that are only understood by a specific group of

speakers due to their shared beliefs and understanding of what is considered taboo in their culture. The vast usage of the term *sebak* shows that among the Biatah speakers, the wind has a significant role as a bringer or carrier for almost everything from unknown sources. The terms *mendam sebak* "wind's illness" means that the illness is of unknown causes, *anak sebak* "wind's child" means that the child is born out of wedlock to which the pregnancy before marriage is euphemized as *bitè sebak* "wind's pregnancy."

Another instance is the Ludic euphemisms in describing sexual organs, mainly used when conversing with children. To teach children about their sexual organs is rather serious and necessary for the Biatah speakers. They attempted to be as direct as possible when mentioning sexual organs to children. However, the most straightforward terms sound vulgar and dysphemistic, but the euphemistic expressions such as *manuk,* "bird," *buat,* "property" or *kăyuh,* "thing," could confuse children. These euphemisms serve the function of Protective euphemisms when used by adult Biatah speakers among themselves mainly to protect their shame, avoid being offensive among interlocutors and show respect by not mentioning the direct words that sound vulgar and harsh. However, playful terms derived from the most straightforward terms are used when conversing with children, such as *lelew* instead of *turoi,* "penis," or *tatè* instead of *dambè* "vagina." The Ludic euphemisms ensure the children have no confusion and misunderstanding when it comes to teaching and discussing their sexual organs. When they get older, they are exposed to exclusively euphemistic terms that are more common to use.

The findings revealed that five out of the six functions of euphemisms as proposed by Burridge (2012) were found in the Biatah Bidayuh dialect. The findings of this study, however, could not be generalized to all the other Bidayuh groups. Euphemism is culture-specific; therefore, it cannot be guaranteed that Bidayuh of different dialects and areas perceived their world as similar to the Biatah speakers of Kampung Quop.

Considering this, future studies may want to focus on the euphemisms of different dialects and areas of the Bidayuh,

afterwhich, comparisons can be made to study how similar or how different the euphemism phenomena are across different dialects and areas of the Bidayuh. The researcher is hopeful that this study's findings could provide insights and support further studies on the euphemism phenomenon of the Biatah speakers. Euphemism study is necessary as it could help preserve the vitality of the Bidayuh language and its dialects along with the culture mirrored in their language.

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