

The Corpora of Mandarin Chinese and German Animal Fixed Expressions: A Cognitive Semantic Application *

Shelley Ching-yu Hsieh,
Department of Applied English
Southern Taiwan University of Technology
Taiwan, R.O.C.
shelley@mail.stut.edu.tw

1. Introduction

This paper presents the results of a cross-lingual study of a Mandarin Chinese (MCh) corpus and a German (Ge) corpus of fixed animal expressions (AEs). The AEs in the corpora include: metaphors, similes, proverbs, sayings, frozen collocations, grammatically ill-formed collocations and routine formulae, all of which are fixed expressions (Alexander 1978, Carter 1987, Moon 1998), not ad-hoc terms or freely generated phrases, and contain at least one animal name that has metaphorical meaning. The Chinese corpus contains 2980 and the German corpus 2630 written and spoken AEs. The data are categorized by the animal names in alphabetical order in EXCEL. Different kinds of data relating to individual AEs were recorded in up to 12 separate fields, including phonetic transcription of the MCh, word-to-word translation, semantic feature of the metaphorical vehicle (animal name), frequency, metaphorical tenor (meaning) of the AE, the underlying conceit (the association between vehicles and tenors), etc.

The purpose of this research is first to examine the underlying conceit then the metaphorical tenors of these expressions in both languages. I discuss the proportions of different types of underlying conceits and the salient metaphorical tenors they convey, and finally the focus is set on the positive and negative tenors which bring out the last result that AEs are our vocabulary of values.

Over the years there has been continuing interest in the research of idioms, metaphors and in recent years also the cognitive endeavors. In comparison, studies on animal expressions are relatively few. Brinkmann (1878) investigates AEs in English, German, Italian, Spanish, French and Portuguese with the focus on domestic animal names, then Riegler (1907) completes Brinkmann's collection with wild animal names. They both study the origins of the AEs and Riegler also reports the etymology of the animal names. Craddick and Miller (1970) examine the animal names used to represent outer or inner circle for men and women and have their identification of the concept of self in terms of animal metaphors. Fraser (1981) examines insulting terms using animal names in eleven languages. The aim is to inspect if the informants have equivalent usage in their native languages as the English stupid-donkey, coward-chicken, sneaky-snake, mean-dog, nasty-rat and dirty-pig. One of the results

* The research reported here as a part of the results of the project on *A Semantic and Pragmatic Study on Metaphors of Created Animals in Mandarin, Taiwanese, English and German* would have been impossible without the support of National Science Council (NSC 91-2411-H-218-003) in Taiwan.

shows that stupid-donkey and dirty-pig are more widespread while nasty-rat is not.

Whaley and Antonelly (1983) reveal the assumptions about male-female relationships by animal metaphors; in particular the *women are animals*. According to Low (1988) and Newmark (1988), animal metaphors are largely used to describe inferior or undesirable human habits and attributes. O'Donnell (1990) lays his focus on the descriptions of common and productive figurative meanings assigned to animal names and animal metaphors in different languages. Sutton (1995) studies language discrimination towards females and makes a strong argument on *women are animals* metaphor. Hsieh (2002) further discusses animal expressions in light of the approach of semantic molecules (Goddard 1998). She suggests the interconnection and interaction between semantic molecules and these animal names serve as semantic contributors in distinct semantic domains. Fontecha and Catalan (2003) concentrate on the word pairs *fox/vixen* and *bull/cow* and their Spanish counterparts *zorro/zorra* and *toro/vaca* with the data from dictionaries to investigate the semantic derogation of the related animal metaphors and concepts. They found that, with mapping from source to target domain, the main metaphorical meanings of the female terms connote worse qualities than those connoted by the metaphors of the male terms.

2. The underlying conceit

As Lakoff and Turner (1989:65) already noticed “We conventionally understand these concepts not by virtue of metaphoric mappings between them and different conceptual domains but rather by virtue of their grounding in what we take to be our forms of life, our habitual and routine bodily and social experiences.” Most of the AEs reflect human observation of the vehicles. Both Chinese people and Germans may observe and perceive animals from the same viewpoint and interpret what they see identically. i.e. they share the same underlying conceit. For example, the ease of fish in water is expressed in MCh as *ru²yu²de²shui³* 如魚得水 (as-fish-get-water – feel just like fish in water; be in one's element) and in Ge as *wie ein Fisch im Wasser* (like a fish in water – feeling well).

Both peoples may share the same viewpoint but develop different underlying conceits and therefore generate different AEs, e.g. the cat is gluttonous in the eyes of both Germans and Chinese, thus *nei³zhi¹mao¹er²bu⁴tou¹xing¹* 哪隻貓兒不偷腥 (which-cat-not-steal-raw-fish – which cat wouldn't steal the fish smell; which man wouldn't like the wife of another) developed in MCh. The German version is *Naschkatze* (sweet-toothed cat), which means a person who likes nibbling at sweets. Both emphasize human behaviours, but the MCh is in the domain of 'emotion' while the Ge belongs to the domain of 'basic need'.

AEs are developed either from the animals' appearances, habits, and relation to people (Wierzbicka 1985:167) observed from different cultural backgrounds. In addition, many AEs are arbitrary inventions and have nothing to do with the animals themselves (Hsieh 2001:149-), as exemplified in Tables 1 and 2: 15% in MCh and 9% in Ge. Without doubt, most of the underlying conceits of AEs in both languages are associated with the metaphorical vehicles' attributes, e.g. their appearances, habits or behaviours. Ahrens and Say (1999:6) propose that the appearance of an animal

is usually mapped to the target domain of human appearance in MCh AEs, whereas animal behaviours are mapped to human behaviours. The result of the present corpora further indicate that Chinese tend to generate more AEs from animal appearances and apply them to the basic-need domain (see Table 1), e.g. that a snail carries a shell is observed by Chinese people, thus, *wu²ke²gua¹niu²* 無殼蝸牛 (no-shell-snail – people who are not capable of purchasing houses) and *gua¹niu²zu²* 蝸牛族 (snail-tribe – people who do not possess real estate) are produced, to apply to the basic housing need. On the other hand, the Germans tend to generate more AEs from animal behaviours or habits and apply them to an emotional domain (see Table 2). That a snail carries its shell is also observed by the Germans, but the behaviour that it withdraws into its shell when encountering danger is the conceit of the AEs: *sich in sein Schneckenhaus zurückziehen* (self-in-one's-snail shell-withdraw) and *jemanden zur Schnecke machen* (someone-to-snail-make) They are composed to denote "to go into one's shell" and "to come down on someone like a ton of bricks", respectively. Tables 1 and 2 count the percentages of different types of underlying conceits and the share of metaphorical tenors in MCh and Ge.

Table 1. The underlying conceits and metaphorical tenors in Mandarin Chinese corpus

Underlying Conceit	Percentage ¹	Metaphorical tenor	Percentage
Appearance	27%	basic need domain	25.8%
		emotion	5.1%
		amusement	5.4%
		society	14.2%
		work, sport, etc.	49.5%
Behavior	25%	basic need domain	29.2%
		emotion	11.1%
		amusement	5.5%
		society	11.1%
		work, sport, etc.	43.2%
Habit	18%	basic need domain	22.2%
		emotion	9.5%
		amusement	5.1%
		society	16.0%
		work, sport, etc.	47.2%
Human-Animal Relation	21%		
Arbitrary	15%		
Unknown	8%		

The unknown derivation as shown in the tables can be traced from historical events and be arbitrary inventions. The popular Ge AE *Mein Name ist Hase* (my name is hare – I know nothing; search me) is an example: At the end of the semester 1854/55 Victor von Hase helped a student illegally cross the German boarder by providing him with his own identification passport. As he was interrogated by the police he replied immediately, "My name is Hase (hare), I deny all questions, I

¹ An AE can be categorized into more than one type when we analyze its underlying conceits, e.g., *qian¹xi¹chong²* 千禧蟲 (millennium-bug – y2p; year 2000 computer problem) can be associated with the small size of the bug – appearance, and the harm that it brings – habit. Therefore, the total percentage of underlying conceit in Table 1 is 110%, and that of Table 2 is 105%.

know nothing at all." This statement went the rounds in Heidelberg and became a well-known saying from then on (Büchmann 1937:579). Arbitrary inventions are mostly abstracts of legends and superstitions. They can be due to rhyme form, e.g. *weder Fisch noch Fleisch* (neither fish nor meat – neither fish nor fowl; neither ass nor horse; ambiguous). Or like many modern AEs, e.g., (transliteration) *ma³sha¹ji¹* 馬殺雞 (horse-kill-chicken – transliteration of English "massage") and (phonetic translation) *ma3ke4* 馬克 (horse-gram – Deutsche mark). Language contact brought out more and more such inventions.

The metaphorical vehicles fish, dog, horse, mouse, etc. generate AEs based on the vehicles' habits, as in the above exemplified *wie ein Fisch im Wasser* (like a fish in water – feeling well). Their AEs also often are based on human-animal relations (fishing, watchdog, horse riding, culture follower). This is a marked feature of more productive vehicles. Less productive vehicles tend to render specific underlying conceits and generate particular metaphorical tenors, such as *mao* 貓 (cat) for 'gluttonous' and *Kater* (tomcat) for 'hangover'. The domains of metaphorical tenors will be discussed in the following section.

Table 2. The underlying conceits and metaphorical tenors in German corpus

Underlying Conceit	Percentage	Metaphorical tenor	Percentage
Appearance	21%	basic need domain	10.6%
		emotion	8.4%
		amusement	8.4%
		society	9.0%
		work, sport, etc.	63.6%
Behavior	27%	basic need domain	10.9%
		emotion	13.5%
		amusement	4.3%
		society	3.6%
		work, sport, etc.	67.7%
Habit	21%	basic need domain	9.8%
		emotion	14.5%
		amusement	4.4%
		society	5.7%
		work, sport, etc.	65.1%
Human-Animal Relation	20%		
Arbitrary	9%		
Unknown	12%		

3. The metaphorical tenor

First the salient metaphorical tenors will be distinguished, then the evaluation of some tenors in order to represent the different values.

3.1 Salient metaphorical tenors

When I examine the underlying conceits that belong to animal attributes – appearance, behaviour and habit, both Tables 1 and 2 indicate that MCh and Ge favor the metaphorical tenor of the BASIC NEED domain in which they utter the various meanings about eating, drinking, housing, etc. Lakoff and Turner (1989:168) said in their "Great Chain Metaphor" that "Therefore, instinct is a generic-level parameter of animals. Similarly, the mental, the moral, and the aesthetic are generic-level parameters of

human beings."

In addition, Chinese people tend to create more tenors related to the SOCIETY domain while Germans ring the bell for the EMOTION domain.² There are a good number of group-oriented secular benedictions in Mandarin Chinese and many endearments (one-on-one dictions) in German, but not vice versa. For example, *wo⁴hu³cang²long²* 臥虎藏龍 (crouch-tiger-hide-dragon – a remarkable talent who has not been discovered), *Schmusekatze* (flattering cat – a term of endearment to a woman). This gives a hint to the different modes of thinking between Chinese and German, i.e. the Chinese tend to think group-centrally while the Germans think individualistically or egocentrically (Hsieh 2002). On the other hand, German endearments fall into the EMOTION domain, while the MCh secular benedictions express the SOCIETY domain. A SOCIETY domain like schooling can be exemplified by the AEs *ren²sheng¹bu⁴du²shu¹* *huo²zhebu⁴ru²zhu¹* 人生不讀書 活著不如豬 (people-life-not-read-book-live-not-as-pig – people living in the world would be ignorant if they did not study), *fang⁴niu²ban¹* 放牛班 (release-cow-class – let alone classes where the students' school performances are inferior), *ya¹dan⁴* 鴨蛋 (duck-egg – the school grade "unsatisfactory": zero), *shang⁴ke⁴xiang⁴tiao²chong²* *xia⁴ke⁴xiang⁴tiao²long²* 上課像條蟲 下課像條龍 (up-class-like-a-worm down-class-like-a-dragon – students acting dully in class and dynamically out of class) and *diao⁴yu²* 釣魚 (fishing – sleepy; to fall asleep for tiredness in class). Chinese also emphasize diligence as a human virtue, such as with *wen²ji¹qi³wu³* 聞雞起舞 (hear-chicken-up-dance – to rise up upon rooster; diligent and full of enthusiasm) and *li¹ba¹za¹de²jin³* *huang²gou³zuan¹bu²jin⁴* 籬笆紮得緊 黃狗鑽不進 (fence-basketry-tie-get-tight, yellow-dog-drill-not-inside – man should work hard to prevent a contingent disaster). However, diligence is not emphasized in a German-speaking society.

Some examples from the German EMOTION domain, other than the above-mentioned German endearments, are: *einen Affen an jmdm. gefressen haben* (to have eaten a monkey on someone – to be crazy about someone), *Du benimmst dich wie ein Backfisch* (you behave like a fried fish – you behave like a young girl falling in love), *jmd. unklammern wie ein Tintenfisch* (someone embrace like a squid), *einen Vogel haben* (a-bird-have – to have a screw loose) and *die Sau rauslassen* (the-sow-let-out – to let the pig out; having fun; to paint the town red).

When categorized, the metaphorical vehicles horse, dog, cow, etc. tend to be responsible for 'work', pig, snail, etc. more for the BASIC NEED domain 'housing', and the names of wild animals more for SOCIETY. There are vehicles that serve only as positive metaphorical tenors, such as *long* 龍 (dragon) in MCh. Many vehicles produce only negative metaphorical tenors, such as *gou* 狗 (dog) and *Hund* (dog). Some vehicles serve for specific metaphoricality, such as German *Grille* (cicada) stands for 'strange mood' and 'strange ideas'. Moon (1998:163) says that "idioms represent concepts embedded in the culture and associated with particular lexicalizations. They are characterized by an underlying conceit ... and an overlying preferred lexical realization", and usually with connoted evaluation. The

² The tenors of the terms of endearments are categorized into the BASIC NEED domain "love" that can also be sorted to EMOTION.

present corpora demonstrate that about 80% of AEs are used to scorn or warn people. Thus, we can say AEs are a vocabulary of peoples' values. They convey values from different cultures and societies. The following sections exemplify this argument.

3.2 Positive and negative tenors

Both Germans and Chinese pay attention to their shape and watch their weight. Praises in forms of AEs are: *shui³she²yao¹* 水蛇腰 (water-snake-waist – a slender waist), *Wespentaille* (wasp waist – slender waist), *shen¹qing¹ru²yan⁴* 身輕如燕 (body-light-like-swallow – light as a swallow) and *schlank wie ein Reh* (slender-like-a-deer – slender). People outside the norm are despised with AEs like *fei²zhu¹* 肥豬 (fat-pig – a fat person; fatty), *shou⁴pi²hou²* 瘦皮猴 (thin-skin-monkey – bag of bones), *Schwer wie ein Elefant* (heavy like an elephant – very heavy), *Schultern wie ein Huhn* (shoulders like a chicken – having slim shoulders), *pudeldick* (poodle fat – very fat) etc.

Table 3 gives the evaluation of body-part AEs. Although many of them are neutral descriptions, such as *hu³kou³* 虎口 (tiger-mouth – part of the hand between the thumb and the index finger) and *tu⁴chun²* 兔唇 (hare-lip – harelip; cleft lip), some of them are compliments, most of them carry negative connotations.

Table 3. The evaluation of body-part AEs

Evaluation	Mandarin Chinese	German
positive	13%	18%
negative	66%	64%
neutral	21%	18%

Also to pinpoint and reprove a woman are examples, *aufgedonnert wie ein Pfau* (in full feather like a peacock – dressed or done up to the nines) and *hu²li²jing¹* 狐狸精 (fox-spirit – woman of easy virtue [supposed to be a fox in disguise]; an enchantress). To a man, e.g., *alter Gockel* (old cock – a conceited old man) and *wu³ye⁴niu²lang²* 午夜牛郎 (mid-night-cowboy – male prostitute). To events, e.g., *hua⁴she²tian¹zu²* 畫蛇添足 (draw-snake-add-foot – draw a snake and add feet to it; ruin the effect by adding something superfluous) and *Schweinearbeit* (pig work – chore). To places, *bei euch ist ein furchtbarer Hecht* (there is a terrible pike in there – there is a stale air in there) and *gou³wo¹* 狗窩 (dog-den – doghouse; small and in disorder room). And to a society, e.g., *die großen Fische fressen die kleinen* (the-big-fish-eat-the-small – the great fish eat up the small; the strong overwhelm the weak) and *shu⁴dao³hu²sun¹san⁴* 樹倒猴孫散 (tree-fall-monkey-scatter – when the tree falls, the monkeys scatter; when an influential person falls from power, his hangers-on disperse).

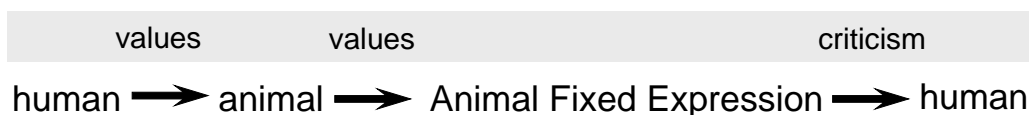
A great amount of AEs are taboo, e.g., *Sauigel* (sow-hedgehog – a person telling indecent jokes; dirty person), *dummes Kamel* (stupid camel – stupid!), *er geht nicht mit kleinen Hunden pinkeln* (he does not go pissing with small dogs – he is not interested in insignificant people),

lang²dao⁴chu⁴chi¹rou⁴ gou³dao⁴chu⁴chi¹shi³ 狼 到 處 吃 肉 狗 到 處 吃 屎
(wolf-everywhere-place-eat-meat, dog-everywhere-place-eat-dung – people in different classes have different lives), shen¹ru²lan⁴chan² cui³ru²tie³qian² 身 如 爛 蠶 嘴 如 鐵 筍
(body-like-rotten-silkworm, mouth-like-iron-tongs – to blame someone who does not admit his mistake), etc. Trudgill (1974:29-31 in Risch 1987:353) explains that "Such words are not only considered inappropriate for a certain context, but are forbidden in most communicative contexts." However, there is an underlying cognition that we adopt animal names as metaphorical vehicles and create a great quantity of AEs as part of our vocabulary.

4. Vocabulary of values

The corpora document the compliments and taboos that express the differences and the similarities between human beings and animals. AEs are used not always for bad purposes but rather due to some ignorance with respect to the nature of the animal (Schenda 1998:13).³ In other words, the metaphorical vehicles that people adopted to produce AEs and people's knowledge of animals are often based on different cognitive levels. For example, we know monkeys are clever, but we have AE *Affentheater* (monkey-theater – complete farce) and *sich zum Affen machen* (make a monkey of oneself – to make a fool of oneself). Zoological research (Grzimek 1988:20 and elsewhere) reports that pigs are smart, but *ben⁴zhu¹* 笨豬 (dumb pig; idiot) is a popular AE. People use AEs as swearwords and as emphatic comparisons as Michel (1991:ii) states: ... the silly donkey and the sharp-eyed falcon. We human beings imagine ourselves as above other animals because animals are merely controlled by their instincts. Nevertheless, we also envy other animals because of their excellent senses and abilities.⁴

Fig. 1 AE schema



AEs express positive and negative sanctions in the societies. Praise and reprimand help the process of adaptation to the standards and rules of the society. When one is called a *falscher Hund* (a false dog – a false man; a liar), he should know that his behaviour is considered to be "false, underhanded, insidious" and should change his attitude accordingly. When being called a

³ The original text is: "nicht immer aus böser Absicht, eher aus Unwissenheit."

⁴ The original text is: "der dumme Esel und der scharfblickende Falke. Wir Menschen fühlen uns teils erhaben über die in ihren Erbkoordinationen befangenen Tiere; teils aber beneiden wir sie auch um ihre vorzüglichen Sinne und Anpassungen in lebensbedrohenden Umwelten."

gen¹pi⁴chong² 跟屁蟲 (follow-butt-worm – bluebottle) one knows that it is improper to cling to someone like a leech. Huang and Tian (1990:83) explicate vocabulary with negative denotations as: "Modern linguistic taboo is chiefly due to regard for social etiquette, propriety in behavior ... Inhibition, rather than prohibition, is the key to understanding the very intricate nature of linguistic taboos in our time."

To conclude, AEs are a vocabulary of peoples' values used to express our values and to criticize human behaviours. Fig. 1 shows the schema of the application of animal fixed expressions as human criticism or evaluation. People map their system of values subconsciously on animals and imagine how animals should be, then generate AEs accordingly, with the systematic underlying conceit and the metaphorical tenors surfaced, to criticize and to rule human beings themselves.

References

- Ahrens K, Say A L T 1999 "Mapping Image-Schemas and Translating Metaphors." In: *The Proceedings of Pacific Asia Conference on Language, Information and Computation*. Taipei.
- Alexander R J 1978 Fixed expressions in English: a linguistic, psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic and didactic study (part 1), *Anglistik und Englischunterricht* 6:171-88.
- Brinkmann F 1878 *Die Metaphern*. Verlag von Adolph Marcus, Bonn.
- Büchmann G 1937 *Geflügelte worte – der zitatenschatz des deutschen volkes*. Berlin, Haude & Spenerschen.
- Carter R 1987 *Vocabulary*. London, Allen and Unwin.
- Craddick, Miller 1970 Investigation of the symbolic self using the concentric circles method and animal metaphor. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 31:147-150.
- Davies E E, Bentahila A 1989 Familiar and less familiar metaphors. *Language & Communication*, 9:49-68.
- Drosdowski G, Scholze-Stubenrecht W 1992 *Duden (Band 11) Redewendungen und sprichwörtliche Redensarten*. Mannheim, Leipzig, Wien, Zürich, Meyers LexikonVerlag.
- Fontecha A F, Catalan R M J 2003 Semantic derogation in animal metaphor: a contrastive-cognitive analysis of two male-female examples in English and Spanish. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 35:771-797.
- Fraser B 1981 Insulting Problems in a Second Language. *TESOL Quarterly*, 15:435-441.
- Grzimek B 1988 *Grzimeks Enzyklopädie (Band 5) – Säugetiere*. München, Kindler Verlag.
- Hsieh, S C Y (謝菁玉) 2001 *Teirmetaphern im modernen Chinesischen und Deutschen: eine vergleichende semantische und soziolinguistische studie*. unpublished PhD thesis, Tübingen University.
- . 2002 Cat Expressions in Mandarin Chinese and German – Animal Expressions and Cultural Perspectives. In *the 10th International Conference on Cognitive Processing of Chinese and Other Related Asian Languages*. Taipei, National Taiwan University Dec. 9-11.

- . 2003a Vogel metaphern und Taiwan heute: sprache und was dahinter steht. *Taiwanese culture and literature news*. Germany, Ruhr University Bochum. (paper accepted)
- . 2003b The Corpora of Mandarin Chinese and German Animal Expressions: An Application of Cognitive Metaphors and Language Change. In *Proceedings of the Corpus Linguistics 2003 conference*, Lancaster University, England, pp 332-341.
- Huang H, Tian G 1990 A sociolinguistic view of linguistic taboo in Chinese. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 81: 63-85.
- Lakoff G, Johnson M 1980 *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Lakoff T M 1989 *More than cool reason: a field guide to poetic metaphor*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Low G D 1988 On teaching metaphor. *Applied Linguistics*, 9(2): 125-47.
- Michel P 1991 *Tiersymbolik*. Bern, Peter Lang.
- Moon R 1998 *Fixed expressions and idioms in English*. Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Newmark P 1988 *Approaches to Translation*. Prentice Hall, Hemel Hempstead.
- O'Donnell Paul 1990 Entre chien et loup: a study of French Animal Metaphors. *The French Review*, 63: 514-523.
- Riegler R 1907 *Das Tier im Spiegel der Sprache*. C.A.Kochs Verlagsbuchhandlung, Dresden, Leipzig.
- Risch B 1987 Women's derogatory terms for men: That's right, 'dirty' words. *Language in Society* 16: 353-358.
- Röhrich L 1991 *Lexikon der sprichwörtlichen redensarten*. Freiburg, Herder.
- Schenda R 1998 *Who's Who der Tiere – Märchen, Mythen und Geschichten*. München, Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag.
- Sutton L A 1995 Bitches and Skankly Hobags. The Place of Women in Contemporary Slang. In: Hall K and Burholtz M (eds.), *Gender Articulated*. Routledge, London.
- Whaley C, Antonelly G 1983 The birds and the beasts – woman as animal. *Maledicta*, 7, 219-229.
- Wierzbicka A 1985 *Lexicography and Conceptual Analysis*. Ann Arbor, Karoma.