

# A STUDY OF EUPHEMIZED ABUSIVE JAVANESE TERMS AND THEIR FIGURATIVE MEANINGS

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***Abstract:** Speech community frequently uses language for insulting. This study deals with a perspective to find out the classification of the euphemized abusive Javanese terms based on Huang and Warren (1993) and their figurative meanings. By using qualitative method, the writer collected nine public documents related to the euphemized abusive Javanese terms. Then, they were examined and validated by five Javanese experts such as lecturers, puppeteers, and teachers to check their accuracy. The results show that based on Huang and Warren's theory, abstract and spirit provenance for insult attacking physical shortcomings; intellectual shortcomings; character and personality deviations; and personal behavior and social deviations are absent. Secondly, the euphemized abusive Javanese terms for insult attacking physical shortcomings are not found. Thirdly, new provenance, emotion is found in insult attacking characters and personalities. Lastly, from figurative meaning facet, the majority of the euphemized*

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*abusive Javanese terms have metaphorical meanings, while the others belong to irony and simile.*

**Key words:** *Euphemized abusive Javanese Terms, figurative language, metaphorical meaning, provenance*

## INTRODUCTION

Language in people's lives plays such important roles as to share ideas, demonstrate intention, convey message to other people, and conduct social life (Kramsch 1998:3). In terms of conducting social life, language functions well in uniting similar opinions, thoughtful patterns and ways of thinking among different people. As a result, those people share such features as similar opinions, thoughtful patterns and ways of thinking by using the same language and then create a group called speech community. Saville-Troike (2003:15) defines speech community as "the shared dimension be related to ways in which members of the group use, value or interpret language".

In speech community, the members frequently immerse themselves in a particular situation such as insulting. For instance, Javanese speech community use euphemized words in insulting others so that it will not hurt or shock those who hear them. It is also assented by Sartini (2009:32) that the Javanese neglect offensive utterances towards other people, dislike hurting others, and behave humbly in the case of communication. The euphemized words for insult actually tend to be abusive in order to give moral teachings to other intended people having unpleasant personality and characters (Huang and Warren as cited in Aman1993:194). That is why this article will focus on classifying the euphemized abusive Javanese

terms based on Huang and Warren's theory and analyzing them figuratively.

### **ABUSIVE TERMS**

In accordance with Conley (2010:8) abusive term is “a term that is inherently abusive, that is insulting.” How abusive the terms are varies from language to language, culture to culture, and even within a language, a given term can be more or less abusive depending on the situation and personal conduct agreed by one's culture. For instance, English has terms considered dangerous, holy, magic or shocking, offensive, obscene, and only used in certain situations, or by certain people (Swan 1980:589). If the terms are misused from their original usage, those who utter them will shock one hearing this or sound immensely abusive. Therefore, such terms are called “taboo words”.

Within English community, taboo words tend to concern Christian religion, bodily functions, body parts and death such as “Jesus”, “Christ” and “God” representing Christian religion; “fuck”, “sweat”, “piss”, “defecation” which are categorized into bodily functions; “penis”, “cock”, “vagina”, “cunt” which are categorized into body parts; and “die”, “kill” sorted into death (O'Graddy et al. 1997: 554).

In comparison with English, abusive terms in China are euphemistic and drawn by analogies, namely human, animal, plant, object, body part, characteristic, abstract, activity, and spirit (Huang and Warren as cited in Aman 1993:194). From the aforementioned provenance, animal is considered to be the most disdainful analogy. They emerge as the reflection of Chinese women who are licentious, talkative and untrustworthy. Also, the unflattering relationship between man-

woman, husband-wife, parent-child and learned-illiterate is the cause of the insult (Huang and Warren as cited in Aman 1993:195). According to Huang and Warren (as cited in Aman 1993:196-211) there are abusive Mandarin terms for four kinds of insults associated with some provenance categories in each insult.

Insult attacking physical shortcomings	Insult attacking intellectual deviations	Insult attacking character and personality deviations	Insult attacking personal behaviour and social deviations
Human provenance: <i>ai-ze</i> : “short junior”: a short man	Plant provenance: <i>dai-gua</i> : “stupid melon”: a gullible person	Animal provenance: <i>ce-lao-hu</i> or “old female tiger”: a dominant and short-tempered woman	Abstract provenance: <i>wu-fawu-tien</i> : “no law, no heaven”: a person having no respect for any existing rules or laws
Object provenance: <i>ka-iti-en-chuang</i> : “open-sky window”: a person having syphilis	Characteristic provenance: <i>jie-jieba-ba</i> : “stammerin”: an inarticulate person	Body part provenance: <i>hen-xin</i> : “cruel heart”: a cruel person	Activity provenance: <i>cheruan-fan</i> : eating soft rice: a pimp  Spirit provenance: <i>jiou-guei</i> : “liquor ghost”: an alcoholic

**Table 1:**  
The examples of abusive Mandarin terms

## FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Stull (1961:4) clearly indicates that figurative language is “the language that avoids speaking directly or plainly about the subject under examination”. In expressing figurative meanings, there are ways which can be used by the author or the speaker.

Those are irony, hyperbole, metaphor, metonymy, litotes, simile, personification and oxymoron (Leech as cited in Anonymus n.d.:2).

### **A. Irony**

Irony is to say something in which the meaning is different from the real situation. Leech and Short further report that irony is “a double significance which arises from the contrast in values associated with two different points of view” (1981: 278). For instance, the utterance “*You have so high IQ that you cannot solve such an easy question*” means that the real situation shown by the utterance is that the intended person does not surely have high IQ. If he or she has high IQ, he or she must be able to solve an easy question. In other words, the utterance is indirect sarcastic criticism for the hearer.

### **B. Hyperbole**

Perrine (as cited in Mindari 1999:65) state that hyperbole is an exaggeration of the truth. The use of it is usually for emphasizing what a speaker or an author sorely means. For example, the utterance “*I am so thirsty that I want to drink river near my house*” implies and stresses that the unbearable thirst makes a speaker wants to drink a lot.

### **C. Metaphor**

Jakobson and Halle (as cited in Cruise 2000:211) contend that “metaphor is based on resemblance and involves the use of one domain as an analogical model to structure our conception of another domain”. The example can be seen through the

sentence “time is money”. Money is something precious and worth. Most people compete for earning money, for without money, they cannot fulfill their principal needs. Similarly, “time” is something valuable. If one is five minutes late, for instance, he or she may not enter office or school.

#### **D. Metonymy**

Metonymy means “the use of a single characteristic to identify a more complex entity” (Sutcliffe 2005:1). In metonymy there is association between two components within a single domain (Cruise 2000:211). “*I go to campus by Mercedes Benz*” is the example of metonymy. “Mercedes Benz” here represents the brand of the car coming from Germany. In other words, “Mercedes Benz” and car are the two similar components.

#### **E. Litotes**

Litotes is “saying less than is actually the case” (Anonymus n.d:2). For example “*Would you call in on my small house?*” expresses the idea where speaker does not merely reveal intention of his or her small house to the hearer. However, he or she actually wants to show the hearer his or her big house.

#### **F. Simile**

In accordance with Toner and Whittome (2003:12) simile is to say two things that are similar one another by using such words as “like” or “as”. For instance, the sentence “*Sue’s appearance is like a Barbie doll*” has two different objects

compared, namely appearance and Barbie doll. Sue's appearance is beautiful, outstanding, and gorgeous.

### **G. Personification**

It is to give inanimate objects particular abilities in order to be able to act like alive human beings. For instance, in the sentence, "My pencil is dancing in my book" personification plays its role to make "pencil" dance like human being. Since when someone is holding a pencil and writing, his or her pencil moves over and seems like dancing.

### **H. Oxymoron**

Oxymoron is to "place two ideas that seem to be directly opposed to one another in close proximity, which, on closer inspection, make sense" (Toner and Whittome 2003:15). It usually involves two contradictory terms like the sentence, *His infidelity is open secret*. The term, secret is something that should not be told to others and is only known by particular people. However, it becomes contradictory, for it is linked to the term, open which is totally different from the secret that should be closed.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN: TYPE, DATA COLLECTION AND INTERPRETATION**

This study uses qualitative method focusing on library study as the natures are to classify, discover the kinds of the figurative languages of the euphemized abusive Javanese terms and analyze them figuratively. The euphemized abusive Javanese terms are obtained from the following books:

1. *Kawruh Basa Jawa Pepak*;
2. *Buku Pinter Basa Jawi Pepak*,
3. *Peribahasa Jawa Sebagai Cermin Watak, Sifat, dan Perilaku Manusia Jawa*;
4. *Kamus Jawa-Indonesia*;
5. *Sistem Morfemis Adjektiva Bahasa Jawa-Indonesia*;
6. *Suatu Studi Kontrastif*;
7. *Sesuluh Basa Jawi; Gagrag Anyar Basa Jawi Pepak*;
8. *Basa Jawa Pepaking Pepak Kawruh Basa*

Afterwards, they are validated by five Javanese experts, namely one lecturer, one puppeteer, one Junior High School teacher and two Elementary School teachers.

The data are interpreted by using Huang and Warren's theory. By using this theory, the euphemized abusive Javanese terms for insults are classified into provenance categories, such as human, animal, plant, object, body part, characteristic, abstract, activity and spirit. Then, they are analyzed based on their figurative meanings such as irony, hyperbole, metaphor, metonymy, litotes, simile, personification and oxymoron.

## **CLASSIFICATION OF EUPHEMIZED ABUSIVE JAVANESE TERMS AND THEIR FIGURATIVE MEANINGS**

### **A. Insult attacking physical shortcomings**

In insult attacking physical shortcomings, none of such nine provenance classifications as human, animal, plant, object, body part, characteristic, abstract, activity, and spirit are found.

## **B. Insult attacking intellectual shortcomings**

Within insult attacking intellectual shortcomings, there are no euphemized abusive Javanese terms classified into human, animal, plant, object, abstract, and spirit provenance. The other ones belong to body part, characteristic, and activity provenance. In other words, the detail is as follows:

### 1. Body part provenance

*Landhêp dhêngkul*: “sharp knee”: a very stupid person

It is irony referring to a very stupid person. The Javanese experts that the writer claims it is the euphemized abusive Javanese term. *Dhêngkul* or “knee” is part of the leg which is blunt, yet in this case the “knee” is called sharp. Knee is never used for thinking; however, in this context, it is used to refer to brain.

While the brain is normally sharp due to high intelligence, the knee is normally blunt due to the low intelligence. Thus, “sharp” is irony of “blunt” and “knee” is irony of “brain” which entirely means a very stupid person.

### 2. Characteristic provenance

*Cupêt nalaré*: “short intellect”: a person who cannot think all things

It is a metaphor deriving from *cupêt* or “short” and *nalar* or “intellect” which is the ability to think in a logical way.

If a person has short intellect, he or she cannot think all the things. In other words, he or she is indirectly a stupid person.

### 3. Activity provenance

*Ora mêlék*: “not seeing”: a stupid person, an illiterate.

A blind person is someone who is unable to see. However, *ora mêlék* or “not seeing” is a description of a stupid person or an illiterate since he or she can understand nothing and has no fascinating insight. That is why *ora mêlék* or “not seeing” is a proper analogy for a stupid person or an illiterate and belongs to metaphor.

### C. Insult attacking character and personality deviations

The provenance classifications of the euphemized abusive Javanese terms which are absent within insult attacking characters and personalities are abstract and spirit provenance, whereas the others comprise human, animal, plant, object, body part, characteristic, activity, and emotion provenance.

#### 1. Human provenance

*Cinã craki*: “Chinese medicine merchant”: a miser

It depicts metaphor and encompasses euphemized abusive Javanese terms. It does not merely express a medicine merchant coming from Chinese. *Cinã* or “Chinese” here, in accordance with the Javanese has a notion of a person who is unwilling to spend much money. Furthermore, if he or she is a medicine merchant, he or she will always sell his or her medicine with expensive price without giving a bit of discount to a buyer at all.

#### 2. Animal provenance

*Mâtã yuyu*: “crab eyes”: a woman who can easily cry.

*Mâtã yuyu* or “crab eyes” here is not crab’s eyes but it is metaphor for a woman who easily cries. If she easily cries everytime she faces certain problems, especially the light

ones, her eyes gets bigger and wide like crab's eyes. If animal is directed at human, he or she will be humiliated.

### 3. Plant provenance

*Anggêdêbog bosok*: “like rotten banana tree trunk”: a person whose face and heart are bad.

Since “like” (preposition) is used in the euphemized abusive Javanese term, it belongs to simile. A person whose face and heart are bad is like rotten banana tree trunk. If it gets rotten, it will be useless since it does not function well anymore. Therefore, a person whose face and heart is bad fits that analogy.

### 4. Object provenance

*Mâtâ dhuwitên*: “money eyes”: a materialistic person

It is not related to currency or financial matter, but it is metaphor depicting a materialistic person where he or she tends to regard money the most important thing in his or her life. In other words, when he or she sees abundant money, his or her eyes are directed at it and then he or she wants it.

### 5. Body part provenance

*Lunyu ilaté*: “slippery tongue”: a person whose utterance changes anytime

It is a methapor used to describe a person whose utterance changes anytime. The adjective *lunyu* or “slippery” in *lunyu ilaté* or “slippery tongue” leads to such easily movable motion that the tongue can produce changed utterance anytime.

## 6. Characteristic provenance

*Cupêt pangandélé*: “short belief”: a person who is not easy to believe in others

This term has been checked and validated by five Javanese experts. They all state that *cupêt pangandélé* or “short belief” is the euphemized abusive Javanese term. It represents a person who is not easy to believe in others. *Cupêt* or “short” here reflects something lacking.

## 7. Activity provenance

*Pécél alu*: “breaking rice pestle”: a person whose behavior is rigid

It portrays metaphor. *Alu* or “rice pestle” is made from stone and the nature of stone is hard and not easy to be broken. Similarly, a person whose behavior is rigid tends not to want to take others’ advice and regard his or her opinion as the most correct one.

*Wêdi gêtih*: “afraid of blood”: a faint-hearted person

The color of blood is by nature red and red frequently represents bravery. It is an appropriate metaphor for a faint-hearted person since he or she does not dare enough to take any risks and face challenges.

## **D. Insult attacking personal behavior and social deviations**

In insult attacking personal behavior and social deviations, there is no classification of the euphemized abusive Javanese terms included in abstract and spirit provenance,

while the other terms are classified into human, animal, plant, object, body part, characteristic, and activity provenance.

### 1. Human provenance

*Tangan togog*: “hands of giant’s servant”: an unfair person

It is encompassed in metaphor. *Togog* is evil figure who is frequently demonstrated in Javanese shadow puppet, such as disloyal, greedy, unfair, money-grubbing, and so forth. He is Semar’s close friend who is older than him. Furthermore, his work is to serve giants. That is why *tangan togog* or “hands of giant’s servant” is directed at an unfair person.

### 2. Animal provenance

*Cumbu lalêr*: “easily caught fly”: a person having excessive acts

*Lalêr* or “fly” is an insect which can fly quickly. Consequently, it cannot be easily caught. There is euphemized abusive Javanese term saying that fly is easily caught, however. It exactly does not represent the same meaning of what the term is. There is discrepancy between what is said and what the intention is. “Easily caught fly” or *cumbu lalêr* is irony for a person who has excessive acts.

### 3. Plant provenance

*Carang canthél*: “bamboo twig hung”: a person engaging in a conversation but he or she is actually not invited

It is metaphor for a person engaging in a conversation but he or she is actually not invited. Bamboo twig is a part of bamboo tree that cannot be used. It tends to be removed. A person who is not invited to engage in a conversation

resembles a bamboo twig. Since he or she wants to immerse himself or herself in a conversation, he or she seeks to take part. Likewise, useless bamboo twig wants to be hung as wall decoration in order to be considered valuable.

#### 4. Object provenance

*Anggênthong umos*: “like leaky pitcher”: a person who cannot keep a secret

If a pitcher or *gênthong* is leaky, it cannot be used to fill water. Moreover, if it is filled with water, the water will permeate out of it. Similarly, a person who cannot keep a secret is portrayed by simile, “like leaky pitcher”. His or her mouth tends to divulge what to be a secret.

#### 5. Body part provenance

*Dåwå tangané*: “long hands”: a thieving person

This metaphor does not merely express the idea of a person having long hands. It is, however, the depiction of a thieving person. The adjective, *dåwå* or “long” in *dåwå tangané* or “long hands” means the ability of seizing something. As a result, he or she easily takes others’ possessions.

#### 6. Characteristic provenance

*Garang garing*: “strong but dry”: a rich person who actually feels lacking

It is metaphor for a rich person who actually feels lacking. *Garang* or “strong” is an image of something powerful, while *garing* or “dry” describes something having no water on it. A rich person is an illustration of the one who is

powerful in terms of money. He or she can buy what he or she wants or needs. However, his or her wealth cannot totally make him or her happy since he or she feels *garing* or “dry” where he or she cannot likely attain freshness on his or her heart, namely love and care. As a result, his or her wealth is not precious again.

### 7. Activity provenance

*Adol ayu*: “selling prettiness”: a woman who only shows off her beauty

It is metaphor for a woman who only shows off her beauty. Literally, the action of *adol* or “selling” is usually associated with things or objects so that it will be, for example, “selling fruit”. Its normal meaning is to give those things to someone in return for money. Nevertheless, *adol ayu* or “selling prettiness” figuratively shows *ayu* or “prettiness” to attract other people’s attentions and does not expect money.

## **CONCLUSION**

There are some conclusions drawn from the classification and the figurative analysis of euphemized abusive Javanese terms as insults. Firstly, new provenance, emotion emerges in insult attacking character and personality deviations.

Secondly, abstract and spirit provenance for insult attacking physical shortcomings; intellectual shortcomings; characters and personality deviations; personal behavior and social deviations are absent. Abstract provenance is considered unsuitable since the random order cannot convey implicit intention of them to the ones who are insulted. As a result,

those who are insulted will not recognize their improper behavior. Meanwhile, the Javanese are religious so that they avoid things in relation to spirit. They believe that their lives are only for God so that all the things that they do are directed at God (Prihatmi et. al.2003:63).

Thirdly, none of euphemized abusive Javanese terms for insult attacking physical shortcomings are found, for according to the Javanese physical shortcomings are God's gifts. They are not for being insulted but for being accepted (Prihatmi et. al. 2003:66).

Lastly, a large majority of euphemized abusive Javanese terms have metaphorical meanings. The remainder of them belongs to irony and simile.

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