

# Analysis of Chinese Animal Idioms Acquisition Bias and its Teaching Countermeasures Based on Chinese Mediated Corpus--native English Learners as an Example

Sihan Wu

Hubei University, Wuhan, Hubei,430000

**Abstract:** How to better master idioms, a crucial component of Chinese vocabulary, has become a hot issue of discussion in recent years. Animal idioms are intimately tied to human production and living. In order to properly analyze the errors, this article gathers a lot of data from the Chinese Mediated Language Corpus. In order to better understand the peculiarities of native English speakers' acquisition of Chinese animal idioms, this research looks into the reasons why mistakes are made and suggests pedagogical guidelines and remedial techniques. We intend to contribute in a positive way to the improvement of foreigners' instruction of Chinese animal idioms.

**Keywords:** Vocabulary; Animal idioms; Teaching Chinese as a foreign language

## 1. Study's historical context

Due to the influence of country cultural differences, detrimental native language migration, and detrimental target language migration, foreign students frequently make a range of errors in word form, structure, semantics, and usage while using idioms. This research examines the bias issues of native English speakers using the animal idioms gathered from the Chinese Mediated Language Corpus and provides relevant instructional countermeasures in an effort to assist Chinese teachers in teaching idioms in foreign languages more effectively.

## 2. Survey techniques and contexts for analyzing typical animal idioms

For study, the author selected 300 sentences from a corpus of Chinese intermediate language that used animal idioms. Ten different animal idioms in 300 sentences. Horse was determined to have the highest percentage of animal idioms, followed by bird, dragon, chicken, and fish. We may better focus our instruction to these pupils by looking into which animal idioms are most frequently utilized by native English-speaking international students when writing essays.

Animal Idioms	Quantity	of total	Correct Rate
望子成龙 (hold high hopes for one's child)	66	28.66%	61.55%
马马虎虎 (sloppy)	59	23.33%	71.2%
对牛弹琴 (cast pearls before swine)	51	22%	55.25%
鸡毛蒜皮 (trivial matters)	48	16%	58.75%
多如牛毛 (too numerous to enumerate)	22	11.66%	36.07%
马到成功 (achieve immediate victory)	18	10.3%	75.32%
井底之蛙 (a person with a limited outlook)	15	8.3%	65.8%
青梅竹马 (puppy love)	13	7.66%	67.5%
车水马龙 (heavy traffic on the street)	5	1.66%	55.34%
走马观花 (look at the flowers while riding a horse)	3	1%	71.43%

Foreign students most frequently use the animal idiom "hold high hopes for one's child" to reflect their parents' expectations for

themselves, according to statistics on the use of animal idioms by native English-speaking international students. This demonstrates that international students are aware of the “dragon” cultural tradition in China. At the same time, many of the idioms used by international students can be understood literally. For instance, the idiom “too numerous to enumerate” immediately conjures up thoughts of minor, difficult objects.

### 3. Analysis of common animal idiom bias among international students

It can be divided into three errors. One is grammatical errors. International students do not have a thorough or in-depth understanding of the word forms. The second is semantic error. In Chinese, some animal idioms even are difficult for native speakers to grasp the meaning accurately, and it is even more difficult for international students to understand them. The third is misuse of language. They don’t grasp the idioms’ rich cultural meanings, don’t understand the context of the sentences, or don’t understand the emotional undertones of the idioms.

## 4. Reasons for students’ acquisition of animal idiom bias

### 4.1 The intricacy of animal idioms themselves

It goes without saying that animal idioms are complicated, which is mostly illustrated by the following: The meaning of animal idioms is firstly greatly enlarged. When they are combined, students can have a wide range of extended connotations. Secondly, idioms are a type of language that has been honed by working people for thousands of years and the lexicon’s structure has become quite entrenched. Thirdly, foreign students need to be familiar with Chinese culture and history when using animal idioms.

### 4.2 Negative transfer of mother tongue

The reference to negative native language transfer primarily pertains to English because in this work we use native English speakers as examples. Chinese and English are very different from one another, and if they are replicated, it could result in major bias issues or detrimental native language transfer.

### 4.3 Generalization of the target language in transition

The majority of the subjects for this paper are foreign students who are native English speakers and are beyond the age of 18, meaning that their logical and abstract thinking is essentially developed. However, throughout this expansion, they will make a number of errors, particularly when using idioms.

### 4.4 Differences in thinking patterns

Despite being uniformly fluent in English, the international students analyzed in this research have quite diverse nationalities and ethnicities. Furthermore, these foreign students from many nations have already solidified their own cultures, and they have only recently arrived in China, making it challenging for them to fully comprehend Chinese culture.

### 4.5 Materials used to teach don’t pay enough attention to animal idioms.

#### 4.5.1 Lacking animal metaphors used while teaching

It is clear that there are not enough idioms in teaching, and there are even fewer animal idioms. There are 8822 words, 127 idioms in the “four-character grid,” and only 2 idioms for animals in the “Chinese Proficiency Vocabulary and Chinese Character Rating Syllabus” created by the Examination Center of the National Chinese Proficiency Examination Committee.

	Number of words	Number of Idioms	Number of animal idioms
Grade A words	1033	0	0
Class B words	2018	2	0
C-word	2202	14	1
D-word	3569	111	2

“paint the lily”, “hold high hopes for one’s child”, and “a large number of mounted and foot soldiers” are the only three animal idioms found in the C-level and D-level vocabulary, which represent the intermediate and advanced levels, respectively. These idioms are not found at all in the A-level and B-level vocabulary, which represent the beginning and beginner levels.

#### 4.5.2 The organization of the teaching materials is unscientific

There are also illogical elements in the creation of teaching materials for teaching Chinese as a foreign language, in addition to the low number of animal idioms in instruction. Idioms are only included in the vocabulary list in Chinese language textbooks and not in the word definitions or in the exercises. Because of this, Chinese idioms cannot be learned alongside semantics and usage.

#### 4.5.3 Teachers’ inadequate explanations of animal idioms

The teaching of animal idioms is a crucial component of teaching Chinese as a foreign language, but it has not received enough

attention during the process. Due to the limited cultural knowledge and professional level of Chinese teachers, they occasionally adopt an evasive attitude when teaching Chinese animal idioms.

## **5. The significance and value of the analysis of the bias**

### **5.1 Deepening students' understanding of Chinese culture**

Chinese idioms referring to animals are a part of Chinese culture and can be taught to overseas students to help them understand Chinese culture better and to help it become more widely known. Idioms assist foreign students in connecting with various Chinese cultures, comprehending their distinctiveness, and connecting with the Chinese way of thinking, customs, and traditions.

### **5.2 Enhancing their capacity for expression**

The amount of vocabulary a Chinese speaker has reflects how well he or she expresses themselves in Chinese. Students' expressions will be influenced by their level of word mastery and the precision of their knowledge, which is crucial for their daily communication.

### **5.3 Stimulating students' interest in learning**

In the process of teaching Chinese idioms as a foreign language, the contents of idioms are diverse and the stories are rich. They are more likely to spark students' interest in studying and turn dull words into vibrant ones. For instance, "to seek power by riding the tiger" refers to a fox feigning to frighten other animals with the tiger's reputation. People who depend on the strength of others to oppress others are referred to by this word.

## **6. Teaching strategies for animal idioms**

### **6.1 Explanation Sources**

In the process of teaching Chinese as a foreign language, teachers who are able to go beyond simply defining animal idioms' meanings and go into further detail about where they came from will have a greater impact on their students' retention of the material. By employing this technique, teachers of Chinese as a foreign language can not only accomplish their educational goals but also facilitate students in comprehending the idiom's surface and deeper meanings.

### **6.2 Performance**

The performance method is to have students act out the short stories behind the animal idioms through choreographed mini-dramas and other forms. Through acting, students can understand and master the idioms more accurately. For example, when explaining the idiom of "Fox and Tiger", the teacher can choose one person to play the role of a tiger, another person to play the role of a fox, and other students to play the role of various small animals.

### **6.3 Animation illustration**

Multimedia technology can be demonstrated to students through video animation to obtain intuitive and clear effects. In addition, relevant pictures can also be collected, so that students can establish a direct connection between animal idioms and pictures in their minds, so that students can associate with the relevant pictures when they see the idioms.

## **References:**

- [1] Shen Lina. A Review of Idiom Teaching in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language in the Past Ten Years[J]. *Journal of Philology*, 2007 (7)
- [2] Feng Juan. Exploring the Meaning and Methods of Teaching Idioms in Chinese as a Foreign Language [D]. Master's thesis, Huazhong Normal University, 2011 (5)
- [3] Luo Changpei. *Language and Culture* [M]. Beijing: Beijing Publishing House, 2004.
- [4] Shen Xiaolong. *Chinese Language and Culture* [M]. Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 2003.
- [5] Zhao Yu, Research on teaching animal idioms in teaching Chinese as a foreign language [J]. *Jilin University*, 2012
- [6] Jiang Qingyan. The Cultural Connotation of Animal Idioms and Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language [J]. *Henan University*, 2013.
- [7] Su Jinjin, A comparison of the cultural meanings of Chinese-English animal words and the design of foreign Chinese vocabulary teaching [J]. *Guangxi University for Nationalities*, 2009.
- [8] Xiao Shuang. A comparative study of Chinese and English animal idioms [J]. *Liaoning Normal University*, 2010.

## **About the author:**

Sihan Wu, Female, Han, Nanping, Fujian, China, B.S. in Hubei University, Research Interests: Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language