

Analyze Language and Cultural Characteristics of Chinese Idioms Based on Malay Idioms

Lee Hau (Author), Norlida Razali (Author)

Academy of Language Studies

Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Cawangan Kelantan Kelantan, Malaysia

Abstract:- Idioms are a unique vocabulary unit of the national language. It not only integrates the essence of the language, but also summarizes the wisdom and experience of the people for thousands of years. This article attempts to compare Malay and Chinese idioms and explore Chinese idioms through their similarities and differences from the aspect of linguistic and cultural characteristics.

Keywords:- Chinese Idioms, Malay idioms, Peribahasa, language characteristics, cultural characteristics.

I. INTRODUCTION

Idiom is a unique vocabulary unit of national languages. Proverbs, short idioms, locutions, aphorisms, etc. are all idioms, but they are all different. Proverbs are popular and profound sentences that are popular among the people. They can be used as sentence components or as general words into sentences as subject, predicate, object, attributive, adverbial and clause. Short idioms refer to a fixed short phrase that has been used in history or has been circulated for a long time among the masses. It is usually a part of a sentence and cannot express a complete thought.

Locutions and proverbs are similar, but they are still different. Proverbs are the crystallization of people's social life experience and have profound meaning. Locutions have relatively simple meanings, and the metaphors used are mostly general phenomena, not a summary of experience. Aphorisms are also close to proverbs, but proverbs do not have the obvious warning meaning like aphorisms. Most proverbs also a mass creation, less celebrity words, classic words.

The Malay idiom "Peribahasa" includes: short idiom "Perumpamaan", proverb "Bidalan", aphorism "Kata-kata hikmat" and locution "Simpulan Bahasa". This article attempts to compare Malay and Chinese idioms and explore the linguistic and cultural characteristics of Chinese idioms through their similarities and differences.

II. LANGUAGE FEATURES

A. Voice

In the form of idioms, in order to facilitate oral transmission and memory, in addition to make sentences neat, they require harmonious tones.

"Biar lambat asal selamat". ("lambat" rhymes with "selamat").

"Biar mati anak, jangan mati adat". ("anak" rhymes with "adat").

A little difference, a thousand miles away 差之毫厘，失之千里 read as "Chà zhī háolí, shī zhī qiānlǐ" ("difference" and "miles" with rhyme).

Three headswins Master Zhuge Liang 三个臭皮匠，定个诸葛亮 read as "Sān gè chòu píjiàng, dìng gè zhūgéliàng" ("heads" and "liang" with rhyme).

Cannibals have soft mouths and short hands

吃人的嘴软，拿人的手短 read as "Chī rén de zuǐruǎn, ná rén de shǒuduǎn" ("soft" and "short" with rhyme).

Malay belongs to alphabetic writing. The tones are expressed in sentences, and the tones do not change much, but they are still catchy when they are pronounced. The tone notes of Chinese are mainly reflected in the tones of Chinese characters. The selection of words with different tones can make the syllables circulate, ups and downs, form a beautiful rhythm, and enhance the expressive power of the language. In Chinese idioms, there are many tones that match well, for example:

兵强马壮, read as "Bīngqiáng-mǎzhuàng" and 千锤百炼 "Qiānchuí-bǎiliàn" sound very pleasing to the ear. These characteristics make Chinese idioms unique among the idioms of many languages.

B. Rhetoric

Chinese and Malaysian idioms widely and appropriately use various rhetoric to express meaning, such as metaphor, antithesis, exaggeration, contrast, rhyme, and substitution, etc. Among them, metaphor and antithesis are dominant, so here are two points for discussion:

➤ Analogy

Metaphors can make complex and profound truths becomes simple, easy to understand, and easy to accept. The number of Chinese and Malaysian idioms expressed by metaphors are extremely large and ingenious. Example:

"Ayam hitam terbang malam". (When a black chicken flies in the night, it is not easy to detect bad things).

“Seperti aur dengan tebing”. (Like bamboo shoots and shore, describe close relationship).

天下乌鸦一般黑 read as “Tiānxià wūyā yībān hēi” (Crows in the world are as black).

陈酒味醇，老友情深 read as “Chénjiǔ wèi chún, lǎo yǒu qíng shēn” (Aged wine tastes mellow, old friendship is deep).

➤ *Duality*

Duality gives people a uniform aesthetic in terms of form, and in terms of content. Due to the contrast of the synonymous or antonymous, it invisibly enriches the semantics and strengthens the tone. Example:

“Di mana bumi dipijak, di situ langit dijunjung”. (Step on the ground, the sky is above your head).

“Berat sama dipikul, ringan sama dijinjing”. (When the weight is heavy, bear it together. Difficulties are shared and blessings are shared).

人要衣装，佛要金装 read as “Rén yào yīzhuāng, fú yào jīn zhuāng” (People want clothes, Buddha wants gold clothes).

种瓜得瓜，种豆得豆 read as “Zhǒng guā dé guā, zhǒng dòu dé dòu” (You get what you sow).

Malay belongs to the alphabetic writings. Thus, a word is composed of several letters and cannot be shaped like Chinese characters in terms of literal and number of characters. Even if it is a dual sentence, each word can't be connected to the letters of the word except for its relative meaning. The amount is also the same. Malay idioms cannot be as neat and consistent as Chinese idioms which is giving people an aesthetic sense of harmony.

➤ *Down to earth, Colloquial*

Other than short idioms, most of the proverbs, locutions, and allegorical words come from the folks. They are the crystallization of the collective wisdom of the people. In daily life and work, people gradually discover some laws and problems from the environment or things they are familiar with. This produced idioms, and later applied idioms in proverbs with similar situations. Thus, idioms have the characteristics of life. Such as:

“Apalagi sawa? Ia berkehendak ayamlah”.

(What else does the python want? It just wants chicken! Describe sending sheep into a tiger's mouth).

“Telan mati emak, ludah mati bapak”.

(Swallow it and the mother will die, if spit it out, the father will die, Describe in a dilemma).

一个巴掌打不响 read as “Yīgè bā zhǎng dǎ bù xiǎng” (One slap won't make a sound).

瘦死的骆驼比马大 read as “Shòu sǐ de luòtuó bǐ mǎ dà” (A lean camel is bigger than a horse).

The two Malay proverbs selected above are very colloquial. In Example 1, there is even dialogue included. In Example 2, instead of writing "mother" and "father", they directly use the colloquial terms of "mother" and "father". In contrast, although Chinese proverbs are also life-oriented, they still differ in degree.

III. CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS

Idioms are summaries. They summarize the daily work experience of people of a country. They are incisive in content, profound in meaning, and have a wide range of appeal. They reflect a country's geography, history, social system, life philosophy and its rich cultural connotations. Because of this, language and culture are inseparable. Language is part of culture, but it is also a special kind of culture.

As a form of language expression, idioms reflect cultural differences such as national history and geographical conditions, and are mainly manifested in the following aspects:

A. *Historic*

Each nation has its own unique history. Some major historical and socially significant events that have occurred during this period will become idioms once they enter the language system and are given a fixed meaning. Idioms have unique nationality and historical factors.

In terms of content, Chinese idioms all reflect China's long and rich historical heritage. The materials are closely related to Chinese history. Idioms with historical allusions, mythological fables or classical poems are everywhere. For example, "Lips die and teeth are cold" (Zuo Zhuan: "The proverb is so-called auxiliary vehicles, lips die and teeth are cold"), although proverbs with similar meanings can also be found in Malay, such as: “Seperti aur dengan tebing” (like bamboo shoots and shore.), “Mati ayam, mati tungaunya” (the chicken is dead, and the tungau is also abolished. "tungau" is a kind of sharp blade to help the chicken's feet during cockfighting). The former comes from historical classics, the latter is based on life. The difference between the two is self-evident.

There are many Chinese idioms with historical color, such as "Xi Shi in the eyes of a lover" 情人眼里出西施 read as “Qíng rén yǎn lǐ chū xīshī” "Mentioning General Cao, General Cao will be there" 说曹操，曹操就到 read as “Shuō cáocāo, cáocāo jiù dào”, "Three heads win one Master Zhuge Liang"

三个臭皮匠，顶过一个诸葛亮 read as “Sān gè chòu píjiàng, dǐngguò yīgè zhūgéliàng” etc. In these proverbs, "Xi Shi", "General Cao" and "Master Zhuge Liang" are all historical figures. These idioms with unique Chinese social history and culture are a major feature of Chinese idioms.

B. Locality

The production of idioms is closely related to people's living environment. The natural landscapes of various places have their own characteristics. They are specifically reflected in the language. Malaysia is a tropical rain forest with a lot of mushrooms, so the Malay term "bak cendawan tumbuh selepas hujan" (like mushrooms grow out after rain) is used to describe the rapid development and mass emergence of general things. In Chinese, the phrase "spring after the rain" is used to express this phenomenon too.

The Chinese and Malaysian proverbs often use natural landscapes or objects as metaphors, such as:

"Pinang dibelah dua" (A betel nut is cut in half, which described as half a catty).

"Lintah darat" (blood-sucking leeches, describing unscrupulous profiteers who make huge profits).

The blind cat ran into a dead mouse, 瞎猫碰到死耗子 read as "Xiā māo pèng dào sǐ hàozi" (Rat "hao zi" is a term used in the north, and mouse "lao shu" in the south).

黔驴技穷 read as "Qiánlú jìqióng", "Qian" is a place name in China).

C. Morality

In Malay proverb, "Biar kalah sabung asalkan menang sorak" (Just let you lose in the cockfighting competition, if you win the applause in the process. This describes a person must do whatever he wants regardless of his wealth) tells Malay people's character of having fun just in time and muddle along with life events. There is also similar sentence in Chinese, "I have wine now, I am drunk now, and tomorrow I will be sad for tomorrow." 今朝有酒今朝醉, 明日愁来明日愁 read as "Jīnzhāo yǒu jiǔ jīnzhāo zuì, míngrì chóu lái míngrì chóu". Although two sentences are quite similar, the difference between them is that Malay proverb contains elements of vanity.

In natural, many idioms about women in Chinese idioms. Due to the influence of patriarchal society, religion, and culture, the social status of women in idioms is generally low, reflecting the discrimination against women.

It's hard to raise a woman and a villain 惟女子与小人难养也 read as "Wéi nǚzǐ yǔ xiǎo rén nán yǎng yě".

Women have long hair and short knowledge 女人头发长, 见识短 read as "Nǚrén tóufǎ zhǎng, jiànshì duǎn".

However, it cannot be generalized because of this. Under the oppression of masculinity, women who work hard and resent are very tough. Therefore, Chinese and Malay idioms give women an affirmation.

巾帼不让须眉 read as "Jīnguó bù ràng xūméi" (Women do not lost to man).

"Tangan yang menghayun buaian dapat menggoncang dunia" (The hand that shakes the cradle will shake the world).

D. Religious

Islam in Malaysia has been spread after Hinduism and has a history of about hundreds of years. There should be quite a lot of idioms influenced by Islam in Malay, but none of them are seen. Therefore, this phenomenon is worth exploring again. And not only that, because in terms of diet, Muslims deters pigs, dogs, donkeys, mules, horses, cats and all ferocious animals, especially "pigs" which are more sensitive and treat them as unclean. The idioms about pigs have negative meanings, such as "Kepala yu, ekor babi" (shark head, pig tail, described hypocritical.). This reflecting the Malay people contempt and disgust for pigs.

In contrast, Buddhism and Taoism have thousands of years of history in China, temples and Taoism are distributed in various places. The influence on the people can be seen. Therefore, there are many Chinese idioms associated with religion, such as:

Put down the butcher knife and become a Buddha on the spot 放下屠刀, 立地成佛 read as "Fàngxià túdāo, lìdì chéng fó". (Buddhism)

Buddhas want gold clothes, and people want clothes 佛要金装, 人要衣装 read as "Fú yào jīn zhuāng, rén yào yīzhuāng". (Buddhism)

One person wins the way, and the dog and the chicken ascend to heaven 一人得道, 鸡犬升天 read as "Yīrén dé dào, jīquǎnshēngtiān". (Taoism)

The eight immortals cross the sea, each showing their magical powers 八仙过海, 各显神通 read as "Bāxiānguòhǎi, gè xiǎn shéntōng". (Taoism)

IV. CONCLUSION

Although Chinese and Malay are two completely different languages, they share some common language features. Through the comparison of the two, in addition to better understanding of the differences between the two, it also highlights the language characteristics of Chinese idioms. The reason for this difference is that the Chinese language has a history of two thousand years, and its cultural heritage is rich. In contrast, Malaysia has only about 700 years of nation-building history, and most of the time is at the backward stage. The country's sporadic distribution of tribes, coupled with the influence of Malay culture on Islam and Hinduism, makes Malay culture not a purely Monoculture.

In terms of the content of idioms, Malay idioms have almost no factors derived from historical classics. The idioms that are spread among the people are directly taken from the daily life environment, making them strong in locality and weak in history, and they are generally colloquial. It is worth noting that there is not a single religious idiom in Malay idioms. This phenomenon is

worth exploring again. In terms of language, the phonetic and rhetorical functions of Malay are also quite simple.

In contrast, with the development of the Han nation, Chinese has become one of the oldest and most developed languages in the world. Therefore, Chinese idioms are rich and changeable in content, including historical, national, religious, and local characteristics. It shows the style of a great country. In the language, every syllable has a tone, which makes Chinese rich in circumflex, harmonious, and pleasant musical beauty. In terms of grammar, rhetoric is flexible and diverse. The vocabulary is also rich. These characteristics make Chinese Idioms are easy to be vivid, rich, concise and accurate. It becomes easy to accept. In Malaysia, an "Excerpts of Chinese Proverbs, Stories and Proverbs" (Malaysian version) was printed six times in three years, so it reflects Chinese idioms still have their charm after being translated into Malay.

Finally, although Malay language is not well developed and the collected information is not complete, the relationship between Malay idioms and Malay culture is still worthy for further discussion.

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