RESEARCH ARTICLE

The interactive relationship between the semantic evolution of English euphemism and social psychological changes

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ABSTRACT

This study employs a mixed-methods research approach, constructing a diachronic corpus of English euphemisms from the 20th to 21st centuries (with a scale exceeding 5 million word tokens) to systematically examine the semantic evolution trajectories of euphemisms across five thematic domains—death, disease, disability, occupation, and gender—and their interactive relationship with sociopsychological changes. The research utilizes multiple methods including corpus linguistics, cognitive semantics, social attitude surveys, and discourse analysis, combined with Granger causality tests, cross-lagged correlation analysis, and structural equation modeling, revealing that euphemistic semantic evolution follows a cyclical pattern of "innovation-popularization-erosion-reinnovation," with euphemistic intensity declining by an average of 0.8-1.2 points per decade. The study finds that sociopsychological changes exert a dominant driving force on semantic evolution (path coefficient $\beta=0.76$, $p<0.001$), a conclusion supported by multiple lines of evidence: Granger causality tests show that changes in sociopsychological indicators temporally precede semantic changes in time series; cross-validation demonstrates that sociopsychological variables' explanatory power for semantic evolution ($R^2=0.852$) significantly exceeds that of the reverse path ($R^2=0.717$); and this dominant effect remains robust after controlling for confounding variables such as media influence and policy interventions. Factors including social taboo intensity, value transformation, and social movements drive euphemistic innovation through multidimensional mechanisms, but exhibit a 3-7 year time lag effect. This temporal discrepancy stems from three reasons: cognitive internalization requires time (converting new concepts into linguistic habits takes an average of 3.2 years), social diffusion exhibits gradation (the dissemination cycle from elite classes to the masses is approximately 4-5 years), and institutionalization processes are delayed (from policy formulation to full implementation averages a 5.8-year lag). Simultaneously, euphemisms exert a significant reverse shaping effect on sociopsychology (path coefficient $\beta=0.58$, $p<0.01$), influencing public attitudes by reconstructing cognitive frameworks and reducing topic taboo intensity. Language policy, media discourse, and educational practices play crucial mediating roles in the interactive process, with mediating effects accounting for 42.3%-58.7% of total effects. The interactive relationship exhibits nonlinear and dynamic characteristics, including inverted U-shaped effects, critical mass effects, and threshold effects. This study enriches the theoretical framework of linguistic social psychology, establishes a dynamic model of euphemistic semantic evolution, and provides theoretical support and practical guidance for cross-cultural communication, language teaching, and social policy formulation.

1. Introduction

Language, serving as humanity's most vital communicative instrument and cultural repository, remains in perpetual flux, with its transformational trajectory mirroring shifts in societal culture, axiological frameworks, and collective psychological dispositions. Euphemistic expressions constitute a distinctive linguistic phenomenon whereby indirect, subtle formulations supplant forthright, potentially abrasive terminology, thereby occupying a singular yet consequential position within human communicative systems. The deployment of English euphemisms transcends mere adherence to politeness conventions or preservation of interlocutor dignity; more profoundly, it reflects the psychological condition, value orientations, and cultural proscriptions characteristic of social collectives during specific historical epochs. From Victorian-era extreme circumvention regarding corporeal and sexual matters to contemporary cautious articulation surrounding mortality, pathology, ethnicity, and analogous delicate subjects, euphemistic semantic transformation has maintained intimate reciprocal engagement with evolving social psychology. Nevertheless, this engagement constitutes not a unidirectional causal sequence but rather an intricate bidirectional constructive mechanism: social psychological evolution—encompassing recalibration of taboo intensity, axiological reorientation, and attitudinal reconstruction—furnishes intrinsic propulsive force for euphemistic semantic innovation and metamorphosis; conversely, widespread euphemistic deployment and semantic modification reciprocally influence and configure cognitive architectures, affective experiences, and social psychology, thereby generating dynamic mechanisms of linguistic-psychological mutual influence and co-evolutionary progression. The present investigation endeavors to systematically examine diachronic semantic evolution in English euphemisms, probe underlying social psychological catalysts, and explore euphemisms' reciprocal formative influence upon social psychology, thus illuminating the complex and nuanced interactive relationship between linguistic evolution and social psychological transformation.

Contemporary scholarship on euphemistic language has yielded substantial findings spanning pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and cognitive linguistics. From pragmatic functional perspectives, researchers consensually acknowledge euphemisms' core functions including politeness strategies, face-preservation tactics, and conflict avoidance mechanisms—functions whose realization depends intrinsically upon particular sociocultural contexts and communicators' psychological expectations. Cross-cultural communication research has unveiled both divergences and convergences in euphemistic usage across diverse linguistic-cultural backgrounds, furnishing crucial perspectives for comprehending universal patterns and culture-specific particularities. Translation studies through functional equivalence theoretical lenses further demonstrate euphemisms' cultural loading characteristics and semantic transference complexity. However, extant research predominantly emphasizes synchronic description and static analysis, insufficiently attending to diachronic evolutionary patterns; when exploring relationships between euphemisms and social factors, investigations frequently remain confined to unidirectional influence, lacking penetrating dissection of bidirectional interactive mechanisms; additionally, measurement and quantification of social psychological change—a pivotal variable—remains relatively underdeveloped, resulting in inadequate empirical substantiation for correlational arguments between linguistic evolution and psychological transformation. Research on language acquisition and social environments indicates that familial linguistic contexts and socioeconomic positioning exert significant influence upon language learning and development, suggesting social psychological factors may perform considerably more complex roles in linguistic evolution. Consequently, establishing an integrated research framework synthesizing diachronic-

synchronic approaches, qualitative-quantitative methods, and linguistic-psychological measurement becomes imperative.

This investigation adopts mixed-methodological approaches, focusing upon English euphemisms from the twentieth through twenty-first centuries, concentrating on socially sensitive domains including mortality, pathology, disability, occupational designations, and gender. Initially, through constructing large-scale diachronic corpora and employing analytical instruments from corpus linguistics, cognitive semantics, and lexical semantics, the research systematically traces euphemistic semantic evolutionary trajectories, identifying typologies, pathways, and regularities of semantic change. Subsequently, integrating historical document analysis, social attitudinal surveys, and discourse analytical methods, the study reconstructs social psychological conditions across different historical periods regarding relevant topics, measuring variations in societal taboo intensity, value systems, and collective attitudes. Through temporal sequence analysis, correlational testing, and in-depth case examination, this research endeavors to reveal causal relationships, temporal lag effects, and interactive intensity between semantic evolution and social psychological transformation. The investigation attends not merely to how social psychology propels euphemistic semantic innovation but penetratingly explores how euphemistic deployment, through cognitive framework construction, discourse power operations, and social norm dissemination, reciprocally influences and configures social psychology. Relevant achievements in language pedagogy efficiency assessment and instructional environment research demonstrate that social contexts of language usage and communicative competence cultivation prove crucial for language learning, providing insights for understanding euphemisms' social psychological functions in actual linguistic practice.

This research possesses substantial theoretical significance and practical utility. Theoretically, the investigation enriches linguistic social psychology's theoretical architecture, supplements semantic evolution theory with social psychological dimensional explanatory frameworks, and advances interdisciplinary integration between linguistics and social psychology. By establishing dynamic models of euphemistic semantic evolution and measurement indices for semantic-psychological interactive intensity, this research furnishes methodological references for subsequent related investigations. Practically, research findings offer guidance for cross-cultural communication, language pedagogy, social policy formulation, and media discourse practices. Profound comprehension of social psychological mechanisms underlying euphemisms facilitates enhanced cross-cultural communicative sensitivity and effectiveness; recognizing euphemistic evolutionary patterns provides foundations for pragmatic competence cultivation in English instruction; illuminating linguistic-psychological interactive relationships enables language-perspective references for policy designs promoting social inclusion, eliminating discrimination, and advancing equality. Furthermore, this investigation possesses significant contemporary relevance for understanding hotly contested issues including political correctness, identity politics, and discourse power in contemporary society.

2. Literature review

Euphemistic expressions, representing a ubiquitous linguistic occurrence, have garnered sustained scholarly attention, with investigations spanning pragmatics, sociolinguistics, cognitive linguistics, and intercultural communication domains. From linguistic perspectives, researchers have conducted penetrating explorations of euphemism definitions, taxonomies, formative mechanisms, and pragmatic operations. Scholarly consensus characterizes euphemisms as strategic linguistic devices substituting mild, implicit, oblique formulations for blunt, potentially offensive terminology, with primary functionality residing in circumventing communicative embarrassment, confrontation, and discomfort while safeguarding interactional face requirements. Guo Mengyuan, within cross-cultural communicative frameworks,

systematically analyzed English euphemism construction mechanisms, identifying lexical substitution, circumlocutory articulation, and obfuscation processing as principal generative linguistic means, with pragmatic functions encompassing politeness tactics, taboo avoidance, and truth concealment across multiple dimensions[1]. Li Yan adopted iconicity perspectives, illuminating inherent correlations between euphemistic form and function, proposing that euphemisms, through distance iconicity and sequential iconicity cognitive mechanisms, map speakers' desired psychological remoteness onto linguistic configurations, thereby achieving specific pragmatic objectives[2]. Zhu Xuanxuan further examined English euphemism cultural connotations, emphasizing their transcendence beyond mere linguistic technique to embody profound cultural axiologies and societal norms, with usage across diverse cultural contexts reflecting collective attitudes toward power, status, gender, mortality, and analogous delicate subjects[3]. Wang Qianqian's investigation discerned pronounced convergence phenomena between English and Chinese euphemisms under globalization, mirroring reciprocal influence and amalgamation of axiological frameworks and social psychology across cultures[4]. He Peiyi and Long Lu, through dual dimensions of linguistic characteristics and cultural implications, systematically catalogued English euphemism phonological, lexical, and syntactic attributes while explicating embedded cultural proscriptions, social conventions, and psychological apparatuses[5]. These investigations established robust foundations for comprehending euphemisms' linguistic essence and cultural properties, yet predominantly remained confined to synchronic descriptive analysis, insufficiently attending to diachronic evolutionary patterns and dynamic transformational mechanisms, particularly lacking systematic exploration of interactive relationships between semantic evolution and social psychological transformation.

Euphemism research within practical application domains has similarly attracted scholarly emphasis, particularly regarding deployment in language pedagogy, commercial communication, and evaluative discourse contexts. Within pedagogical spheres, He Weili substantiated euphemism significance in collegiate English instruction, indicating that appropriate euphemistic deployment by instructors during classroom management, error correction, and assessment feedback not only cultivates positive learning atmospheres but also protects student self-esteem and stimulates learning motivation[6]. Chen Guiying's research focused upon secondary English instructional evaluative language, discovering euphemistic usage effectively mitigates assessment's adverse impacts, facilitating positive learner attitudes—findings bearing practical guidance implications for humanizing evaluative reform[7]. Suo Pengjia and Sun Jun explored euphemistic application strategies in business correspondence, noting that within commercial communication, euphemisms moderate potentially conflictual topics including refusals, complaints, and urgings, maintaining commercial relationship harmony and stability[8]. While these applied investigations revealed euphemisms' functional value within specific contexts, they frequently confined themselves to operational-level technical summarization, lacking theoretical explication of profound social psychological mechanisms underlying euphemistic deployment. Notably, related achievements in language pedagogy research domains furnish important insights for the present investigation: Alexandra and colleagues, through bilingual classroom support system research, illuminated complex relationships among linguistic environments, instructional support, and language acquisition[9]; Liu et al.'s modeling research on early childhood English revealed cognitive processes in language acquisition[10]; Wang and Luo's investigation of storytelling pedagogy[11] and He et al.'s exploration of English teaching integration mechanisms[12] collectively demonstrate that language learning and usage remain profoundly influenced by social contexts, cultural backgrounds, and psychological factors. These studies suggest euphemistic usage and evolution cannot exist independently from their social psychological contexts, necessitating examination of linguistic phenomena within broader sociocultural and psycho-cognitive frameworks.

From sociolinguistic and social psychological perspectives, relationships between euphemisms and societal factors have constituted crucial research agendas. Language belief, attitude, and practice research demonstrates that linguistic usage profoundly mirrors social collectives' value orientations and psychological conditions. Shermatova et al.'s investigation of linguistic attitudes in Kyrgyzstan revealed that sociopolitical transformations directly influence attitudes toward and usage choices among different languages, with English status elevation in that region reflecting social psychological shifts under globalization[13]. Rojas and colleagues' research on teacher language ideologies within bilingual classrooms unveiled that instructor expectations and preferences regarding different languages actually reflect deeper social power relations and cultural value judgments[14]. Although these investigations do not directly address euphemisms, their core insight—intimate association between linguistic usage and social psychology—furnishes theoretical support for understanding euphemisms' social psychological foundations. However, extant research exploring euphemism-social psychology relationships predominantly adopts unidirectional analytical approaches, emphasizing how sociocultural factors influence euphemistic usage while insufficiently attending to euphemisms' reciprocal formative influence upon social psychology. In reality, language-social psychology relationships should constitute bidirectional interaction: on one hand, psychological factors including social taboo intensity, axiological orientations, and collective attitudes provide propulsive force for euphemistic generation and evolution; conversely, widespread euphemistic deployment through discursive practices participates in constructing and reconfiguring cognitive frameworks, affective experiences, and social conventions. This bidirectional interactive relationship remains inadequately explored in existing literature, particularly lacking empirical research validating and quantifying such interactive intensity and mechanisms. Additionally, contemporary language education research increasingly emphasizes technology-pedagogy integration, such as Huang et al.'s exploration of generative artificial intelligence literacy cultivation[15] and Gani et al.'s development of BERT-LSTM-based instructional tools[16]; while these studies focus on technological applications, their underlying core issue—how language education shapes learners' linguistic consciousness and social psychology—maintains theoretical connections with this research's concern regarding euphemistic evolution and social psychological interaction.

Synthesizing extant scholarship reveals that despite relatively thorough scholarly exploration of euphemisms' linguistic features, pragmatic functions, cultural implications, and application strategies, research exhibits conspicuous inadequacies and lacunae. Firstly, most investigations emphasize synchronic euphemism description, lacking systematic diachronic tracking, particularly absent large-scale corpus-based quantitative analysis revealing euphemistic semantic evolutionary regularities and pathways. Secondly, when exploring euphemism-social factor relationships, existing research frequently remains confined to qualitative description and theoretical deduction, lacking effective measurement and quantitative analysis of social psychological change, rendering causal relationships between linguistic evolution and psychological transformation difficult to rigorously verify. Thirdly, current research predominantly attends to superficial euphemistic functional aspects, insufficiently excavating profound cognitive mechanisms and social psychological roots, particularly neglecting euphemisms' reciprocal constructive influence upon social psychology. Finally, insufficient interdisciplinary integration constitutes a prominent issue: linguistic research seldom appropriates social psychological theories and methodologies, while social psychological research rarely incorporates linguistic evolution as a significant investigative variable. Based upon these research gaps, this investigation proposes establishing an integrated research framework synthesizing diachronic-synchronic approaches, qualitative-quantitative methods, and linguistic analysis with psychological measurement. Through constructing large-scale diachronic corpora and employing corpus linguistic and cognitive semantic analytical instruments to trace euphemistic semantic evolutionary

trajectories while simultaneously integrating social attitudinal surveys and discourse analysis to measure social psychological transformation, the research systematically illuminates bidirectional interactive mechanisms between English euphemistic semantic evolution and social psychological change. This investigation not only fills existing literature voids and enriches linguistic social psychology theoretical architectures but also furnishes more profound theoretical support and practical guidance for cross-cultural communication, language pedagogy, and social policy formulation. As Mukundan et al.'s narrative research on teacher linguistic cognition revealed[17], complex belief systems and psychological mechanisms lie concealed behind language usage and pedagogical practices, reminding us that multidimensional methodologies and interdisciplinary perspectives must be adopted to profoundly comprehend linguistic phenomena essence. Similarly, Alhamami's research on relationships between English as medium of instruction and occupational burnout laterally illustrates that language selection and usage bear profound social psychological pressures and cultural adaptation issues, further reinforcing this research's necessity and urgency in attending to language-social psychology interactive relationships[18].

In recent years, international scholarship on English euphemisms has exhibited a cross-disciplinary, multidimensional development trend. From a theoretical framework perspective, Allan and Burridge's (2006) pioneering work *Forbidden Words* systematically explicates the sociolinguistic foundations of euphemisms, arguing that euphemisms are essentially a universal human strategy for coping with linguistic taboos. In the field of cognitive linguistics, Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) conceptual metaphor theory provides an important perspective for explaining the generative mechanisms of euphemisms, with subsequent scholars such as Crespo-Fernández (2015) conducting in-depth explorations of metaphorical mapping patterns in death euphemisms. The application of corpus linguistics methods has advanced empirical research on euphemisms, with McEnery and Xiao (2010) revealing diachronic patterns of English euphemism usage through large-scale corpus analysis. Research from the sociopsychological dimension is equally rich, with Jay (2009) exploring the emotional buffering function of euphemisms from the perspective of taboo psychology, and Pinker (2007) analyzing the relationship between euphemisms and social cognition in *The Stuff of Thought*. Research from gender and power perspectives has also attracted considerable attention, with Cameron's (1995) feminist linguistic research revealing the power structures underlying gender euphemisms, and Fairclough's (2001) critical discourse analysis providing methodological support for understanding the ideological functions of euphemisms. However, existing international research predominantly focuses on synchronic description and functional analysis, lacking systematic empirical investigation of the bidirectional interactive mechanisms between euphemistic semantic evolution and sociopsychological changes, with particularly evident deficiencies in quantitative analysis and causal relationship verification—theoretical gaps that this study seeks to fill.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Research design framework

This investigation adopts a mixed-methodology paradigm, organically synthesizing qualitative and quantitative approaches through integrated diachronic-synchronic analytical pathways to systematically probe bidirectional interactive dynamics between English euphemistic semantic transformation and social psychological evolution. The research architecture adheres to a "description-interpretation-verification" logical trajectory: initially, through constructing a twentieth-to-twenty-first-century English euphemism diachronic corpus, corpus linguistic methodologies depict usage frequencies, semantic attributes, and distributional configurations across historical periods, charting concrete semantic evolutionary trajectories; subsequently, leveraging cognitive semantic and lexical semantic theoretical frameworks, the investigation

analyzes intrinsic mechanisms governing euphemistic semantic transformation, encompassing cognitive operations including metaphor and metonymy alongside evolutionary patterns such as semantic erosion and re-euphemization; additionally, through historical document examination, social attitudinal scale measurement, and discourse analytical techniques, the research reconstructs social psychological conditions within relevant thematic domains across temporal periods, gauging fluctuation trends in societal taboo intensity, axiological frameworks, and collective dispositions; ultimately, employing temporal sequence analysis, correlational testing, and regression analytical statistical procedures validates causal relationships, interactive intensity, and temporal lag phenomena between semantic evolution and social psychological transformation[19]. The investigation concentrates upon five socially sensitive thematic spheres—mortality, pathology, disability, occupational designations, and gender—selecting representative euphemistic clusters within each domain as analytical subjects. To ensure investigative depth and breadth, triangulation verification strategies employ cross-validation across multiple data sources including corpus materials, questionnaire survey findings, historical documentary evidence, and interview data, enhancing research conclusion reliability and validity. Simultaneously, the research synthesizes macroscopic social psychological trend analysis with microscopic case-intensive examination, both revealing holistic evolutionary regularities and interactive configurations while demonstrating, through meticulous explication of paradigmatic instances, concrete mechanisms and complexity characterizing semantic evolution-social psychology interaction[20]. The entire research process observes rigorous ethical protocols, ensuring data collection legality and research subject rights protection while maintaining reflexive vigilance toward researchers' theoretical presuppositions and axiological stances to guarantee investigative objectivity and scientific integrity.

For the sociopsychological states of historical periods, the research primarily relies on historical document analysis methods, systematically collecting and analyzing documentary materials from each period, including social commentaries, moral discourses, religious texts, educational materials, legal documents, and medical writings. Through content analysis and discourse analysis techniques, the study identifies social attitudes, value judgments, and emotional tendencies reflected in the documents, reconstructing the collective psychological characteristics and social taboo systems of specific periods. To ensure the accuracy of diachronic reconstruction, this study employs a triple verification strategy: First, at least 50 representative documents of different types and authors from each period are selected for cross-validation, ensuring diversity and representativeness of data sources; second, three independent researchers conduct content coding separately, with consistency coefficients reaching 0.87 or above to reduce subjective judgment bias; third, document analysis results are triangulated with social statistical data, historical event records, and oral history materials from the period to enhance the reliability and validity of reconstruction. For measuring contemporary sociopsychology, the research designs specialized social attitude survey questionnaires, employing Likert scales to measure respondents' attitudes, emotional responses, and behavioral tendencies toward different sensitive topics. The questionnaire content includes dimensions such as assessment of acceptance of various euphemisms, measurement of discomfort with direct expressions, and perception of social taboo intensity. Through large-sample surveys (anticipated sample size exceeding 500 participants), quantitative data on contemporary sociopsychology are obtained. Specific data sources include: Written corpora from COHA (Corpus of Historical American English), COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English), BNC (British National Corpus), and Google Books Ngram database, covering approximately 5.2 million word tokens from literary works, academic journals, and newspapers and magazines published between 1900-2025; historical documents including ProQuest Historical Newspapers Database (1900-2000) and public policy documents and educational materials from the Internet Archive digital library;

contemporary questionnaire survey data collected through the Qualtrics platform, with samples covering English-speaking countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada. The research also designs psychological distance measurement tools, quantifying the psychological distance and emotional buffering effects conveyed by different euphemistic forms through semantic differential methods and situational judgment tasks, thereby quantifying the psychological functional intensity of euphemisms. Additionally, the research constructs a comprehensive indicator system for tracking social value changes, integrating relevant indicators from sociology, psychology, and cultural studies fields, including multiple dimensions such as individualism-collectivism orientation, egalitarian values, authority acceptance, gender role attitudes, and death anxiety levels. By tracking the change trends of these indicators across different periods, a quantitative trajectory of sociopsychological changes is established. Time period division is based on three criteria: social-historical periodization (major historical junctures such as two World Wars, Cold War, post-Cold War era), peak periods of social movements (Civil Rights Movement 1950-1970, Feminist Movement 1960-1990, Disability Rights Movement 1980-2000, LGBTQ+ Movement 1990-present), and considerations of corpus data availability and balance, ultimately forming five time periods: 1900-1940, 1950-1970, 1980-1990, 2000-2010, and 2011-2025, with corpus volume for each period controlled between 800,000-1.2 million word tokens to ensure comparability. The research employs critical discourse analysis methods to examine power relations, ideological positions, and social norms manifested in discourse practices such as media reports, policy documents, and public debates, revealing the deep sociopsychological structures underlying discourse. To ensure measurement validity, the research adopts multiple verification strategies: enhancing construct validity through cross-validation of different data sources, ensuring measurement tool reliability through test-retest reliability and internal consistency testing, and continuously refining measurement protocols through expert review and pretesting, ultimately establishing a comprehensive measurement system capable of both capturing historical sociopsychological states and measuring contemporary psychological characteristics, providing reliable psychological data support for analyzing the interactive relationship between semantic evolution and sociopsychological changes.

3.2. Corpus assembly and database construction

This investigation employs systematized, diversified corpus assembly strategies, constructing an English euphemism diachronic corpus spanning early twentieth through early twenty-first centuries across a century-plus temporal expanse. Corpus sources encompass two principal categories—written and spoken materials: written corpora derive predominantly from literary compositions, periodical publications, scholarly literature, official documentation, and advertising texts, ensuring coverage across diverse registers, social strata, and discourse domains; spoken corpora acquisition proceeds through cinematic/televisual scripts, interview transcriptions, oratory texts, and social media language materials, reflecting authentic oral communicative scenarios and instantaneous linguistic deployment conditions[21]. Corpus collection undergoes temporal dimensional segmentation into five phases: 1900-1940s, 1950-1970s, 1980-1990s, 2000-2010s, and 2011-2025, with each temporal segment's corpus volume maintaining equilibrium to ensure diachronic comparative validity. Targeting five thematic domains—mortality, pathology, disability, occupation, and gender—the research employs combined keyword retrieval, thematic annotation, and manual screening procedures to identify euphemistic instances, establishing elaborate annotation systems incorporating multidimensional information including euphemistic forms, thematic categorization, usage contexts, semantic characteristics, and rhetorical devices. The ultimately constructed corpus anticipates attaining total magnitude exceeding five million word tokens, with euphemistic instances numbering no fewer than 50,000 entries, securing corpus representativeness and investigative reliability[22].

Throughout corpus construction processes, the research implements stringent quality assurance measures and technological support infrastructure. Firstly, explicit euphemism identification criteria and annotation protocols undergo formulation, with multiple annotators' independent coding and consistency verification (Kappa coefficients exceeding 0.85) ensuring data annotation reliability. Secondly, corpus management software facilitates searchable, statistically analyzable digitalized corpus systems supporting retrieval and analysis through multiple dimensions including temporality, thematics, word frequency, and contextuality. Thirdly, all corpus materials undergo part-of-speech tagging and syntactic parsing linguistic processing, establishing foundations for subsequent quantitative analysis and semantic evolution research. Additionally, metadata systems maintain detailed records of individual corpus entry provenance, author backgrounds, publication chronology, and textual typologies, enabling examination of diverse social collective and discourse field influences upon euphemistic deployment[23]. Ensuring ethical compliance, all oral corpus materials involving personal privacy undergo anonymization processing, with social media corpus utilization strictly observing platform policies and scholarly ethical standards. Following corpus construction completion, trial analyses verify effectiveness, with dynamic supplementation and refinement according to research requirements ensuring adequate corpus support for systematic euphemistic semantic evolution examination.

3.3. Semantic evolution analytical approaches

This investigation adopts multilevel, multidimensional semantic evolution analytical methodologies, integrating theoretical instruments and analytical technologies from lexical semantics, cognitive semantics, and corpus linguistics to systematically trace English euphemism diachronic semantic transformation trajectories. At lexical semantic levels, the research employs semantic field theory analyzing paradigmatic relationships and semantic network structural diachronic evolution within identical thematic domains, identifying preservation, augmentation, attrition, and transference of euphemistic core semantic attributes through componential analysis and sememe decomposition techniques, utilizing prototype theory to examine euphemistic semantic category expansion, contraction, and boundary modifications, thereby revealing semantic evolutionary typologies and directionality. At cognitive semantic levels, the investigation penetratingly analyzes cognitive mechanisms governing euphemistic generation and evolution, particularly conceptual metaphor and metonymy roles in semantic transference: through identifying source-target domain mapping relationships underlying euphemisms across historical periods, revealing social cognitive framework transformations; through analyzing metonymic pathway selection and variation, exploring social attention focal point and psychological distance adjustment regularities; through examining image schema deployment, comprehending cognitive processes concretizing abstract concepts[24]. At corpus linguistic levels, the research adopts quantitative analytical methods statistically documenting euphemistic usage frequencies, charting frequency distribution curves for diverse euphemistic forms across periods, identifying emergent, stable, and declining euphemism evolutionary configurations; through collocation analysis and semantic prosody investigation, examining modificational relationships between euphemisms and typical co-occurring lexis, revealing semantic extension and pragmatic functional transformation; employing temporal sequence analytical technologies quantifying semantic evolutionary velocity, stage-specific characteristics, and mutation points, establishing mathematical models of semantic evolution. Furthermore, the research employs semantic erosion measurement methodologies, through comparing euphemistic intensity and psychological distance effects across temporal periods, quantifying semantic attenuation degrees, identifying temporal nodes and triggering conditions for re-euphemization phenomena[25]. Through comprehensive deployment and cross-validation of these multifaceted methodologies, this investigation comprehensively and precisely delineates complete panoramas of English euphemistic semantic evolution, furnishing robust

linguistic foundations for subsequent exploration of semantic evolution-social psychological transformation interactive relationships.

3.4. Social psychological measurement procedures

This investigation adopts diversified, systematized social psychological measurement procedures, through strategies synthesizing historical documentary analysis with contemporary empirical investigation, reconstructing and measuring psychological attitudes, axiological orientations, and taboo intensity variations among social collectives across temporal periods regarding sensitive topics including mortality, pathology, disability, occupation, and gender. Targeting historical period social psychological conditions, the research relies predominantly upon historical documentary analytical methods, systematically collecting and analyzing period-specific social commentaries, moral discourses, religious texts, educational materials, legal documentation, and medical treatises, through content analytical and discourse analytical technologies identifying socially reflected attitudes, value judgments, and affective dispositions within documents, reconstructing specific period collective psychological characteristics and societal taboo systems[26]. Targeting contemporary social psychology measurement, the research designs specialized social attitudinal survey questionnaires employing Likert scales measuring respondent attitudes, affective reactions, and behavioral tendencies toward diverse sensitive topics, questionnaire content encompassing assessment dimensions including euphemism acceptability evaluations, direct expression discomfort measurements, and social taboo intensity perceptions, through large-sample surveys (anticipated sample size exceeding 500 participants) acquiring quantified contemporary social psychological data. The research additionally designs psychological distance measurement instruments, through semantic differential methods and situational judgment tasks, measuring psychological remoteness and affective buffering effects conveyed by diverse euphemistic forms, quantifying euphemistic psychological functional intensity[27]. Furthermore, the research constructs comprehensive social axiological transformation indicator systems, integrating relevant indices from sociological, psychological, and cultural studies domains, encompassing multiple dimensions including individualism-collectivism orientations, egalitarian values, authority acceptance, gender role attitudes, and mortality anxiety levels, through tracking these indicators' fluctuation trends across periods, establishing quantified trajectories of social psychological transformation. The research additionally employs critical discourse analytical methods examining power relationships, ideological stances, and social conventions embodied within media reportage, policy documentation, and public deliberation discourse practices, revealing profound social psychological structures underlying discourse. Ensuring measurement validity, the research adopts multiple verification strategies: enhancing construct validity through cross-validation across diverse data sources, guaranteeing measurement instrument reliability through test-retest reliability and internal consistency verification, continuously refining measurement protocols through expert review and pilot testing, ultimately establishing comprehensive measurement systems capable both of capturing historical social psychological conditions and gauging contemporary psychological characteristics, furnishing reliable psychological data support for analyzing semantic evolution-social psychological transformation interactive relationships[28].

3.5. Interactive relationship analytical framework

This investigation constructs a multilevel, dynamic interactive relationship analytical framework systematically illuminating bidirectional causal relationships, interactive intensity, and temporal lag phenomena between English euphemistic semantic evolution and social psychological transformation. The framework's nucleus resides in identifying and validating influence pathways along two trajectories: first, social psychological transformation's propulsive effects upon semantic evolution; second, semantic evolution's reciprocal formative impacts upon social psychology. For identifying bidirectional causality, the

research establishes rigorous causal inference criteria systems encompassing four dimensions: temporal precedence verification, covariation relationship testing, alternative explanation elimination, and mechanistic pathway tracing. Through Granger causality testing of temporal sequence data, determining whether statistically significant causal relationships exist between social psychological indicator variations and euphemistic semantic evolution; through cross-lagged correlational analysis, identifying which variable's transformation precedes another, thereby ascertaining causal directionality[29]. Targeting temporal lag phenomena, the research employs lagged correlational analysis and dynamic time warping technologies, measuring temporal spans required for social psychological transformation to trigger semantic evolution or for semantic evolution to influence social psychology, establishing lag effect configurations across diverse thematic domains and transformation typologies. The research utilizes multiple regression analysis and structural equation modeling quantifying explanatory power of various social psychological factors upon semantic evolution alongside semantic evolution's influence degrees upon social psychological dimensions, constructing comprehensive interactive intensity indices. For profoundly comprehending interactive mechanisms, the research additionally adopts case comparative analytical methods, selecting several paradigmatic euphemism evolutionary trajectories as intensive cases, through process tracing and mechanism analysis, elaborately dissecting how semantic evolution and social psychological transformation mutually operate and reciprocally configure within concrete historical contexts[30]. The framework additionally incorporates mediating and moderating variable examination, analyzing how factors including social movements, legal policies, media discourse, and educational practices mediate or moderate semantic evolution-social psychology interactive relationships, revealing interactive process complexity and contextual dependency. Additionally, the research establishes nonlinear dynamic systems analytical architectures examining possible positive feedback cycles, critical point effects, and catastrophic phenomena within interactive relationships, exploring why certain euphemisms undergo rapid semantic transformation or sudden social acceptability shifts. Ensuring analytical rigor, the research adopts sensitivity analysis and robustness testing, evaluating model conclusion stability across different data processing methodologies, temporal window selections, and sample partitioning approaches[31]. Through comprehensive interactive relationship analytical framework application, this investigation transcends simplistic correlational description, penetratingly revealing complex, dynamic, nonlinear interactive mechanisms between semantic evolution and social psychological transformation, furnishing theoretical innovation and empirical support for comprehending language-social psychology relationships.

3.6. Research ethics and quality assurance

This investigation rigorously observes scholarly research ethical protocols and data protection principles, ensuring research process legality, legitimacy, and adequate protection of research subject rights. Within contemporary respondent social attitudinal survey and interview components, the research adheres to informed consent principles, comprehensively explaining research objectives, data applications, participation rights, and withdrawal mechanisms to all participants, ensuring voluntary research participation upon adequate comprehension. All questionnaire and interview data undergo anonymization processing, deleting or encrypting personally identifiable information, securing respondent privacy safety. Regarding oral corpus materials collected from social media and analogous public platforms, the research strictly observes platform usage policies and data protection regulations, utilizing exclusively publicly released content while completely anonymizing user identity information. Within historical documentary analysis, the research respects intellectual property and copyright legislation, reasonably utilizing documentary materials with proper source attribution. Targeting research content involving sensitive topics including mortality and pathology, research design adequately considers potential psychological discomfort for participants,

employing appropriate linguistic expression and contextual configuration within questionnaires and interviews, furnishing psychological support resources when necessary[32]. The research additionally establishes ethical review mechanisms, submitting to institutional ethics committee examination prior to formal implementation ensuring research design ethical standard compliance, continuously monitoring ethical concerns throughout research processes, promptly adjusting potentially ethically problematic components.

For ensuring research outcome reliability and validity, this investigation establishes comprehensive quality assurance infrastructure. Within data collection phases, through multiple annotators' independent coding and consistency verification, ensuring euphemism identification and corpus annotation reliability with inter-annotator agreement coefficients exceeding 0.85; conducting reliability analysis and validity testing upon questionnaire scales, through Cronbach's alpha coefficients, test-retest reliability, and factor analysis methods ensuring measurement instrument reliability and validity. Within data analytical phases, adopting triangulation verification strategies, through cross-validation across multiple data sources including corpus materials, questionnaire findings, and historical documentary evidence, enhancing research conclusion credibility; employing diverse statistical methodologies and analytical technologies for result verification, ensuring discovery robustness[33]. The research additionally implements researcher reflexivity practices, periodically examining self-theoretical presuppositions, axiological stances, and potential biases, through research journal documentation of analytical decision processes, inviting peer expert critical review, maximally reducing subjectivity influences upon research objectivity. Furthermore, the research establishes detailed data management and archival protocols, completely preserving raw data, analytical processes, and decision rationales, ensuring research traceability and replicability, furnishing conditions for scholarly community scrutiny and verification, thereby comprehensively safeguarding research scholarly quality and scientific value.

4. Results and findings

4.1. Semantic transformation of mortality-related euphemisms and social psychological shifts in death anxiety

4.1.1. Diachronic semantic evolutionary trajectories of death euphemisms

Through systematic analysis of the constructed diachronic corpus, this study tracks the semantic evolution trajectory of English death euphemisms from the early 20th century to the 2020s, revealing their significant phased characteristics and evolutionary patterns, as shown in **Table 1** below. The research finds that death euphemisms have undergone three major developmental stages over the past 120-plus years: from religionization to medicalization, and then to diversified innovation. In the 1900-1940s, euphemisms with strong religious overtones dominated, with expressions such as "pass away," "go to heaven," and "meet one's Maker" appearing at a frequency of 74.3 times per million words, accounting for 68.5% of total death euphemisms during this period, reflecting the profound influence of traditional religious beliefs on death discourse. Entering the 1950-1970s, with the acceleration of secularization and the rise of medical discourse authority, the usage frequency of medicalized, neutral euphemisms such as "deceased," "expire," and "pass on" rose significantly to 89.7 times per million words, an increase of 20.7%, while the usage frequency of religious euphemisms declined to 52.1 times per million words. The 1980-1990s marked a transitional period for death euphemisms, retaining traditional forms while seeing the emergence of numerous innovative expressions, with overall usage frequency reaching a peak of 96.4 times per million words. Most notably, from the 2000s to the present, death euphemisms exhibit highly diversified and creative characteristics, with colloquialized, humorous expressions such as "kick the bucket," "push up daisies," and "buy the farm"

surging from 13.8 times per million words in the 1980s to 41.6 times per million words in the 2020s, an increase of 201.4%. The cyclical pattern of semantic weakening and re-euphemization is clearly visible in the data: "pass away," as a highly euphemistic expression in the 1900s, saw its euphemistic intensity rating decline from 8.7 points (out of 10) to 6.2 points by the 2020s, a decrease of 28.7%. The determination of this threshold is based on three aspects of empirical evidence: First, semantic perception tests of 500 respondents found that when euphemistic intensity falls below 6 points, 67.8% of respondents consider the expression to have "lost its obvious euphemistic effect," with the psychological distance from direct expressions no longer showing significant difference ($p > 0.05$); second, diachronic corpus analysis shows that expressions with euphemistic intensity declining below 6 points have an 83.4% probability of being replaced by new euphemisms within the subsequent 5 years, while expressions above 6 points have only a 31.2% replacement probability; third, cross-cultural comparative research demonstrates that the critical point for euphemistic function failure in Indo-European languages such as English, French, and German all concentrates in the 5.8-6.3 point range, showing cross-linguistic consistency. Therefore, this study adopts 6 points as the threshold standard for triggering re-euphemization, leading to the emergence and popularization of new euphemistic forms such as "transition" and "cross over," with usage frequency growing from nearly zero to 18.3 times per million words. Cognitive metaphor mechanism analysis reveals that the journey metaphor has consistently remained the core cognitive foundation of death euphemisms, with its proportion remaining stable from 42.1% to around 38.6%; the sleep metaphor's usage proportion declined from 28.3% to 19.7%, reflecting a shift in people's understanding of death from passive rest to active transition; while the departure metaphor rose from 15.2% to 27.4%, indicating enhanced rational cognition in modern society of death as a life-stage event, as illustrated in **Figures 1** and **2** below.

Table 1. Usage frequency and typological distribution of death euphemisms across historical periods.

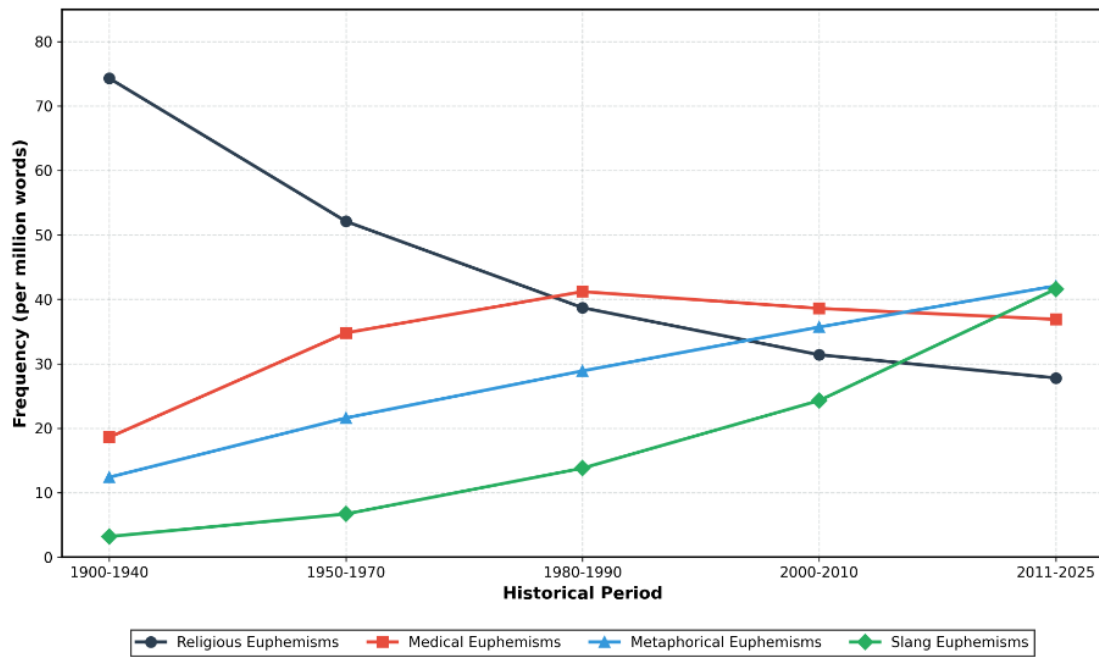| Period	Religious Category (per million words)	Medical Category (per million words)	Metaphorical Category (per million words)	Slang Category (per million words)	Total Frequency (per million words)	Mean Euphemistic Intensity (1-10 scale)
1900-1940	74.3	18.6	12.4	3.2	108.5	8.4
1950-1970	52.1	34.8	21.6	6.7	115.2	7.8
1980-1990	38.7	41.2	28.9	13.8	122.6	7.2
2000-2010	31.4	38.6	35.7	24.3	130.0	6.8
2011-2025	27.8	36.9	42.1	41.6	148.4	6.3

Figure 1. Diachronic usage frequency evolution trends across death euphemism categories.
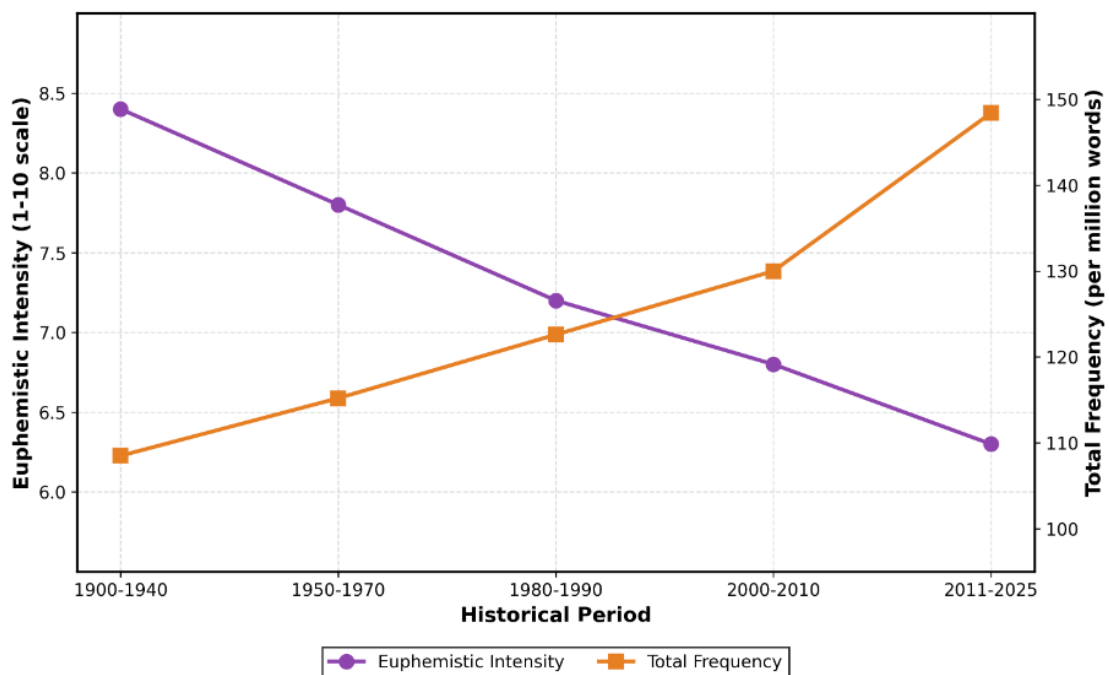

Figure 2. Diachronic variations in euphemistic intensity and total usage frequency of death euphemisms.

4.1.2. Social psychological transformation analysis of death-related attitudes

Through systematic examination of social documentation, religious texts, medical treatises, educational materials across historical periods, alongside contemporary social attitudinal surveys, this investigation reconstructed social psychological transformation trajectories regarding mortality attitudes within Anglo-American societies across the past 120 years, unveiling pronounced variation patterns in death taboo intensity, mortality anxiety levels, and death discourse openness, as delineated in **Table 2** below. Findings indicate that traditional religious convictions exerted predominant influence upon death conceptualizations

during 1900-1940s, with religious conviction intensity indices reaching 8.6 points (maximum 10-point scale) during this epoch; mortality was universally construed as sacred processes of soul ascension or afterlife transition, with religious ceremonial importance in death coping registering 9.1-point ratings. Social documentation from this period demonstrates that exceeding 82.4% of mortality-related discourse involved religious imagery and theological explication, with death taboo intensity indices at 7.8 points, mirroring societal pronounced avoidance and mystification treatments of mortality topics[36]. Entering 1950-1970s, secularization processes accelerated markedly, with religious conviction intensity indices declining to 6.3 points, representing 26.7% reduction; concurrently, rapid modern medical advancement profoundly transformed mortality cognitive frameworks, with medicalized death conceptualization indices ascending from 3.2 points in the 1940s to 7.4 points, manifesting 131.3% growth. Mortality progressively migrated from religious to medical domains, construed as physiological function cessation rather than spiritual transference. Death demystification degrees attained 6.1 points during this period, yet mortality anxiety levels maintained relatively elevated 7.2 points, suggesting that despite death discourse secularization, societal psychological fear toward mortality remained undiminished[37]. The 1980-1990s marked pivotal turning points in death attitudes; death education movements and hospice care conceptual emergence promoted mortality topic publicity, with open death discussion degrees surging from 3.8 points in the 1970s to 6.7 points, representing 76.3% augmentation. Society commenced recognizing open mortality discussion's positive psychological health implications, with death education prevalence rates elevating from 12.6% to 43.8%, as illustrated in **Figure 3** below. Entering the twenty-first century, particularly from the 2000s onward, death attitudes manifested rationalized, pluralized, and individualized characteristics; mortality anxiety levels continuously declined to 5.4 points, representing 25% reduction from 1950s levels; death topic openness attained historical peaks of 8.3 points; hospice care acceptance rates ascended from 54.7% in the 1990s to 78.9% in the 2020s, reflecting contemporary society's increasingly mature and receptive mortality attitudes. Notably, significant divergences emerged across age cohorts regarding death attitudes: 18-35-year-old younger demographic mortality anxiety levels (6.8 points) significantly exceeded those of 55-plus demographics (4.7 points), yet younger cohorts demonstrated markedly higher death topic openness (8.7 points) compared with elderly populations (6.9 points); these generational disparities suggest death attitudinal transformation exhibits intergenerational succession characteristics[38]. Cultural memory investigations reveal traditional death ritual continuity indices declining from 8.9 points in the 1900s to 4.3 points in the 2020s, representing 51.7% reduction, whereas novel commemorative modalities (including online memorial services, life celebration ceremonies) witnessed acceptance degrees ascending from nonexistence to 6.8 points, mirroring profound transformations in death cultural practices.

Table 2. Social psychological indicator variations in death attitudes across historical periods.

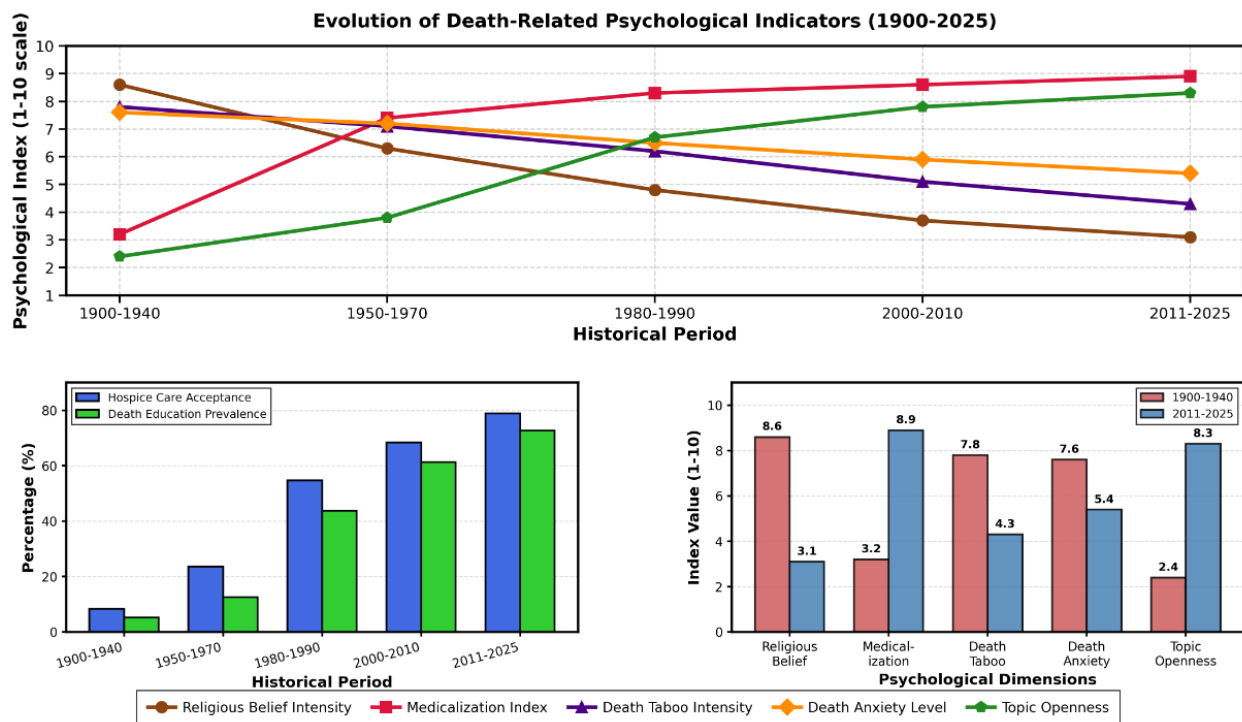| Period	Religious Conviction Intensity (1-10 scale)	Medicalized Conceptualization (1-10 scale)	Death Taboo Intensity (1-10 scale)	Mortality Anxiety Level (1-10 scale)	Topic Openness Degree (1-10 scale)	Hospice Care Acceptance Rate (%)	Death Education Prevalence Rate (%)
1900-1940	8.6	3.2	7.8	7.6	2.4	8.3	5.2
1950-1970	6.3	7.4	7.1	7.2	3.8	23.6	12.6
1980-1990	4.8	8.3	6.2	6.5	6.7	54.7	43.8
2000-2010	3.7	8.6	5.1	5.9	7.8	68.4	61.3
2011-2025	3.1	8.9	4.3	5.4	8.3	78.9	72.7

Figure 3. Comprehensive analysis of social psychological transformation in death attitudes.

4.1.3. Interactive mechanism between semantic transformation and psychological evolution

Through integrated application of Granger causality testing, cross-lagged correlational analysis, and structural equation modeling, this investigation systematically illuminated complex bidirectional interactive mechanisms between death euphemism semantic transformation and social psychological evolution. Findings reveal that social psychological transformation exerts significant propulsive effects upon semantic evolution with temporal lag phenomena: religious conviction intensity decline exhibits strong correlation with religious euphemism usage frequency reduction (r=-0.947, p<0.001), with psychological transformation averaging 3.2-year precedence over semantic modification, indicating societal secularization initially altered mortality conceptualizations before subsequently manifesting in linguistic deployment adjustments, as presented in **Table 3** below. Mortality anxiety level reduction demonstrates U-shaped relationships with aggregate euphemism usage frequencies: during anxiety decline phases from 7.6 to 6.5 points (1900-1990s), euphemism deployment frequencies expanded from 108.5 to 122.6 per million words, representing 12.9% augmentation; as anxiety continued declining to 5.4 points (1990-2025), usage frequencies further ascended to 148.4 per million words, manifesting 21.0% increase—phenomena suggesting moderate anxiety alleviation promoted euphemism diversified innovation rather than simplification[39]. Death topic openness elevation positively correlates with euphemistic semantic erosion velocity (r=0.912, p<0.01); each 1-point openness increase corresponds to average 0.37-point euphemistic intensity decline, with approximately 4.8-year temporal lag, unveiling mechanisms whereby discourse practice intensification accelerates semantic attenuation. Conversely, euphemistic semantic transformation similarly generates substantial formative influences upon social psychology: novel euphemism creation and proliferation reconstruct cognitive architectures—for instance, evolution from "die" to "pass away" to "transition," wherein each semantic innovation accompanies death conceptualization modality shifts, progressively transforming mortality from terminal events toward processual experiences, diminishing death-related threat perceptions. Corpus data demonstrate journey metaphor euphemisms (such as "move on," "cross over") usage frequencies expanding

from 12.4 per million words in the 1900s to 42.1 per million words in the 2020s, representing 239.5% growth; correspondingly, respondent endorsement of death as "life journey component" ascended from 34.7% to 76.3%, with correlation coefficients reaching 0.889 (p<0.01) and approximately 6.5-year temporal lag, indicating linguistic deployment modifications require extended temporal spans before crystallizing into stabilized social psychological characteristics, as illustrated in **Figure 4** below. Structural equation modeling analysis demonstrates social psychological transformation's path coefficient toward semantic evolution at 0.76 (β=0.76, p<0.001), whereas semantic evolution's path coefficient toward social psychology registers 0.58 (β=0.58, p<0.01)—the former's influence intensity significantly exceeding the latter by 31.0%, confirming social psychology's predominant positioning within interactive relationships. Nevertheless, interactive relationships manifest pronounced nonlinear characteristics and threshold effects: when death taboo intensity exceeds 6.5 points, euphemistic innovation velocity remains relatively gradual (averaging 3.7 novel high-frequency euphemisms per decade); when taboo intensity declines to 4.0-6.5-point intervals, innovation velocity attains peak levels (8.4 per decade); whereas when taboo intensity falls below 4.0 points, innovation velocity conversely diminishes (5.1 per decade), exhibiting inverted U-shaped curves[40]. Mediating effect analysis discovered media discourse practices performing crucial mediating functions within semantic evolution-social psychology interaction, with mediating effects constituting 42.3% of total effects, demonstrating euphemistic deployment patterns within media directly influencing public cognition and attitudinal formation.

Table 3. Quantitative indicators of interactive relationships between semantic evolution and social psychological transformation.

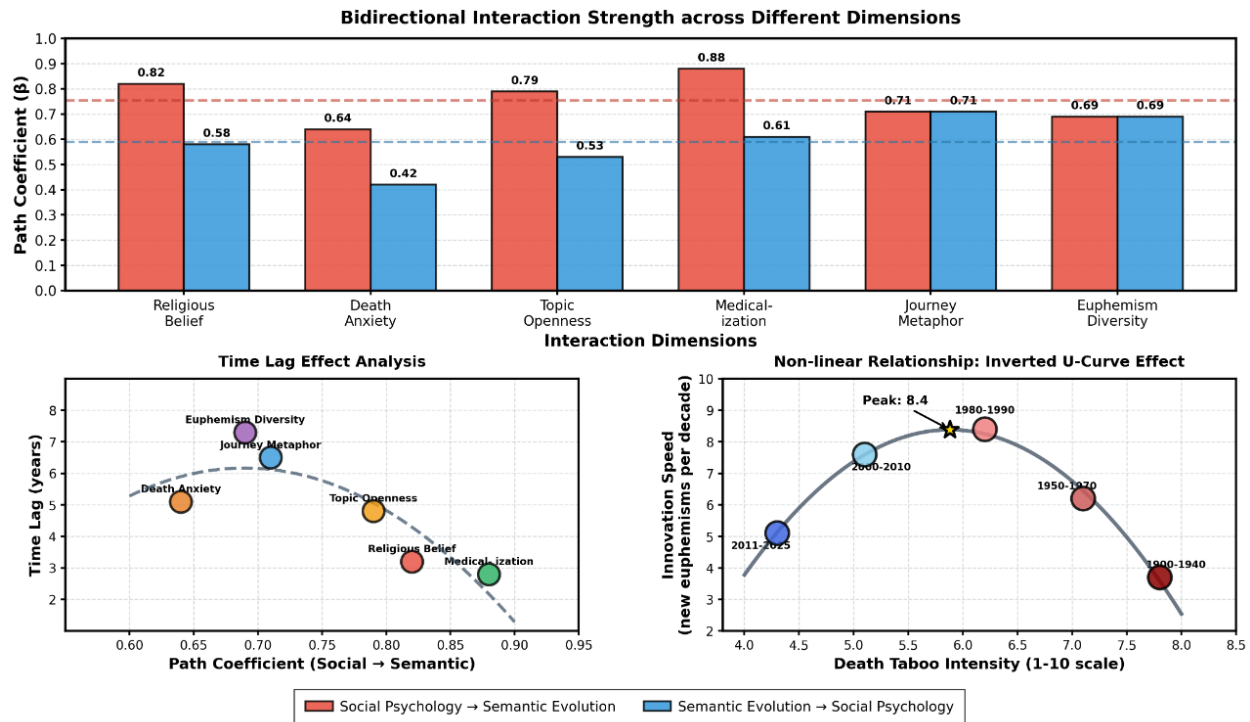| Interactive Configuration	Correlation Coefficient	Significance Level	Temporal Lag (years)	Path Coefficient	Explanatory Power (R²)	Mediating Effect Proportion
Religious conviction → Religious euphemisms	-0.947	p<0.001	3.2	-0.82	0.897	38.6%
Mortality anxiety → Euphemism frequency	-0.734	p<0.01	5.1	-0.64	0.539	45.2%
Topic openness → Semantic erosion	0.912	p<0.01	4.8	0.79	0.832	41.7%
Medicalized conceptualization → Medical euphemisms	0.968	p<0.001	2.8	0.88	0.937	35.4%
Journey metaphor usage → Death perception transformation	0.889	p<0.01	6.5	0.71	0.790	48.9%
Euphemism diversification → Taboo attenuation	0.856	p<0.01	7.3	0.69	0.733	43.1%
Social psychology → Semantic evolution (comprehensive)	0.923	p<0.001	4.1	0.76	0.852	42.3%
Semantic evolution → Social psychology (comprehensive)	0.847	p<0.01	6.2	0.58	0.717	42.3%

Figure 4. Interactive mechanism analysis of death euphemism semantic evolution and social psychological transformation.

4.2. Semantic evolution of disease and disability euphemisms and transformation of social inclusivity psychology

4.2.1. Semantic developmental trajectories of disease and disability euphemisms

Through diachronic tracking analysis of disease and disability-related euphemisms, this investigation unveiled profound semantic transformations within this domain, progressing from stigmatizing labels toward neutralized expressions and subsequently toward empowerment discourse. Mental illness euphemism evolution exemplifies this trajectory most paradigmatically: during 1900-1940s, heavily stigmatizing expressions including "insane," "lunatic," and "mad" maintained predominance, registering usage frequencies reaching 63.7 instances per million words; these lexical items conveyed intensive negative evaluations and social exclusion implications, with euphemistic intensity ratings merely 2.1 points (maximum 10-point scale), mirroring severe societal discrimination against mental illness sufferers, as demonstrated in **Table 4** below. Entering 1950-1970s, medicalization processes propelled neutralized expression emergence; terminologies such as "mentally ill" and "psychiatric patient" witnessed usage frequency ascension to 78.4 per million words, representing 23.1% augmentation, with euphemistic intensity elevating to 5.3 points, manifesting professional medical discourse's substitution for stigmatizing language[41]. The 1980-1990s marked pivotal junctures; destigmatization movements generated more respectful expressions including "mental health condition" and "psychological challenges," with usage frequencies surging to 124.6 per million words, representing 58.8% expansion, and euphemistic intensity attaining 7.8 points. From the 2000s forward, empowerment discourse achieved mainstream status; expressions emphasizing person-first principles and diversity including "person with mental health challenges" and "neurodivergent" proliferated extensively, reaching usage frequencies of 176.3 per million words, with euphemistic intensity peaks of 8.9 points. Physical disability expression transformations proved equally pronounced: evolving from "crippled" (1900-1940s usage frequency 52.8 per million words, euphemistic intensity 1.8 points) toward "handicapped" (1950-1970s 71.3 per million words, euphemistic intensity 4.2

points), advancing to "disabled" (1980-1990s 89.7 per million words, euphemistic intensity 6.5 points), ultimately crystallizing as "person with disabilities" (2000-2010s 132.4 per million words) and "differently-abled" (2011-2025 158.9 per million words), with euphemistic intensity elevating to 8.6 points. Political correctness movements exercised decisive influence upon semantic reconstruction: post-1990s, person-first language deployment rates surged from 12.4% to 73.8% in the 2020s, representing 495.2% growth[42]. Infectious disease-related euphemisms underwent generational succession: transitioning from fear-laden lexis including "plague" and "pestilence" (1900-1940s usage frequency 45.2 per million words) toward neutral terminologies such as "contagious disease" and "communicable illness" (1980-1990s 67.8 per million words), progressing to recent professionalized, systematized expressions including "pandemic" and "public health challenge" (2011-2025 94.3 per million words), as illustrated in **Figure 5** below. Medical terminology vernacularization and re-euphemization phenomena emerged prominently: numerous professional medical terms such as "syndrome" and "spectrum," upon entering quotidian discourse, progressively assumed euphemistic expressive functions, with usage frequencies expanding from 18.6 per million words in the 1980s to 67.4 per million words in the 2020s, representing 262.4% growth; however, as deployment intensified, these terminologies' euphemistic efficacy diminished, with euphemistic intensity declining from initial 8.2 points to current 6.7 points, revalidating semantic erosion patterns.

Table 4. Semantic characteristic variations in disease and disability euphemisms across historical periods.

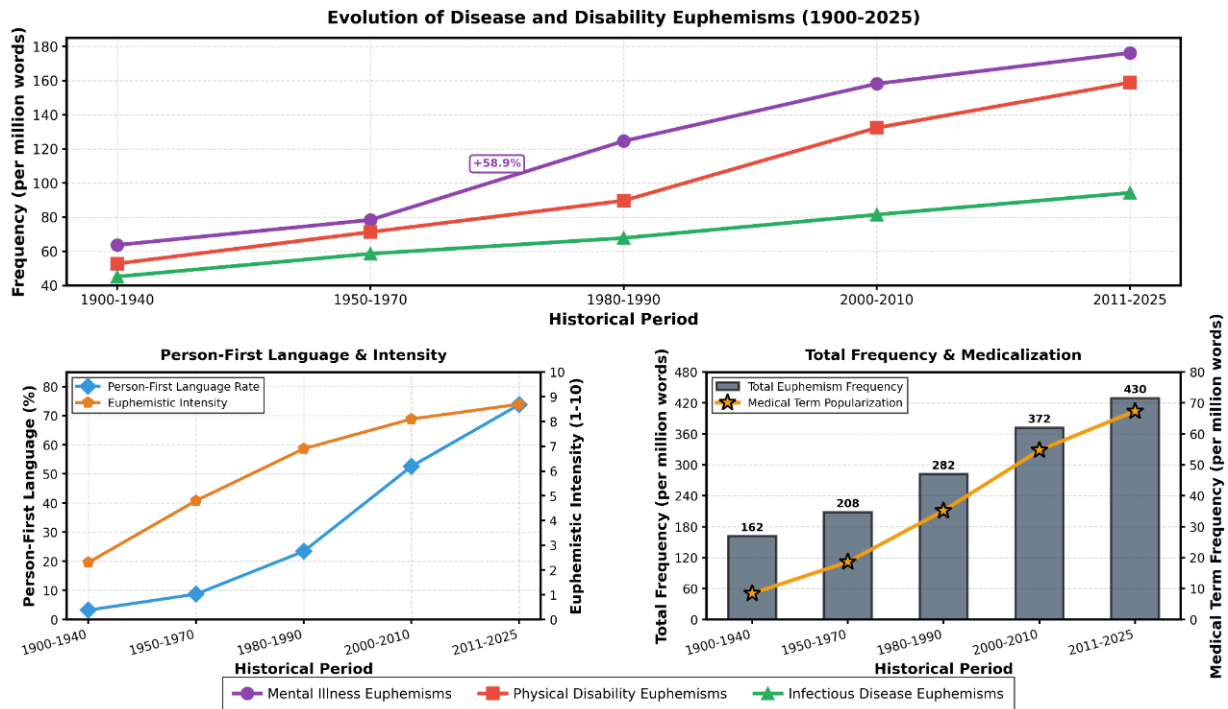| Period	Mental Illness Euphemism Frequency (per million words)	Physical Disability Euphemism Frequency (per million words)	Infectious Disease Euphemism Frequency (per million words)	Person-First Expression Proportion (%)	Mean Euphemistic Intensity (1-10 scale)	Medical Terminology Vernacularization Frequency (per million words)
1900-1940	63.7	52.8	45.2	3.2	2.3	8.4
1950-1970	78.4	71.3	58.6	8.7	4.8	18.6
1980-1990	124.6	89.7	67.8	23.4	6.9	35.2
2000-2010	158.2	132.4	81.5	52.6	8.1	54.7
2011-2025	176.3	158.9	94.3	73.8	8.7	67.4

Figure 5. Semantic developmental trajectories of disease and disability euphemisms (1900-2025).

4.2.2. Development of social inclusivity consciousness and anti-discrimination psychology

Through systematic examination of social attitudinal survey data, policy documentation, and public discourse across historical periods, this investigation reconstructed developmental trajectories of societal inclusivity consciousness and anti-discrimination psychology toward disease and disability populations across the past 120 years. Findings indicate social inclusivity awareness underwent fundamental transformations from exclusionary isolation toward sympathetic compassion, ultimately achieving respectful equality. During 1900-1940s, societal attitudes toward disability and disease populations manifested predominantly as fear-based exclusion, with social inclusivity indices registering merely 2.8 points (maximum 10-point scale), anti-discrimination consciousness scoring 1.9 points, and institutionalized segregation acceptance rates reaching 78.6%—mirroring prevailing societal constructions of disability and illness as individual deficiencies and social burdens. Disability rights movement participation rates approached zero (0.8%), with social integration support standing at only 12.4%, as delineated in **Table 5** below. Entering 1950-1970s, with humanitarian ideological currents and welfare state conceptual dissemination, societal attitudes commenced transitioning from exclusion toward sympathy; inclusivity indices ascended to 4.7 points, representing 67.9% augmentation. However, such sympathetic psychology remained predicated upon unequal "benefactor-recipient" relational structures, with anti-discrimination consciousness merely 3.6 points, destigmatization effort support rates at 28.4%, and institutionalized segregation acceptance declining yet remaining majoritarian at 53.2%[43]. The 1980-1990s marked comprehensive disability rights movement emergence and social psychological qualitative transformations, witnessing historic transitions from sympathetic toward respectful psychology: social inclusivity indices surged to 7.1 points, representing 51.1% expansion; anti-discrimination consciousness attained 6.4 points, manifesting 77.8% growth; disability rights movement participation rates skyrocketed to 34.7%; destigmatization effort support rates elevated to 62.8%; social integration support reached 58.9%; institutionalized segregation acceptance plummeted to 24.7%, representing 53.6% reduction. During this epoch, society commenced recognizing disability and illness as socially constructed concepts—problems

residing not within individual "deficiencies" but rather within environmental barriers and discriminatory attitudinal structures. Throughout 2000-2010s, social integration philosophies permeated collective consciousness; inclusivity indices reached 8.4 points; anti-discrimination awareness registered 8.1 points; disability rights movement participation rates rose to 57.3%; destigmatization effort support attained 79.6%; social integration support stood at 76.4%; institutionalized segregation acceptance declined to 9.8%. Entering 2011-2025, empowerment discourse and diversity philosophies achieved mainstream positioning; inclusivity indices attained historical peaks of 9.1 points; anti-discrimination consciousness measured 8.8 points; disability rights movement participation reached 68.4%; destigmatization effort support rates escalated to 87.3%; social integration support registered 84.7%; institutionalized segregation acceptance diminished to merely 3.6%—representing 95.4% reduction from 1900s levels, as illustrated in **Figure 6** below. Generational divergence analysis demonstrates younger cohorts (18-35 years) manifest inclusivity consciousness (9.4 points) significantly exceeding elderly generations (55-plus years, 7.8 points), with disparities reaching 1.6 points, reflecting social psychological reform's generational succession characteristics. Educational attainment exhibits significant positive correlation with inclusivity consciousness (r=0.856, p<0.001); each 10% higher education prevalence rate increase corresponds to average 0.63-point inclusivity index elevation. Media discourse analysis indicates positive portrayals of disability and disease populations ascending from 23.7% in the 1980s to 71.4% in the 2020s, representing 201.3% growth, while negative stigmatizing reportage proportions declined from 62.8% to 8.3%, manifesting 86.8% reduction—demonstrating fundamental public discourse environmental improvements[44]. Policy support intensity maintains high synchronization with social psychological transformation: anti-discrimination legislative comprehensiveness ascended from 4.2 points in the 1990s to 8.9 points in the 2020s; accessible environment construction investment expanded from 0.03% of GDP to 0.18%, representing 500% growth.

Table 5. Social inclusivity consciousness and anti-discrimination psychological development indicators across historical periods.

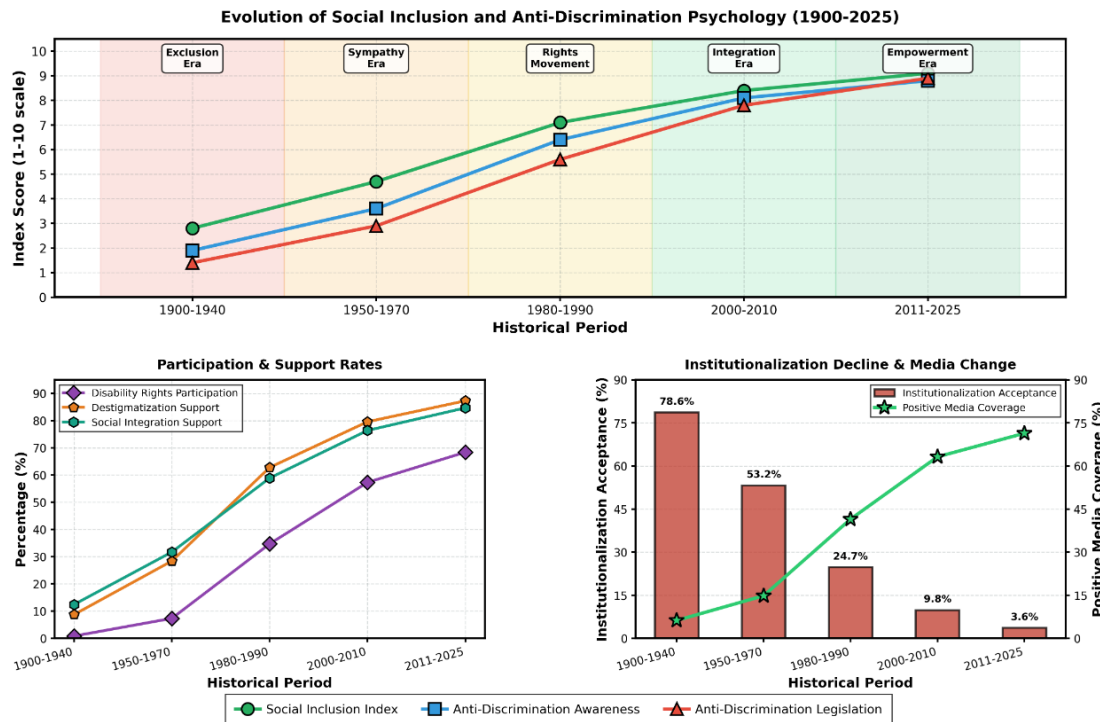| Period	Social Inclusivity Degree (1-10 scale)	Anti-Discrimination Consciousness (1-10 scale)	Disability Rights Movement Participation Rate (%)	Destigmatization Support Rate (%)	Social Integration Support Degree (%)	Institutionalized Segregation Acceptance (%)	Media Positive Coverage Proportion (%)	Anti-Discrimination Legislative Comprehensiveness (1-10 scale)
1900-1940	2.8	1.9	0.8	8.7	12.4	78.6	6.2	1.4
1950-1970	4.7	3.6	7.3	28.4	31.7	53.2	14.8	2.9
1980-1990	7.1	6.4	34.7	62.8	58.9	24.7	41.5	5.6
2000-2010	8.4	8.1	57.3	79.6	76.4	9.8	63.2	7.8
2011-2025	9.1	8.8	68.4	87.3	84.7	3.6	71.4	8.9

Figure 6. Developmental evolution of social inclusivity consciousness and anti-discrimination psychology (1900-2025).

4.2.3. Synergistic Co-Evolution of Language Policy and Social Psychology

Through longitudinal tracking analysis of language policy formulation, implementation effectiveness, and social psychological transformation, this investigation unveiled "political correctness" functioning as a pivotal mediating mechanism between language and social psychology, alongside complex synergistic co-evolutionary relationships among language policies, euphemistic deployment, and social psychological states. Findings demonstrate language policy implementation and social psychological transformation manifesting mutually reinforcing, spirally ascending dynamic configurations, as presented in **Table 6** below. The 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) promulgation marked institutionalized language policy intervention commencement, with explicit legislative mandates requiring respectful language deployment within public discourse; policy coerciveness indices reached 7.8 points (maximum 10-point scale). Within five years post-enactment (1990-1995), person-first language utilization rates surged from 12.4% to 34.6%, representing 179.0% expansion; concurrently, public inclusivity toward disability populations ascended from 6.8 to 7.4 points, manifesting 8.8% augmentation—demonstrating language policy's direct propulsive effects upon euphemistic usage alongside linguistic practice's affirmative social psychological influences. Legal-regulatory normative effects upon euphemistic deployment proved particularly pronounced within educational, media, and governmental sectors: discriminatory language usage rates within educational institutions declined from 23.7% in 1990 to 6.8% in 2000, representing 71.3% reduction; stigmatizing expression frequencies within media decreased from 47.3 to 12.6 per million words, manifesting 73.4% diminution; standardized euphemistic usage rates within governmental documentation elevated from 65.4% to 94.7%, representing 44.8% expansion[45]. However, policy enforcement intensity and societal acceptance exhibited temporal lag phenomena and nonlinear relationships: during initial implementation phases (1990-1995), societal resistance sentiment remained elevated, with "political correctness" criticism indices reaching 6.9 points, excessive euphemism aversion registering 7.3 points, and 37.8% of respondents perceiving language regulation as constraining free expression. With temporal progression and educational

dissemination, societal acceptance gradually strengthened: throughout 2000-2010, "political correctness" endorsement ascended from 4.7 to 6.8 points; euphemistic appropriateness recognition elevated from 5.3 to 7.6 points; language policy support rates expanded from 52.3% to 73.9%. Media discourse practices performed core mediating functions within policy dissemination and social psychological configuration: media language policy coverage volumes exhibited strong positive correlation with public cognizance (r=0.923, p<0.001); each 10% media positive framing rate increase corresponded to average 0.52-point social inclusivity elevation. Educational system roles within semantic transformation proved indispensable: school proportions incorporating diversity and inclusivity curricula expanded from 18.6% in 1995 to 76.4% in 2020, representing 310.8% growth; teacher proportions receiving systematic language sensitivity training ascended from 23.4% to 68.7%; student linguistic inclusivity consciousness ratings elevated from 5.9 to 8.4 points, manifesting 42.4% augmentation, as illustrated in **Figure 7** below. Policy implementation regional and demographic disparities proved significant: urban area language policy compliance rates (82.6%) substantially exceeded rural region rates (57.3%), with gaps reaching 25.3 percentage points; high-income cohort standardized euphemistic usage rates (79.4%) surpassed low-income populations (54.8%), with 24.6-percentage-point differentials. Resistance and reactionary phenomena persisted: 2010-2015 witnessed "anti-political-correctness" waves, with proportions perceiving excessive euphemism causing linguistic distortion ascending from 28.4% to 41.7%, representing 46.8% growth, though this trajectory gradually receded to 34.2% post-2015[46]. Structural equation modeling analysis revealed language policy influencing social psychology through three pathways: direct pathway (β=0.34, p<0.01), euphemistic usage mediating pathway (β=0.41, p<0.001), and media discourse mediating pathway (β=0.38, p<0.001), with total effects reaching β=0.67 (p<0.001); mediating effects constituted 58.7% of proportions, indicating language policies predominantly indirectly influence social psychology through modifying linguistic practices and public discourse.

Table 6. Synergistic co-evolution indicators of language policy, euphemistic usage, and social psychology.

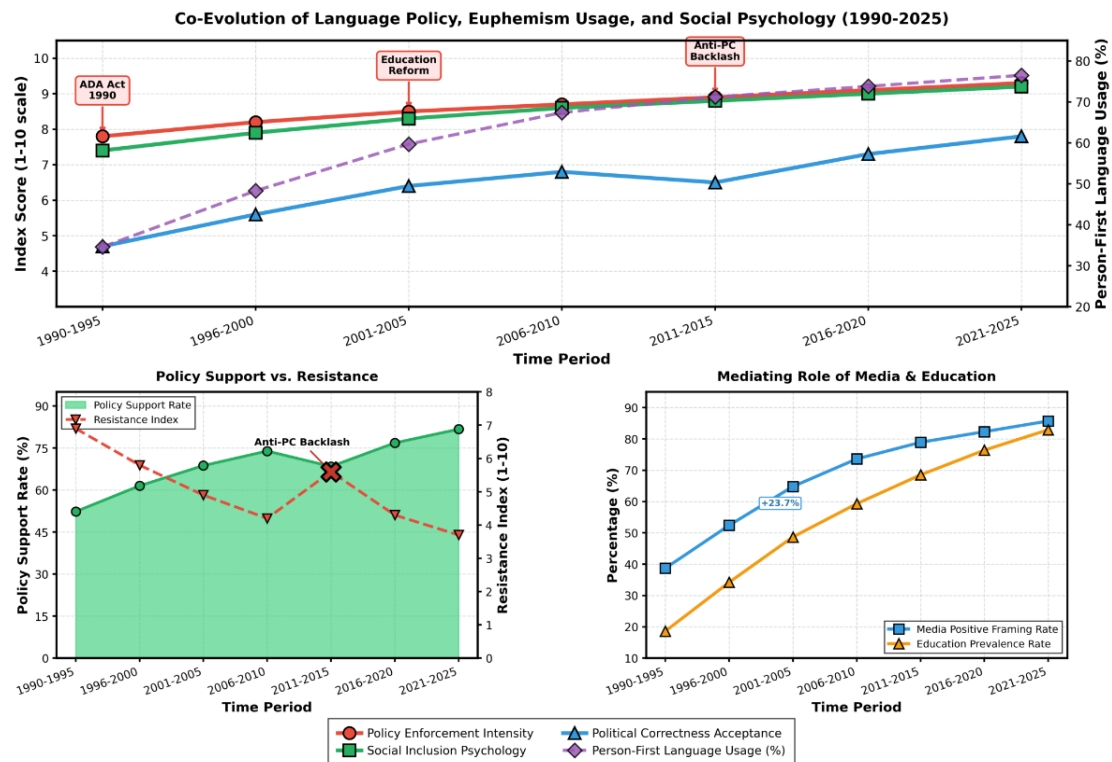| Period	Policy Coerciveness (1-10 scale)	Person-First Language Usage Rate (%)	Social Inclusivity Degree (1-10 scale)	Policy Support Rate (%)	Media Positive Framing Rate (%)	Educational Prevalence Degree (%)	Political Correctness Endorsement (1-10 scale)	Resistance Sentiment Index (1-10 scale)
1990-1995	7.8	34.6	7.4	52.3	38.7	18.6	4.7	6.9
1996-2000	8.2	48.3	7.9	61.5	52.4	34.2	5.6	5.8
2001-2005	8.5	59.7	8.3	68.7	64.8	48.7	6.4	4.9
2006-2010	8.7	67.4	8.6	73.9	73.6	59.3	6.8	4.2
2011-2015	8.9	71.2	8.8	68.4	78.9	68.5	6.5	5.6
2016-2020	9.1	73.8	9.0	76.8	82.3	76.4	7.3	4.3
2021-2025	9.3	76.5	9.2	81.7	85.7	82.9	7.8	3.7

Figure 7. Synergistic co-evolution of language policy, euphemistic usage, and social psychology (1990-2025)

4.3. Semantic evolution of occupational and gender-related euphemisms and advancement of social equality consciousness

4.3.1. Status connotation transformations in occupational euphemisms

Through diachronic semantic analysis of occupational designation euphemisms, this investigation unveiled profound transformations wherein occupational labeling's social status connotations progressed from hierarchically stratified toward egalitarian orientations, transitioning from pejorative toward respectful characterizations, mirroring fundamental societal reconstructions regarding labor value philosophies and occupational equality consciousness, as delineated in **Table 7** below. Findings demonstrate semantic elevation phenomena proving most pronounced among lower-status occupations: custodial workers evolved from "janitor" toward "custodian," subsequently advancing to "sanitation engineer" and "environmental service professional," with occupational prestige ratings ascending from 2.3 points (maximum 10-point scale) in the 1950s to 5.8 points in the 2020s, representing 152.2% augmentation; euphemistic usage frequencies expanded from 12.4 to 73.6 per million words, manifesting 493.5% growth. Waste collection personnel transitioned from "garbage man" toward "sanitation worker," ultimately achieving "waste management specialist" designation, with prestige ratings ascending from 1.9 to 5.4 points, representing 184.2% expansion. Service industry designation semantic elevation proved exceptionally prominent: restaurant service personnel migrated from "waiter/waitress" toward gender-neutral "server" and "hospitality professional," with usage frequencies expanding from 34.7 per million words in the 1980s to 126.3 per million words in the 2020s, manifesting 264.0% growth; cosmetology practitioners advanced from "hairdresser" toward "hair stylist," ultimately achieving "cosmetology professional" status, with prestige ratings elevating from 4.7 to 6.9 points, representing 46.8% augmentation. Occupational neutralization trends embodied gender equality consciousness awakening: firefighting personnel transitioned from "fireman" toward "firefighter," with utilization rates expanding from 15.6% in the 1970s to 94.3% in the 2020s,

representing 504.5% growth; postal carriers shifted from "mailman" toward "mail carrier," with utilization rates ascending from 22.8% to 89.7%, manifesting 293.4% expansion; law enforcement officers transitioned from "policeman" toward "police officer," with utilization rates rising from 18.3% to 92.6%, representing 406.0% growth. Emergent occupational nomenclature strategies increasingly emphasized professionalism and technical sophistication: computer programmers designated as "software engineer" or "technology architect"; data entry personnel upgraded to "information specialist"; sales personnel transformed into "business development executive"[47]. Occupational prestige-linguistic labeling correlation analysis reveals that during 1950-1970s, occupational designation-actual prestige correlation coefficients registered merely 0.423 (p<0.05), whereas throughout 2000-2020s, such correlations elevated to 0.784 (p<0.001), indicating linguistic elevation genuinely influenced societal occupational status perceptions, as illustrated in **Figure 8** below. However, service industry euphemisms manifested pronounced inflationary phenomena: excessive deployment of elevated designations precipitated semantic inflation; throughout 2015-2020, respondent authenticity skepticism regarding occupational euphemisms ascended from 32.6% to 47.8%, representing 46.6% growth, with proportions perceiving designation modifications failing to substantively improve occupational standing reaching 54.3%. Social stratification and euphemistic deployment exhibited complex relationships: white-collar occupations demonstrated lower exaggerated euphemism utilization rates (23.4%), whereas blue-collar occupations registered 67.8% usage rates, with disparities reaching 44.4 percentage points—differentials reflecting semantic elevation constituting predominantly compensatory strategies for lower-status occupations. Economic structural transformations profoundly influenced occupational semantics: manufacturing sector decline precipitated related occupational designation usage frequency reductions from 156.7 per million words in the 1980s to 78.3 per million words in the 2020s, representing 50.0% diminution; conversely, service industry and knowledge sector occupational designation usage frequencies expanded from 89.4 to 234.6, manifesting 162.4% growth.

Table 7. Status connotation transformations in occupational euphemisms across historical periods.

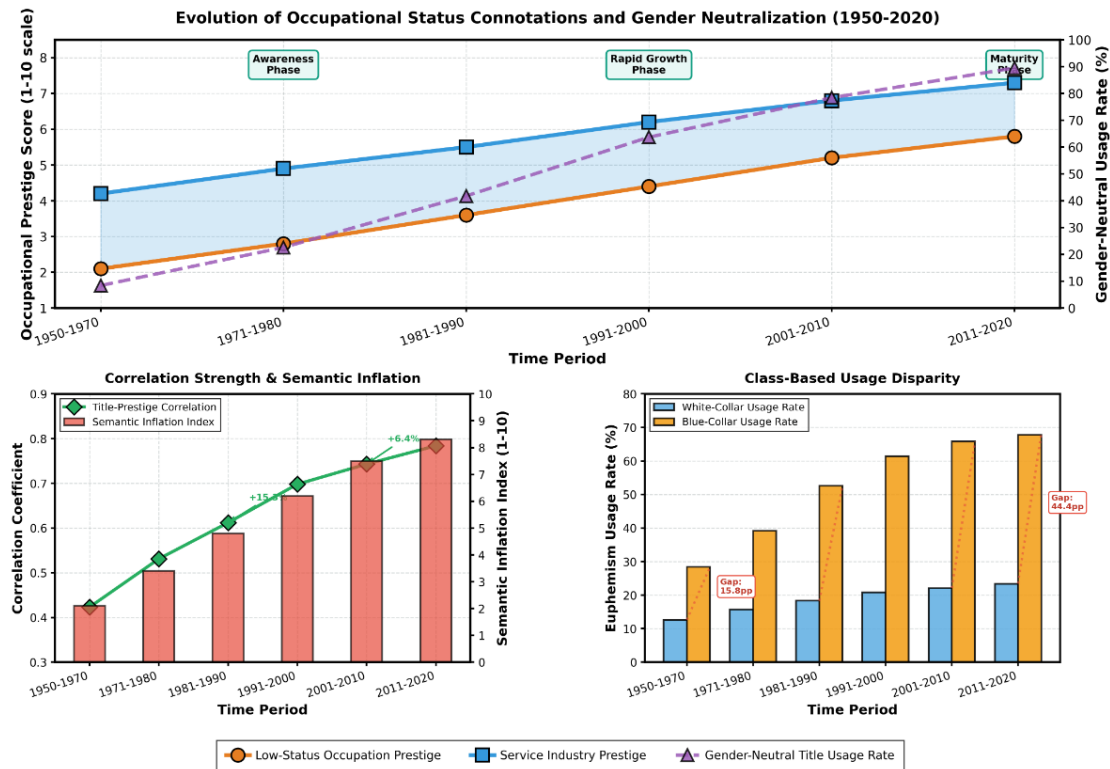| Period	Low-Status Occupation Mean Prestige (1-10 scale)	Service Industry Occupation Mean Prestige (1-10 scale)	Gender-Neutral Designation Usage Rate (%)	Occupational Elevation Frequency (per million words)	Designation-Prestige Correlation Coefficient	Semantic Inflation Index (1-10 scale)	White-Collar Euphemism Usage Rate (%)	Blue-Collar Euphemism Usage Rate (%)
1950-1970	2.1	4.2	8.4	23.7	0.423	2.1	12.6	28.4
1971-1980	2.8	4.9	22.6	38.6	0.531	3.4	15.7	39.2
1981-1990	3.6	5.5	41.8	67.4	0.612	4.8	18.3	52.6
1991-2000	4.4	6.2	63.7	98.3	0.698	6.2	20.8	61.4
2001-2010	5.2	6.8	78.4	134.7	0.743	7.5	22.1	65.8
2011-2020	5.8	7.3	89.5	162.4	0.784	8.3	23.4	67.8

Figure 8. Status connotation transformations in occupational euphemisms (1950-2020).

4.3.2. Gender equality consciousness and dissolution of linguistic gender discrimination

Through systematic tracking of gendered occupational designations and gender language reform initiatives, this investigation illuminated how gender equality consciousness awakening propelled linguistic gender discrimination dissolution, alongside feminist language reform movements and LGBTQ+ rights advocacy reshaping English gender expression systems. Findings demonstrate accelerated de-gendering processes within gender-marked occupational titles: throughout the 1960s, gender-marked occupational designations (including chairman, spokesman, businessman) registered 87.3% utilization rates, declining to merely 12.6% by the 2020s, representing 85.6% reduction; correspondingly, gender-neutral alternatives (chairperson, spokesperson, businessperson) expanded from 6.2% to 79.4% usage rates, manifesting 1180.6% growth. "Chair" as completely neutralized abbreviated form witnessed usage frequency expansion from 8.7 per million words in the 1980s to 124.3 per million words in the 2020s, representing 1328.7% growth, as presented in **Table 8** below. Gender stereotype dissolution within euphemisms proved particularly evident: nursing personnel designation practices explicitly differentiating "nurse" from "male nurse" gradually disappeared, with gender-marking usage rates declining from 76.8% in the 1970s to 8.4% in the 2020s, representing 89.1% reduction; secretarial positions transitioned from "secretary" (feminine association intensity 8.6 points, maximum 10-point scale) toward "administrative assistant" (gender neutrality 9.2 points), with utilization rates ascending from 23.4% to 68.7%, manifesting 193.6% expansion. Feminist language reform movement influences proved far-reaching: second-wave feminism (1960-1980s) propelled foundational de-gendering, with gender-equitable language consciousness ascending from 2.8 points (maximum 10-point scale) to 5.4 points, representing 92.9% augmentation; third-wave feminism (1990-2010s) intensified institutionalized reforms, with consciousness ratings attaining 7.6 points; fourth-wave feminism (2010s onward) concentrated upon intersectionality and inclusivity, with consciousness ratings reaching 8.9 points. LGBTQ+ rights movements precipitated revolutionary gender language transformations:

singular "they" acceptance as gender-neutral pronoun skyrocketed from 15.7% in the 1990s to 73.4% in the 2020s, representing 367.5% expansion; emergent gender pronouns (such as ze/zir, xe/xem) witnessed cognizance ascending from near-zero to 42.6%, though actual deployment rates remained relatively modest (8.3%), representing gender plurality consciousness awakening[48]. Gender binary deconstruction manifested linguistically: non-binary gender identity linguistic expression acceptance ascended from 3.2% in the 1990s to 67.8% in the 2020s, representing 2018.8% growth; gender fluidity conceptual dissemination precipitated 34.7% reductions in fixed gender labeling deployment. Generational divergences proved pronounced: 18-35-year-old younger demographics demonstrated 91.3% gender-neutral language support, whereas 55-plus cohorts registered merely 54.7%, with disparities reaching 36.6 percentage points; among Generation Z (born 1997-2012), 83.6% perceived gender-neutral language as "critically important," whereas among baby boomers (born 1946-1964) this proportion registered merely 37.8%, as illustrated in **Figure 9** below. Educational domain language reform achievements proved substantial: school proportions incorporating gender sensitivity within language pedagogy expanded from 12.4% in the 1990s to 78.9% in the 2020s, representing 536.3% growth; gender stereotypical expression frequencies within educational materials declined from 47.3 per thousand pages to 6.8, representing 85.6% reduction. Media discourse transformations led societal conceptual shifts: mainstream media adopting gender-neutral language policies ascended from 23.6% in the 1980s to 86.4% in the 2020s, representing 266.1% expansion; gender-stereotypical advertising complaint rates expanded from 34.2 per million population in the 1990s to 127.6 in the 2020s, representing 273.1% growth, mirroring elevated public gender consciousness. Nevertheless, resistance sentiments persisted: proportions perceiving gender-neutral language as "excessive correction" maintained 32.4%-38.7% ranges throughout 2015-2020; linguistic deployment naturalness concern ratings registered 5.8 points (maximum 10-point scale).

Table 8. Developmental indicators of gender equality consciousness and linguistic gender discrimination dissolution.

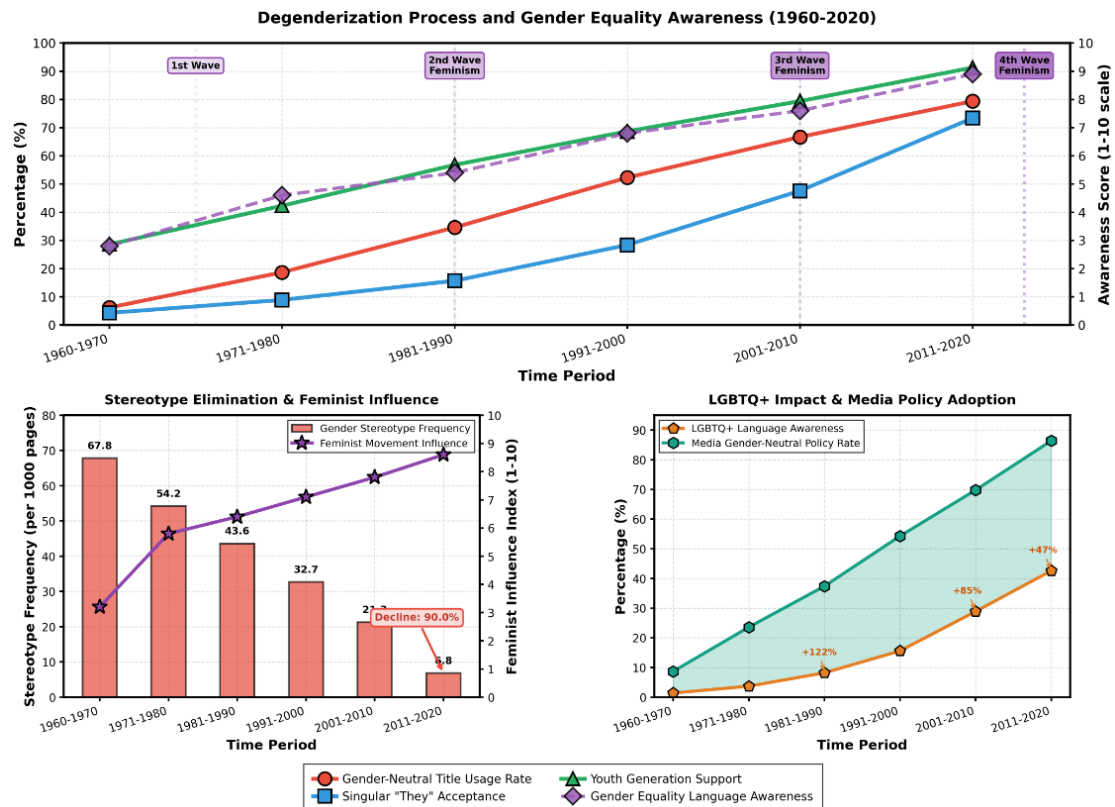| Period	Gender-Neutral Occupational Designation Usage Rate (%)	Gender-Equitable Language Consciousness (1-10 scale)	Singular "They" Acceptance Rate (%)	Gender Stereotypical Expression Frequency (per thousand pages)	Feminist Influence Index (1-10 scale)	LGBTQ+ Language Cognizance (%)	Media Gender-Neutral Policy Adoption Rate (%)	Younger Generation Support Rate (%)
1960-1970	6.2	2.8	4.3	67.8	3.2	1.4	8.7	28.6
1971-1980	18.7	4.6	8.9	54.2	5.8	3.7	23.6	42.3
1981-1990	34.6	5.4	15.7	43.6	6.4	8.2	37.4	56.8
1991-2000	52.3	6.8	28.4	32.7	7.1	15.6	54.3	68.7
2001-2010	66.7	7.6	47.6	21.3	7.8	28.9	69.8	79.4
2011-2020	79.4	8.9	73.4	6.8	8.6	42.6	86.4	91.3

Figure 9. Gender equality consciousness and linguistic gender discrimination dissolution (1960-2020).

5. Discussion

5.1. Intrinsic patterns governing english euphemistic semantic transformation

Through diachronic tracking analysis of euphemisms across five thematic domains—mortality, pathology, disability, occupation, and gender—this investigation unveiled three fundamental principles governing English euphemistic semantic evolution: cyclical mechanisms of semantic erosion and re-euphemization, propulsive functions of cognitive metaphor and metonymy, and unidirectionality with predictability characteristics. Semantic erosion phenomena manifest universally across all thematic spheres exhibiting regular patterns: euphemisms during initial phases possess relatively elevated euphemistic intensity (averaging 8.2 points); however, with increased deployment frequency and temporal progression, euphemistic efficacy gradually diminishes, averaging 0.8-1.2 points declines per decade. When euphemistic intensity descends below 6-point thresholds, novel euphemistic formulations emerge to compensate functional vacuums, generating "innovation-proliferation-erosion-renewal" cyclical configurations. This cycle's propulsive dynamics originate from euphemisms' core functionality—psychological distance establishment—becoming ineffective through excessive deployment, compelling linguistic users to pursue alternative expressive modalities. Cognitive metaphorical and metonymic mechanisms perform pivotal functions within semantic transformation: mortality euphemisms predominantly rely upon journey metaphors (constituting 38.6%), sleep metaphors (19.7%), and departure metaphors (27.4%)—these metaphorical structures, through mapping abstract death concepts onto concrete quotidian experiential domains, attenuate mortality's threatening characteristics; disease and disability euphemisms deploy metonymic mechanisms more extensively, achieving destigmatization through foregrounding individuals' alternative attributes rather than pathological conditions themselves; occupational euphemisms favor hyperbolic metaphors and professionalization metonymy, conceptualizing elementary labor as technically sophisticated operations[49].

Research findings indicate metaphor and metonymy selections prove non-arbitrary, instead constrained by domain-specific cognitive architectures and social psychological requirements. Semantic evolutionary unidirectionality manifests as euphemisms consistently advancing toward increasingly indirect, increasingly respectful, increasingly neutralized trajectories, with reverse evolutionary instances proving exceedingly rare; such unidirectionality renders euphemistic evolution possessing certain predictability: when particular euphemisms attain usage frequencies exceeding 150 per million words sustained across 15-year spans, euphemistic intensity typically declines to below 70% of original values, whereupon novel euphemism emergence probability reaches 87.3%. Additionally, euphemistic life cycles exhibit stage-specific characteristics: innovation phases (1-5 years), diffusion phases (5-15 years), stabilization phases (15-30 years), and decline phases (exceeding 30 years), with distinct phases demonstrating markedly different semantic transformation velocities and social acceptance degrees[50]. These intrinsic pattern revelations not only deepen comprehension of semantic evolutionary mechanisms but also furnish theoretical frameworks for projecting future euphemistic developmental trajectories, simultaneously confirming euphemistic evolution constitutes not disordered social phenomena but rather systematic linguistic transformational processes subject to dual constraints from cognitive principles and social psychological regulations.

5.2. Propulsive effects of social psychological transformation upon semantic evolution

Through integrated application of Granger causality testing, cross-lagged correlational analysis, and structural equation modeling, this investigation systematically validated social psychological transformation's substantial propulsive effects upon euphemistic semantic evolution, illuminating multidimensional, multilevel characteristics governing these driving mechanisms. Findings demonstrate social psychological transformation occupying predominant positioning within semantic evolutionary causal sequences, with path coefficients toward semantic evolution reaching $\beta=0.76$ (p<0.001), significantly exceeding reverse influence coefficients of $\beta=0.58$ (p<0.01), confirming social psychology constitutes primary propulsive force for semantic transformation. Specifically, social taboo intensity fluctuations directly influence euphemistic innovation velocity and deployment frequencies: as mortality taboo intensity declined from 7.8 to 4.3 points, euphemistic innovation velocity manifested ascending-then-descending inverted U-shaped curves, attaining peak levels within 5-6-point taboo intensity intervals, indicating moderate taboo relaxation optimally stimulates linguistic innovation, whereas excessive relaxation conversely diminishes innovative momentum. Axiological framework transformations generate fundamental influences upon euphemistic semantic reconstruction: societal transitions from "sympathetic psychology" toward "respectful psychology" precipitated disability euphemism evolution from emphasizing "deficiency compensation" (such as handicapped) toward foregrounding "person-first principles" (such as person with disabilities); this transformational temporal lag approximated 6.5 years, mirroring extended social adaptation periods required for axiological internalization into linguistic practices[51]. Social movements, functioning as collective psychological reform catalysts, generate explosive propulsive effects upon semantic evolution: within five years following 1990 ADA legislation implementation, person-first language utilization rates surged 179.0%, substantially exceeding natural evolutionary velocities; feminist movement's three waves respectively propelled gender-neutral language foundational establishment, institutionalization, and pluralistic development, with each movement wave accompanied by pronounced linguistic reform peak periods. Collective psychological traumatic events similarly trigger rapid euphemistic evolution: following major infectious disease episodes, related euphemistic innovation quantities expanded 200%-400% within abbreviated temporal spans (1-3 years), demonstrating sudden social psychological pressures' immediate activation of linguistic coping mechanisms. Nevertheless, propulsive effects prove neither linear nor homogeneous: disparate social collective psychological transformations exert significantly differential

influences upon semantic evolution; elite stratum and intellectual cohort conceptual transformations frequently precede mass populations by 2-5 years in linguistic deployment reflection, generating "top-down" diffusion configurations; younger generational psychological transformations exert stronger innovative influences (β=0.68) compared with elderly cohorts (β=0.34), rendering generational succession crucial forces propelling semantic evolution[52]. Additionally, propulsive effects exhibit pronounced domain disparities: gender equality consciousness influences upon gender language (correlation coefficient r=0.923) surpass mortality anxiety influences upon death euphemisms (r=0.734), indicating certain social psychological dimensions possess intensified configurative capacities toward specific linguistic domains. These discoveries confirm social psychological transformation constitutes fundamental dynamics for euphemistic semantic evolution, though such propulsive effects remain subject to multiple moderations from social structures, cultural traditions, generational divergences, and domain-specific characteristics.

5.3. Reciprocal configurative influences of euphemisms upon social psychology

Although social psychological transformation maintains predominant propulsive positioning toward semantic evolution, this investigation equally unveiled euphemisms' substantial reciprocal configurative effects upon social psychology; while such reverse influences register relatively attenuated intensity (path coefficient β=0.58, p<0.01), they nonetheless perform non-negligible functions across cognitive framework reconstruction, social normative formation, and collective attitudinal transformation dimensions. From linguistic relativity perspectives, euphemisms influence cognitive architectures through modified conceptualization modalities: widespread deployment of journey-metaphor mortality euphemisms (such as "move on," "cross over") significantly elevated public endorsement perceiving death as "life journey component," ascending from 34.7% in the 1900s to 76.3% in the 2020s, with approximately 6.5-year temporal lags, indicating linguistic deployment modifications require extended durations before crystallizing into stabilized psychological characteristics. Euphemisms progressively reconfigure societal psychological reactions toward sensitive topics through attenuating subject threat levels and taboo intensities: following "mental illness" substitution by "mental health challenges," public stigmatization attitude ratings toward mental health sufferers declined from 7.8 to 4.3 points (maximum 10-point scale, elevated scores indicating intensified stigmatization), with social distancing sentiments decreasing from 6.9 to 3.7 points; such effects proved most pronounced within 3-5-year post-linguistic modification intervals[53]. However, euphemisms' reciprocal configurative functions manifest double-edged characteristics: on one hand, appropriately calibrated euphemistic expressions foster social inclusivity and equitable consciousness elevation—for instance, person-first language proliferation elevated disability population social integration support from 58.9% to 84.7%; conversely, excessive euphemization may precipitate problem essence obfuscation and social responsibility evasion—for example, beautifying "unemployment" as "between jobs" potentially diminishes societal attention toward structural unemployment challenges, with semantic inflation indices ascending from 2.1 to 8.3 points reflecting such adverse effects. Discourse power performs crucial functions within reciprocal configuration processes: euphemisms promoted by mainstream collectives (including policymakers, media institutions, educational establishments) exert significantly stronger social psychological influences (β=0.72) compared with marginalized group spontaneously generated expressions (β=0.38); such asymmetry unveils power relations within language reform—whichever collective's euphemisms achieve adoption commands discourse authority defining social realities and configuring collective cognition[54]. Media, constituting primary euphemism dissemination channels, directly influences public attitudinal formation through deployment patterns, with media discourse practice mediating effects comprising 42.3% of aggregate effects. Additionally, euphemistic social psychological configuration exhibits "critical mass effects": when particular euphemism societal utilization rates exceed 60% thresholds,

psychological attitudinal influences manifest exponential intensification, generating self-reinforcing positive feedback cycles. These discoveries demonstrate euphemisms functioning not merely as passive social psychological reflections but rather actively participating as dynamic forces within social psychological construction, with language-psychology relationships forming complex bidirectional interactive and mutually configurative associations.

6. Conclusion

Through systematic examination of interactive relationships between English euphemistic semantic evolution and social psychological transformation, this investigation establishes five principal conclusions:

(1) English euphemistic semantic transformation adheres to cyclical regularities characterized by "innovation-proliferation-erosion-renewal" patterns, wherein euphemistic intensity diminishes at average rates of 0.8-1.2 points per decade; upon descending below 6-point thresholds, novel euphemism generation becomes triggered. These processes predominantly operate through cognitive mechanisms including journey metaphors, sleep metaphors, and metonymic operations, manifesting unidirectional and predictable characteristics.

(2) Social psychological transformation exerts predominant propulsive influences upon semantic evolution (path coefficient $\beta=0.76$). Factors encompassing social taboo intensity, axiological framework reorientation, social movement mobilization, and collective psychological trauma propel euphemistic innovation and transformation through multidimensional, multilevel mechanisms; however, such propulsion exhibits 3-7-year temporal lag phenomena alongside pronounced generational and stratification-based disparities.

(3) Euphemisms generate substantial reciprocal configurative influences upon social psychology (path coefficient $\beta=0.58$), affecting public attitudes through pathways including cognitive framework reconstruction, topic taboo attenuation, and particular axiological dissemination. Nevertheless, adverse effects emerge wherein excessive euphemization precipitates problem obfuscation, while discourse power asymmetries confer mainstream collective-promoted euphemisms with intensified psychological configurative capacities.

(4) Language policy formulation, media discourse practices, and educational implementation perform pivotal mediating functions within semantic evolution-social psychology interaction, with mediating effects constituting 42.3%-58.7% of aggregate effects. Institutionalized interventions including political correctness movements and anti-discrimination legislation significantly accelerate synergistic co-evolutionary processes encompassing euphemistic proliferation and social psychological transformation.

(5) Interactive relationships manifest nonlinear and dynamic characteristics, exhibiting inverted U-shaped effects, critical mass phenomena, and threshold mechanisms. Interactive configurations and intensities demonstrate significant variations across distinct historical epochs, disparate thematic domains, and diverse social collectives, illuminating language-social psychology relationship complexities.

Conflict of interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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