

Semantic Shifts and Cross-Cultural Interpretations of “Bachelor” in Sociolinguistic Contexts

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Abstract

Across different cultures, the word “bachelor” has many meanings, showing a complicated connection between language and society. The study aims to investigate the way the meaning of the word “bachelor” has accrued different connotations in dictionaries over time, and the difference in the meaning of “bachelor” in Vietnam, Singapore, and the United States. The research method is a combination of a lexicographic analysis to determine the origins and the process of word formation of “bachelor,” and a psycholinguistic analysis conducted on a group of 15 participants (5 people from a country), dealing with the perception of the word. These findings point to the transformation from “bachelor” as a concrete concept to an abstract one and highlight pronounced cross-national variability between Vietnamese, Singaporean, and U.S. participants that corresponds to specific cultural values and particular social contexts. The research yields evidence of the dynamic, creativity, and embeddedness of language with culture and the human mind. Furthermore, it also offers multiple implications for the study of linguistics, pragmatics, and intercultural communication. It especially expands the language evolution theories, proposes an integrated lexical-ethnolinguistic methodology, and identifies applications in language learning, dictionaries, translations, and intercultural communication policies to enhance cross-cultural understanding.

Keywords: Bachelor; Cross-Cultural Interpretations; Lexicography; Polysemous Word; Semantic Shifts; Sociolinguistics