

Lian CHEN

Contrastive analysis of the idiomaticity of idiomatic expressions in French and Chinese

Keywords: idiomaticity; idiomatic expressions; chéngyǔ; French-Chinese

I propose a communication aiming at the comparative analysis of the idiomaticity (词组固定性) of French idiomatic expressions (ex: avoir la tête dans les nuages) with their Chinese counterparts : 成语¹, both characterized by a high degree of fixity. It is “a construction specific to a language, which has no exact lexical or syntactic equivalent in another language, and which cannot be translated literally” (Neveu 2004).

Our theoretical methodological analysis focuses on three aspects of idiomaticity: linguistic, cultural and stylistic. This study is based on a corpus (of 2400 entries) established from specialized monolingual and bilingual dictionaries in Chinese and French. I have already obtained the following results:

Linguistically, IEs and *chéngyǔ* are characterized by their polylexicality, semantic non-compositionality, lexical and syntactic fixity. However, the idiomaticity (intra- and inter-linguistic) of IEs and *chéngyǔ* presents some differences. Indeed, the former do not present such a specific structure as in Chinese where the quaternary rhythm (or quadrisyllabism) dominates.

From the cultural point of view, IEs and *chéngyǔ* are loaded with implicits carrying the idiosyncrasy of a culture, a state of society, a collective way of seeing things, a certain historicity and conventionality. Nevertheless, most French IEs come from a popular and oral tradition. They have inherited all the connotations that this implies: familiarity and banality, among others (González Rey 1997: 291). The *chéngyǔ* on the contrary are mainly in the bookish realm (Shi 1979, Doan 1982, Sun 1989, Wang 2006,), and have acquired their letters of nobility through the pen of a famous writer.

In both languages, they have a rich stylistic value through their use of rhetorical figures (metaphor, synecdoche, metonymy, etc.), which generates a certain lexical and semantic opacity. The higher their metaphorical degree, the more difficult they are to understand. I thus study from the explicit to the implicit comparison, or “abbreviated comparison” (metaphor) according to the term of González Rey (2002).

References

- Doan, Patrick (1982): Les catachrèses quadrisyllabiques du chinois moderne. Thèse de troisième cycle, Paris VII.
- Gonzalez Rey María Isabel (2002): La phraséologie du français. Toulouse : Presses Universitaires du Mirail.

1 For example: “佛口蛇心” (*fókǒu-shéxīn* (Buddha+mouth+snake+heart): Buddha's words, serpent's heart/ honeyed words but evil mind.

ICLC-10 2023 - Document Template for Revised Abstracts

- Gonzalez Rey María Isabel (1997): La valeur stylistique des expressions idiomatiques en français, In Paremia, ISSN 1132-8940, N°6, (Ejemplar dedicado a : I Congreso Internacional de Paremiología (Homenaje al prof. Pedro Peira Soberón) 17-20 de abril de 1996/Pedro Peira (hom.)), pp. 291-296.
- Mejri, Salah (2003): Le figement lexical. In Mejri, Salah (eds): Le figement lexical, Cahiers de lexicologie, n° 82, Paris : Classiques Garnier, pp. 23-39.
- Neveu, Franck (2004): Idiomaticité et métalangue. L'espace euro-méditerranéen : une idiomaticité partagée. In: Rencontres Linguistiques Méditerranéennes, Hammameth, Tunisie. pp. 267-280. <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-00012534/document>. (last access: 8 March 2023)
- Shi, Shi (1979): Study of chéngyǔ [? ? ? ? 成语研究]. Sichuan: People's Publishing House.
- Sun Weizhang (1989): Chinese Phraseology [? ? ? ? 汉语短语学]. Changchun Jilin: Educational Press.
- Wang, Qin (2006): Chinese phraseology [? ? ? ? 汉语短语论]. Shandong: Educational Press.

Lian CHEN [?] [?]

PhD of Language Sciences at Cergy Paris University (LT2D-Jean Pruvost Centre)

loselychen@gmail.com