A CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARISON OF CHINESE AND MALAY ANIMAL WORDS

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Abstract:

The Chinese and Malaysian people have evolved an in-depth observation and comprehension of animals, resulting in complex linkages and the formation of a great number of animal-related words. These animal words not only relate to diverse creatures in nature. But they also include the distinct cultural characteristics of both countries. Because of the two countries' distinct cultural environments, mentalities, lifestyles, religious convictions, and historical backgrounds, there are also various interpretations of how animals are perceived and understood, resulting in both similar and disparate cultural connotations of the words related with them. It will not be difficult for native speakers to understand, but it will inevitably be difficult for second-language learners who lack such cultural knowledge. Consider this, this paper compiles animal words in Chinese and Malay. The interdependence of language and culture serves as the foundation for this paper's comparative analysis of frequently used animal words in Chinese and Malay using descriptive explanation and comparative analysis. To accomplish the goal of language cross-cultural communication for second language learners and develop their cross-cultural awareness, the objective of this study is to investigate the similarities and differences in the cultural meanings of animal words in these two languages and discover the factors that impact their cultural similarities and differences.

Keywords:

Chinese Language, Malay Language, Animal Words, Cross Culture, Cultural Meaning

Introduction

Throughout human history, animals have been equipped with unique cultural connotations and carry human emotions. As a result, several animal words with distinctive national culture have emerged. Animal words established via historical accumulation include both commonalities and significant contrasts in cultural connotations due to distinct cultural environments, ways of thinking, living habits, religious beliefs, and historical backgrounds.

More and more Malay students are taking Chinese classes seriously because of the expanding bilateral relationship between China and Malaysia and the frequent cross-cultural interactions. There will undoubtedly be a cultural miscommunication or even a cultural conflict when two distinct cultures speak with a single another. As a result, studying about cross-cultural animals may help students learn about cross-cultural.

Literature Review

Currently, comparative research on the cultural meanings of animal words is abundant, focusing mostly on the description and analysis of words, idioms, proverbs, and maxims, with many of them comparing Chinese and English. For example, (Huang Jing, 2003) analysed and compared the uniqueness and similarity of Chinese and English animal words from the standpoint of human cultural evolution. (Wang Hongyan, 2012) (Yu, 2019) (潘子文, 2022) investigated cultural differences and connotations, as well as the explanations for these differences and connotations, and giving instructional ideas and translation techniques on cultural connotations.

Furthermore, there are comparative studies of Chinese and other languages. For instance, (韩雪, 2011) examined representative animal words in Chinese and French; (Mukesh Kumar, 2014) compared and contrasted 14 different animal idioms in Chinese and Hindi, (Chen Zhengyang, 2020) investigated animal words in Chinese and Spanish proverbs, (Hu Xingxing & Hailiqiamu Maimaiti, 2021) analysed animal words in Chinese and Uighur from three perspectives: (Sari et al., 2022) compared the Chinese and Indonesian zodiac animals, determine the causes for the variances, and propose teaching and translating techniques.

Study Malay animal words is (Rashid et al., 2012) who choose a specific sort of animal words and compare the animal metaphor of Malay and Arabic words, studied the vocabulary of animals in the image, and its cultural meaning. (Yuldashev, 2020) used conceptual metaphor theory to examine dog-related animal proverbs in Malay and Uzbek cultures, demonstrating discrepancies between the two.

In conclusion, while several successful research has been done on the comparative study of the cultural meanings of animal terms both domestically and internationally, there are virtually no studies on the comparative study of animal words between Chinese and Malay, and the systematic analysis of Malay animal words is evidently inadequate. As a result, this area merits a detailed survey.

Definition of Animal Words

Language serves to transmit meaning, but this meaning varies depending on the culture and has not always been universal. (黄伯荣 & 李炜主编, 2016) classified word meaning into two

types: conceptual meaning and connotative meaning. Conceptual meaning is the core meaning connected with concepts, and it refers to the naming and description of objective things or occurrences that do not alter meaning comprehension in cross-cultural communication (祖晓梅, 2015). For example, the conceptual meaning of cat set it apart from other animals like tiger and leopard. Connotative meaning includes not only conceptual meaning, but also human subjective attitude meaning. For example, the cat in the Chinese proverb "a cat cries a mouse (猫哭老鼠)" refers to someone who tries to elicit others' sympathy by acting to be miserable to attain his or her aims. This demonstrates the phenomena in which people attach specific sentiments to the word, premised on the cat's behaviour, giving it a unique cultural connotation. Animal words have varied implications for different cultures due to differing views towards each animal.

In this paper, two categories of animal words are discussed. One is compound words, which are the words composed of two or more morphemes. Examples are the Chinese words for "running dog (走狗)," and "iron cock (铁公鸡)." Connotations may be found in Malay words such as "dead chicken (mati ayam)", "black dog (anjing hitam)" and so on. The second is an idiom, which includes proverbs and idiomatic phrases with animal names. Examples include the Chinese "serve like a dog or a horse (犬马之劳) and the Malay "Musang berbulu ayam (weasel with feathers)", The article that follows will compare the cultural meanings of Chinese and Malay animal words.

Method
The corpus of Chinese and Malay in this paper is mainly drawn from "7th Edition of Contemporary Chinese Dictionary" (现代汉语词典第七版）and "Kamus Perdana (Edisi Keempat)", with idioms and proverbs drawn from "3rd Edition of Dictionary of Idioms" (成语词典第三版), "Dictionary of Chinese Proverbs" (中国谚语大辞典), "KAMUS PERIBAHASA (Edisi Kelima)", and online dictionaries.

Based on a sizable corpus of gathered data, this paper combined description and explanation to construct a comparative classification and analysis of the animal words that are often used in Chinese and Malay and investigated the causes for their differences from four aspects, to overcome the communication challenges brought on by animal words in cross-cultural communication. These exploratory studies are expected to assist the Chinese and Malay language learners in better comprehending the cultural significance of Chinese and Malay animal words to grasp bilingualism.

Findings
A total of 894 frequently used animal words, mostly referring to domesticate animals including cows, horses, sheep, dogs, chickens, cats, ducks, and pigs, was found in the combined Chinese and Malay corpus. This is because these animals coexist most closely with humans. The top three animal words in Chinese, according to statistics, are cow, dog, and horse. Chicken, cow, and dog are the top three animal words used in Malay. As a result, this paper compares and elaborates on the cultural meanings of chicken, cow, dog, and horse related words that are most often used.
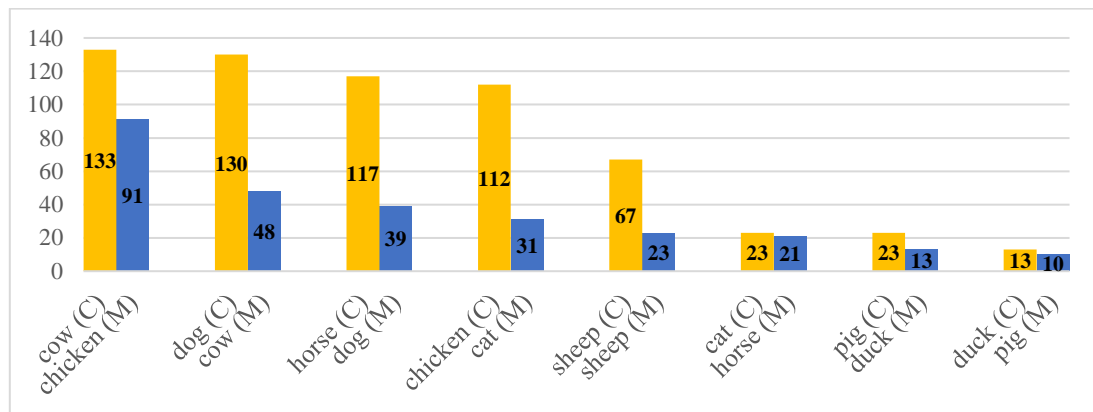
Figure 1: The Number of Frequent Animal Words in Chinese and Malay

The Cultural Connotation of Chicken in Chinese and Malay Culture

Chicken makes a cultural meaning in Chinese and Malay. Chickens are the most widely grown animal and the simplest to see, catch, and consumption. The following is a statistical summary of emotional colour data of chickens in the Chinese and Malay culture.

Table 1: The Emotional Colour Data Percentage of Chicken in the Chinese and Malay Culture

Chicken	Chinese	Malay
Commendatory Words	21 (18.75%)	24 (26.37%)
Derogatory Words	82 (73.21%)	56 (61.54%)
Neutral Words	9 (8.04%)	11 (12.09%)

On the positive side, chicken is often thought of in Chinese culture as an animal that welcomes good luck due to the homophone between "jī (鸡=chicken)" and "jí (吉=lucky)," which indicates good luck and good fortune.

Chicken is typically used as dowry in Chinese wedding ceremonies to symbolise vigour and good fortune for newlyweds. In Chinese, the commendatory words that include the word "chicken" (18.75%) emphasise the virtues of diligence, courage, and early rising in chickens. For example, the word "冠鸡" refers to a cock-shaped headgear, which is a symbol of bravery.

Chickens, however, serve a dual cultural significance. Derogatory words (73.21%) contained in small, ordinary, cowardly, stingy, and trifling cultural symbolism, such "鸡毛蒜皮," which refers to chicken feathers and garlic skin, and is also used as a metaphor for inconsequential matters.

Chicken is known as "ayam" in Malay. Chicken is the most common and commonly seen poultry in Malay lifestyle, and their characteristics are like Malay living habits. Thus, many words with "chicken" can be found in the Malay language. In Malay, commendatory words that include the word "chicken" (26.37%), such "ayam jalak" refers to a bird that is smaller than a regular chicken and has black feathers, which represent a bold person.

In Malay, the word "chicken" is frequently used to describe individuals or to express an emotion, which clearly illustrates the quality of the chicken. The sole similarity to Chinese is the cultural symbol of courage. Cockfighting tradition is what the symbols of courage originated. In rural areas, cockfighting is a popular pastime. Both cultures recognised the chicken's inherent courage and fighting spirit. The word "chicken" is frequently used in pejorative ways in Malay (61.54%), including the word "ibu ayam," which refers to the mother chicken while also symbolically referring to a prostitute-selling lady.

It can be observed that there is a resemblance between the "chicken" as perceived by the two peoples in the process of interpreting the world and the "prostitute" in the social class since the Malay language also employs the chicken as a metaphor for prostitute. Furthermore, Malay and Chinese also employ the word chicken to indicate timid and insignificant. In contrast to Chinese, it also incorporates cultural symbols of carelessness, ignorance, and poverty. In both languages, the word that includes "chicken" tends to have a derogatory emotional connotation.

The Cultural Connotation of Cow in Chinese and Malay Culture
Cattle were among the first domesticated animals. The following figures show the emotional colour data percentage of cattle in the Chinese and Malay culture.

Table 2: The Emotional Colour Data Percentage of Cow in the Chinese and Malay Culture

Cow	Chinese	Malay
Commendatory Words	44 (33.08%)	13 (27.08%)
Derogatory Words	74 (55.64%)	32 (66.67%)
Neutral Words	15 (11.28%)	3 (6.25%)

Cattle, on the other hand, are an asset to Chinese agriculture. The image of hard working, tireless, silent dedication comes to mind when thinking here of cattle. The cattle also offer individuals a solid, stable sense. Commendatory words created by the morpheme "cow" (33.08%), such as "九牛二虎之力" refers to the combination of the strength of nine cows and two tigers, denoting enormous strength.

Another perception of cattle, which the Chinese consider to be stubborn, a slow-moving, and rowdy, exists. Derogatory words (55.64%), such as "牛脾气," refers to cattle's irritable temperament as a metaphor for obstinate and stubborn individuals.

Like ancient Malaysia, it was an agrarian civilization, and cattle served as both a dependable companion and a vital mode of transportation. The Malay people also liken the surroundings to the behaviour of cattle. "Lembu" is the Malay word for cow. A "kerbau (buffalo)" is another cow-like mammal. During corpus collecting, it was discovered that "lembu" and "kerbau" in Malay are employed in various idioms. Hence, they are categorised here in this paper. The commendatory word "cattle" (27.08%), such as "lembu punya susu, sapi dapat nama," refers to cow's milk, but the black ox has been praised for their hard labour. It is a metaphor for working hard, but others are praised.

While there are few good expressions, it can be observed that Malays, like the Chinese, use cow to refer to hardworking individuals. They also utilised the cow's enormous size as a

metaphor for the great guy. There are also numerous negative terms in Malay composed of the word cow (66.67%), such as "lembu kenyang," which refers to a stuffed cow and represents a stubborn and lazy person.

The cow, like the Chinese, is often used as a metaphor for stubborn and clumsy people in Malay culture. Consequently, the cultural meaning attached to the word "cow" is the same in both cultures. Malay also contributes some cultural characteristics that Chinese culture does not, such as those who are sloppy and careless, lack opinion, commit a wrong or threaten others yet are gripped by fear. In both languages, the expressive quality of the word "cow" often tends to be disparaging.

The Cultural Connotation of Dog in Chinese and Malay Culture

Dogs are an integral part of people's life all around the world, from Malaysia to China. Some can be taught to work as patrol dogs, while others can be used to hunt and herd sheep. The following figures show the emotional colour data percentage of dogs in the Chinese and Malay culture.

Table 3: The Emotional Colour Data Percentage of Dog in the Chinese and Malay Culture

Dog	Chinese	Malay
Commendatory Words	22 (16.92%)	3 (7.69%)
Derogatory Words	108 (83.08%)	34 (87.18%)
Neutral Words	0	2 (5.13%)

On the positive side, dogs have historically been favoured by Chinese people because of their reliance on and loyalty to their masters and because they are typically seen as their right-hand men when protecting and hunting. Most positive words (16.92%) referred to loyal and deserving individuals, such as "狗不嫌家穷," refers to the dog does not dislike the impoverished family, which denotes the loyalty of the dog to its owner.

Despite being regarded as human companions, most animal words containing the word "dog" were negative (83.08%). The dog is a lowly animal related to humans in the traditional Chinese worldview. Chinese people have always held a negative view of dogs in their culture. Chinese proverbs frequently utilise the word "dog" to describe those who serve as slaves, aid in wicked deeds, or oppress others. For example, "狗党狐群" refers to the dogs and wolves who are symbolically working together with the evil guys. Chinese society places a low value on dogs.

Very few positive dog words (7.69%) exist in Malay, and those that do are primarily used to express how delighted a dog appears when they come upon sand. The remainder is mostly negative (87.18%). "Kamus Perdana" explained "anjing (dog)" as a word for "angsama, barua, jaruman muncikari, pinang muda, tali barat (metaphor for running dogs, the traitors, pimp)". As can be seen from this, dogs are regarded as inferior creatures by both Malays and Chinese, and the word "dog" is typically used to describe individuals who are greedy, shameless, engage in terrible deeds, and are of low rank. For example, "anjing hitam" refers to the black dog, a metaphor for wicked individuals who frequently expose their negative actions.

Most dog-related Malay words are insulting. Overall, the word "dog" has an emotional pejorative connotation in both languages, and dogs tend to act and think in ways that are unpleasant and demeaning.

The Cultural Connotation of Horse in Chinese and Malay Culture

Over the years, horses have served a vital function that cannot be replaced by other animals, for humans to ride or pull products. The statistics of the emotional colour data percentage of horses in the Chinese and Malay culture are as follows.

Table 4: The Emotional Colour Data Percentage of Horse in the Chinese and Malay Culture

Horse	Chinese	Malay
Commendatory Words	55 (47.01%)	5 (23.81%)
Derogatory Words	46 (39.32%)	14 (66.67%)
Neutral Words	16 (13.68%)	2 (9.52%)

Horses have traditionally been regarded as symbols of farming culture in Chinese history, and people have placed a great value on these animals. As a result, several equine-related words have emerged, each with a rich cultural value. In Chinese, commendatory expressions containing the word "horse" (47.01%) typically refer to persons who are talented, meritorious, active in taking the lead, and incorruptible, while also demonstrating the horse's strength, courage, and passion. Horses had military utility in agrarian cultures, primarily as war riding equipment. Chinese people admired many of the positive traits of horses, to the point where later generations came to perceive horses as symbols of royalty or bureaucrats' prestige, money, and affluence. For instance, the phrase "汗马功劳" refers to the warriors rushing on horses are building up military success, a metaphor for the important contribution provided to the labour.

Horses, however, have a dual cultural significance. Derogatory words (39.32%) were used to represent a lack of opinion, ignorance and stupidity, flattery, sloppiness, lack of ambition, and harm to the group. For instance, "马屁精" in Chinese used to describe someone who is a flatterer, often a subordinate who is a flatterer of a superior.

The Malay term for horse, Kuda, is also a common domestic animal, and Malays often describe their surroundings using the horse's behaviours. In Malay, positive "horse" morphemes make up 23.81 percent of the language, such as "Seperti kuda lepas dari pingitan" refers to a runaway horse, a metaphor for happiness due to out of bondage.

Horse symbolism in Malay is basically the same as in Chinese, with words like "competent, energetic, unbound" being used. The word "horse" is frequently used to compare the wealthy; it is a symbol of riches and prestige. The words for horse in Malay and Chinese have the same cultural connotation and share similar cultural symbols. Most of the disparaging terms (66.67%) represents people who follow orders, work for others, and behave inappropriately under given circumstances. "Kuda pelejang bukit," for example, refers to a running horse used symbolically as a tool for others.

Malay additionally adds cultural symbols that the Chinese do not have, such as "Seperti kuda kencing di papan," which means to pee like a horse on the board, a metaphor for a person who talks non-stop. The majority of words still refer to horses in Chinese, demonstrating the tremendous status of horses in Chinese culture. The Malay word for "horse" has an emotional pejorative connotation.

Discussion

According to the above findings, it can be concluded that the two cultures' interpretations of their cognitive and perspectives on animals differ when they come from different cultural backgrounds, which results in animal words having the same or different cultural connotations. The factors influencing the cultural connotation of Chinese and Malay animal words are as follows.

Religious Belief

Religion pervades all human activity and society in some way. Chinese Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism all has a significant impact on Chinese traditional culture. Many animal words in Chinese are linked to Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, such as "how to kill a chicken with an ox sword (杀鸡焉用牛刀)" and "raising dogs and horses (犬马之养)," which are derived from Confucianism; and "when a man achieves the Dao, his poultry and dogs rise to Heaven (一人得道，鸡犬升天)," which is derived from Taoism. In the Buddhist texts, "ox-head and horse-face (牛头马面)" are described as the hell of the two ghost warriors and was later used to characterize various types of ugly or aggressive characters.

Malaysia's official religion is Islam, which is practised by most of the population. Dogs are considered "Haram (forbidden) " creatures by most Muslims, even as a euphemism for dirt. They dislike dogs and never touch them because of the influence of religion. The study found out that dog-related Malay animal words frequently carry a negative meaning. This demonstrates that religion does influence language.

Geographical Location

The study discovered that cattle, horses, dogs, and chickens have a comparatively wide vocabulary because in plain places, for example, the ground is flat, the land are dry, the water is abundant, and the ventilation is sunny. Although China's overall plain area is less than one-third of the total land area, it plays a vital role in human existence and development.

On the other hand, Malaysia makes a limited land area. The central region is a plateau covered with tropical rain forest. Whereas the coastal region is primarily plain. Most Malays were involved in productive activities in the plains, which had a significant influence on their worldview. Malaysia also includes irrigated grasslands that are densely forested with water grass and are extremely conducive to the advancement of animal husbandry especially chicken sector. As a result, the study found that chickens have an extensive vocabulary, placing first in the total rating.

Consequently, Chinese and Malays had easy access to these animals, which they naturally picked as metaphors and connections.

Productive Habits

Geographical factors also take a role in how a country chooses to organise its work force. In China's feudal culture during the agricultural civilisation, cattle served as the primary source of labour. Due to its long-standing reputation as the farmers' lifeblood, the cow holds a significant position in Chinese society and has drawn to represent diligence, constancy, and calm determination. Since dogs are regarded less highly than cows, the study discovered that animal words containing dogs are often disparaging.

Like Chinese people, Malaysians also depend on agriculture, albeit their economy is more akin to that of a small-scale peasantry and is mostly based on animal husbandry. Most Malays in rural regions make their livelihood by raising domestic animals, thus they are intimately familiar with their behaviours. As a result, people frequently use readily available animals as metaphors, such as chickens, cows, dogs, and so on.

Societal Mentality of the Populace

The same metaphor may have several implications or convey the same message through various metaphors since each culture has a unique knowledge of animals.

The Chinese people consider a "horse" is foolish and uneducated. Thus, they have words such as "like a cow or horse dressed in human clothes (襟裾马牛)". And the Malay word "Kerbau sekandang jalang" (common buffalo mistaken for wild buffalo), which means looking smart but being stupid; "Bermain-main dengan kerbau, dilontarnya muka dengan ekor" (play with water buffalo, eventually, face was dumped by ox tail), mean make friends with stupid people, eventually suffer.

Furthermore, Chinese animal words exhibit homophone; people will readily correlate "鸡(jī)-chicken" with "吉(jí)-lucky," which indicate good luck. Moreover, they relate the word "chicken" to a woman who makes a career by selling sex and claim that it has a similar sound to the word "妓(jì)-prostitute." Chinese and Malay have very distinct phonetic structures. Hence it is natural that their metaphorical meanings will differ.

Conclusion

Animal words are the culmination of a national culture, bearing its cultural heritage, representing its richness, reflecting the people of the globe, expressing its ideas and conceptions, as well as reflecting the cultural spirit.

Comparing the meanings of different animals in Chinese and Malay animal words reveals how different animals have varied connotations in the two languages' respective cultural contexts. The various social, cultural, and linguistic factors that influence how Chinese and Malay animal words are transformed into unique connotations as well as their similarities and differences are all known. Only through research and comprehension of their connotation may lead to effective communication.

To ensure peaceful cohabitation and cordial relations between the two countries, this paper plays an important role in enhancing cross-cultural awareness, flexibility in cross-cultural communication, and teaching abilities. Newer corpus will be included in the ensuing research

to expand the scope and increase the depth of the research in light of the shortcomings and the limits of this work. For instance, unmentionable animal word categories are chosen to enhance the outcomes.

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