




The use of Xiehouyu in Chinese

 Xasanova Shaxzoda

Teacher of Oriental University, Uzbekistan

OPEN ACCESS

SUBMITTED 20 February 2025

ACCEPTED 19 March 2025

PUBLISHED 21 April 2025

VOLUME Vol.05 Issue 04 2025

COPYRIGHT

© 2025 Original content from this work may be used under the terms of the creative commons attributes 4.0 License.

Abstract: This article provides information about xiehouyu, one of the unique expressions of the Chinese language. Xiehouyu is an expression consisting of two parts, the first part of which is often descriptive, while the second reveals its hidden meaning. The article discusses the structure of xiehouyu, the context of use, cultural significance and its role in everyday life. The content of these expressions is illustrated through examples and their importance in language learning is shown.

Keywords: Xiehouyu, Chinese language, idiom, oral speech, culture, metaphor, humor, folk art, phraseology.

Introduction: Among the idiomatic expressions in the Chinese language, xiehouyu (歇后语) occupies a special place. These expressions are widely used from ordinary speech to literary works. Xiehouyu is a type of idiom consisting of two parts, metaphorical and often humorous or wise. These expressions reflect the wisdom, humor, and language skills of the Chinese people. The study of phraseological units in Chinese linguistics began in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and during this period many studies on idioms appeared. Chinese phraseologisms are of particular importance for both the Chinese people and scholars of the country, since their basis is based on the national-cultural component, which has been formed over thousands of years. Phraseological units in the Chinese language are understood as fixed and stereotyped phrases or expressions that cannot be changed. This concept is expressed by the term "shu yu (熟)". There are various typologies of the Chinese language, but two typologies are distinguished, presented by Doctor of Philology A. L. Semenas and Chinese linguist Ma Guofan[1].

Xiehouyu is usually structured as follows:

1. The first part is an event, situation or image: this is a metaphorical image based on the context;

2. The second part is a hidden or humorous meaning: here lies an allegory or irony.

- 老虎头上拍草蟹 —— 找错了地方 Killing a fly on a tiger's head - choosing the wrong place Meaning: doing something inconvenient or wrong.
- 井风的青蛙 —— 目光短浅 The following frog is narrow-minded Meaning: a person with a limited worldview.
- 剪刀环到布 —— 疼电接网 Scissors touch the cloth — it is useless Meaning: the action is fruitless.
- 八仙过海 —— 各显神通 Eight gods cross the sea — each shows his abilities. Meaning: everyone works in his own way or solves the problem.

In Chinese, there is a special class of phraseological units — xiehouyu (歇后语), which literally means “cut words” [2, 7]. In Russian literature, these units are interpreted as “allegory and explanation”. Xiehouyu has a two-part structure, and when the first part is said, the interlocutor is expected to know and say the second part. This second part expresses the main meaning of the proverb.

For example, let's take the following expression: 多此一举 (yǎo kuàizi hē shuǐ – duō cǐ yī jǔ) – literally: “taking a stick to drink water – excessive effort”. This expression is used to express unreasonable and unnecessary actions, when a person exerts too much effort in something. Here, the first part – “taking a stick to drink water” – piyù (设喻), that is, “allegory”, performs the function of “excessive effort” – jiědá (解达), that is, “revealing the content”.

As one of the leading researchers of xiehouyu, M.G. Pryadkhin, noted, these units have a two-part structure, and their meaning is fully revealed in the context. For example: 壶里煮饺子 – 有嘴倒不出来 (hú li zhǔ jiǎozi – yǒu zuǐ dào bù chū lái) – “cooking dumplings in a kettle – there is a mouth, but the contents do not spill out”. This expression expresses a state of wanting to say something, but not being able to say it: “the tongue is on the tip of the tongue, but I cannot say it”. B. I. Pankratov studied xiehouyu as stable expressions characteristic of the Beijing dialect and analyzed the mechanism of their formation. According to his observations, the speaker seeks to express it in a humorous or figurative form instead of a simple expression. For this purpose, he first cites the first artistic-allegorical part and adds a second part that gives an explanation to it. For example: 泥菩萨过河 – 自由难保 (ní púsà guò hé – zì yóu nán bǎo) – “The

Bodhisattva made of clay is crossing the river – it is difficult for him to survive himself”. This expression is used in the Russian sense of “I myself am not surviving” or “it is difficult for me”.

Yu. L. Krol, in his article “Experience in classifying and describing the structure of Beijing xiehouyu”, relying on the ideas of B. I. Pankratov, emphasizes that the first part is connected to the second part as a predicative subject. The second part, as a rule, is a phraseological unit, which gives a specific meaning to the situation in speech and evokes a figurative image. However, Krol notes that the second part can also take other forms – a trope, a colloquial term, a curse word or chengyu, even a negative form or a complex number expression. According to him, these units act as a “semantic word” with an indivisible semantic value in speech.

According to M. G. Pryadokhin, the phenomenon of xiehouyu is very unique and is characteristic only of the Chinese language. Such a phenomenon is not found in Indo-European languages or other Eastern languages, even in Sino-Tibetan languages, which are typologically close to Chinese [3, 6-7].

Cultural significance

Xiehouyu reflect the thinking, lifestyle, social relations and values of the people. They are often characteristic of a certain social class, historical period or geographical region. Therefore, the study of xiehouyu serves not only to understand the language, but also to understand the culture in depth.

The concept of Xiehóuyǔ and its linguistic features

In Chinese linguistics, the term “xiehóuyǔ” (歇后语) is used to denote expressions consisting of two parts and having a figurative meaning. They are usually constructed in the following form: the first part is a metaphor (a figurative image), and the second part is a comment that interprets or explains this metaphor. For example: 猪八戒照镜子 —— 里外不像人个 Zhū Bājiè zhào jìngzi – lǐ wài bù xiàng gè rén “Zhu Batze looks in the mirror - he does not look like a person either inside or out” - this expression means that a person cannot be found good in any way, that is, he is bad in every way.

Xiehóuyǔ expressions can be used both in full form (i.e. with two parts) and only with the first - figurative part. Although the second part is omitted in oral speech, its meaning is understood by the listener based on the context. Thus, even in an abbreviated form, these expressions retain their semantic load.

In expressions of this type, the metaphor - that is, the first part - performs the main semantic and expressive function. The second part often consists of a phraseological unit, which can also exist separately.

Also, this interpretation often acquires a new meaning, different from its meaning in its usual context. Therefore, xiehóuyǔ often gives the speech a rich imagery through hypocrisy, irony or humor.

Xiehóuyǔ about the sky

The image of the sky is often used in Chinese xiehóuyǔ. Such expressions often serve to figuratively express real-life situations through light irony or humor. The following examples are a vivid proof of this.

1. bàn tiān yún lí diào kǒu dài — zhuāng fēng Bàn tiān yún lí diào kǒu dài — zhuāng fēng "Hanging a bag in the middle of the sky - gathering wind" — This expression means that someone is playing the role of a naive or ignorant person, deliberately trying to appear simple, that is, "playing the role of a fool", "pretending to be ignorant."

2. bàn xuán kōng zhōng shuā jiàng zi — hú yún Bàn xuán kōng zhōng shuā jiàng zi — hú yún «Applying paste in the middle of the sky – gluing clouds» — Meaning: "stupid talk, meaningless, illogical talk", that is, "speaking nonsense", "expressing opinions that have nothing to do with the situation".

3.当天一道裂 — 日月难过 Dàng tiān yī dào liè — rì yuè nán guò «A crack that cuts through the sky – it is difficult for the sun and the moon to pass through» — This expression figuratively expresses difficult periods in life, trying times. It refers to hardship, trials, and depression. Its poetic content is often expressed in a romantic or philosophical tone: "life is beautiful, only the sky is a little cracked".

These xiehóuyǔ express ordinary everyday situations in a poetic and ironic way through their imagery and unique images. They are a vivid example of folk oral creativity, embodying the worldview and cultural and aesthetic views of the Chinese people.

Xiehóuyǔ are folk proverbs that are widely used and used on various topics. They enrich ordinary situations in life and make them easier to understand. The following expressions are vivid examples of this type of xiehóuyǔ.

1. 蘆子過街 — 人人喊打 Hàozǐ guò jiē — rén rén hǎn dǎ "When a cat crosses the street, everyone starts beating it" — This expression is used when "everyone criticizes and opposes someone or something." Thus, this expression means "when people unite in disagreement."

2. 蘆子啃書 — 咬文嚼字 Hàozǐ kěn shū — yǎo wén jiáo zì «Cat bites the book – biting and swallowing the words» — This expression means "overanalyzing words or paying attention to each word without

making any sense at all." This Chinese expression sometimes refers to incorrect analysis or writing letter by letter.

3. 蘆子碰見貓兒 — 難逃 Hàozǐ pèng jiàn māo ér — nán táo «Cat meets cat – difficult to escape» — This expression means "being caught in a difficult situation and having difficulty getting out of it." Sometimes used to describe "the impossibility of following the right path."

4. 蘆子舔貓鼻梁骨 — 貪色不顧命 Hàozǐ tiǎn māo bī liáng gǔ — tān sè bù gù mìng «A cat that licks a cat's nose is putting its life at risk» — This expression means "forgetting about its own danger and doing high-risk things for personal gain." Similarly, in such a situation, a person loses himself and even does not consider the risk of death.

5. 蘆子舔貓鼻子 — 找死 Hàozǐ tiǎn māo bǐ zi — zhǎo sǐ «A cat that licks a cat's nose is seeking death» — This expression is used about "a person who is close to his death or who has put himself in danger". In Chinese, this expression is often used to express a person's wrong, dangerous actions.

Xiehóuyǔ are a form of folk art that often helps to describe common truths and various life situations. These expressions play an important role in social networks or daily conversations, as well as in introducing interesting and meaningful interpretations to natural events.

CONCLUSION

Xiehóuyǔ is one of the unique linguistic units that expresses the diversity of the Chinese language. Through them, the wisdom, imaginative thinking ability and culture of the Chinese people are revealed. Learning and correctly using these expressions will bring great benefits to language learners. Xiehóuyǔ can also be an important resource for cross-cultural research by comparing them with expressions from other languages.

REFERENCES

Хасанова, Ш. (2023). ФЕЪЛ ФРАЗЕОЛОГИЗМЛАРДА ВАРИАНТЛАНИШ (хитой ва ўзбек тиллари мисолида). *Oriental renaissance: Innovative, educational, natural and social sciences*, 3(23), 127-131.

Xasanova, S. (2021). Rus tilshunosligida frazeologizmlarning tadqiqi: rus tilshunosligida frazeologizmlarning tadqiqi. *Журнал иностранных языков и лингвистики*, 2(7).

Shaxzoda, X. (2020). *Lexical Properties Of Pu Songling Novels. The American journal of social science and education innovations.*

Xasanova, S. (2022). XITOIY VA O 'ZBEK TILLARIDA FE'L FRAZEOLOGIZMLARINING ANTONOMIYA HODISASI. Oriental renaissance: Innovative, educational, natural and social sciences, 2(Special Issue 29), 188-197.

Khasanova, S. A. Q. (2022). Analysis of verb phraseological units in chinese. Asian Journal of Multidimensional Research, 11(5), 280-283.

Shaxzoda, X. The development of story of the XVI XVII century and the specific style of Pu Sungling's work. Academia an international multidisciplinary research journal. DOI, 10, 2249-7137.

Qizi, K. S. A. (2024). PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS EXPRESSING THE SITUATION. European International Journal of Philological Sciences, 4(02), 16-18.

qizi Khasanova, S. A. (2024). PHRASEOLOGISMS RELATED TO THE WAY OF LIFE OF A PERSON. CURRENT RESEARCH JOURNAL OF PHILOLOGICAL SCIENCES, 5(02), 19-22.

qizi Khasanova, S. A. (2024). VERB PHRASEOLOGISMS EXPRESSING POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE FEELINGS IN UZBEKI AND CHINESE LANGUAGES. The American Journal of Social Science and Education Innovations, 6(02), 22-24.

qizi Khasanova, S. A. (2024). VERB PHRASEOLOGISMS EXPRESSING POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE FEELINGS IN UZBEKI AND CHINESE LANGUAGES. The American Journal of Social Science and Education Innovations, 6(02), 22-24.

qizi Khasanova, S. A. (2024). PHRASEOLOGISMS RELATED TO THE WAY OF LIFE OF A PERSON. CURRENT RESEARCH JOURNAL OF PHILOLOGICAL SCIENCES, 5(02), 19-22.

Shaxzoda, X. (2024). STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF VERB PHRASEOLOGISMS IN CHINESE AND UZBEK LANGUAGES. TANQIDIY NAZAR, TAHLILY TAFAKKUR VA INNOVATSION G 'OYALAR, 1(1), 403-406.