

Study on the Origin and Evolution of Xiehouyu

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Abstract: Chinese Xiehouyu is a two-part allegorical saying, which is a language with a unique structure and a special way of expressing. It has a humorous style and uses more flexible idioms to express the speaker's meaning. The origin of Chinese Xiehouyu can be traced back thousands of years ago. With the development of society, the content and form of Chinese Xiehouyu have also undergone tremendous changes.

Keywords: Chinese Xiehouyu; Origin; Evolution.

1. Introduction

Chinese Xiehouyu is a kind of Chinese idioms and a special language form of Chinese. It is a special form of language created by the Chinese people in their daily life. This language is lively, humorous and philosophical. Eg: "Moths to the flames--Suicide." It means when the moth flies around the flame, it burns itself to death. It usually divides a sentence into two parts to express a certain meaning, which is similar to the two parts of the riddle and the answer. The former part is a metaphor, which using a thing to compare a thing. The "question" in a riddle. "Moths to the flame" is like a riddle, which makes people think of the consequences of the moths to the flame. The latter part is like the "answer", which is the explanation of the meaning. "Self-Destruction" is the answer to "the moth". The conjecture and explanation of the matter of "putting out the fire" is a metaphor for people's blindness when doing something, which will result in failure. There is a certain pause between the former part and the latter part, because the part of the answer after the pause sometimes needs people to guess and understand the meaning it originally intended to express. For that reason, it is called Chinese two-part allegorical sayings.

2. The Origin and Characteristics of Chinese Xiehouyu

The name "Xiehou" first appeared in the Tang Dynasty. The so-called "ZhengWuxiehou style" (a kind of "Xiehou" style poem) has already been mentioned in *"The Old Tang's Historical Book · Biography of Zheng Qing"*. However, as a language form and language phenomenon, it appeared as far back as the pre-Qin period. For example, there is a sentence in *"State Strategy · Chu Strategy IV"*, "It's not late to mend the barn even though the sheep are lost already". It means that it is not too late to repair the sheepfold after losing the sheep. Meanwhile, it is also a metaphor that when we face a problem, we should take to avoid other mistakes. This is the origin of Chinese Xiehouyu.

Chinese Xiehouyu usually uses two rhetorical methods: metaphorical meaning and homophony. So, it can be divided into metaphorical meanings, Chinese Xiehouyu and homophonic Chinese Xiehouyu. The first part of the metaphorical meaning is a metaphor, and the second part is an explanation of the former part. According to the attribute, metaphors can be divided into three types: Chinese Xiehouyu

of characters, Chinese Xiehouyu of animals, and Chinese Xiehouyu of things and phenomena. Most of the animal Chinese Xiehouyu are created orally by the peasant masses. Most animal Chinese Xiehouyu are written by farmers and created orally. Farmers live in mountains, plains, lakesides, hillsides, and fields. They work in the water, so they know more about the appearance characteristics and living habits of animals, and at the same time they are more aware of many shortcomings and weaknesses of human beings. Because of their rich and peculiar imagination, endless Chinese Xiehouyu have been created by them. For example: "Cat Weeps for Mouse--Fake Mercy (crocodile tears)." "Reading a play while riding a donkey--Wait and See (if you don't believe)." Those Chinese Xiehouyu about the characters involves people of all periods and classes, including historical celebrities, common people, and characters in novels. For example, the historical figures in *"The Romance of the Three Kingdoms"*, one of China's four great classics, have produced many Chinese Xiehouyu. Regarding the characters in the stories of the Three Kingdoms, the ones that most often appear in Chinese Xiehouyu are about Liu Bei, Zhang Fei, Guan Yu, and Zhuge Liang. The broad masses of the people have also created many Chinese Xiehouyu based on historical events and the personalities of these characters. For example: "Liu Bei borrows Jing Province--Borrowing without returning." This proverb describes the situation of a person who borrows something without the intention of returning it. There are many names for Guan Yu, such as "Guan Gong" and "Guan ErYe". Guan Yu has also always been a symbol of justice. Chinese Xiehouyu about Guan Yu include: "Guan Gong's Blade Shop--Genuine goods at a fair price." The analogy is that the goods are not counterfeit, and the price is real and good like his Green Dragon Crescent Blade. Most of the allegorical remarks about Zhang Fei are ridiculed, such as: "Zhang Fei's embroidery--There can be care in one's roughness". This sentence refers to a person who looks rude in appearance, but is very careful in doing things. Zhuge Liang has always been a brave and resourceful image in people's minds. There is an allegorical saying about Zhuge Liang: "When Zhuge Liang squint the brows--He'll have an idea." This sentence is a metaphor for thinking and coming up with a solution to a problem. It contains the meaning of praising people for their quick thinking, ability, and methods. Chinese Xiehouyu of things and phenomena is about the characteristics of things and some special phenomena, such as: "Boil Coptdis with Rock Sugar--Sharing joys and

sorrows", Coptidis is a very bitter traditional Chinese medicine. This sentence is a metaphor for enjoying blessings together, and bearing hardships together. "The Sun Over the Mountain--Not useful anymore." It is a metaphor for how things can eventually lose its use, and it primarily refers to people who are elder and frail.

Some Chinese Xiehouyu homophones or similar characters are similar in shape, and some words with the same initials, finals and tones. They are often used and another meaning is derived from the original meaning in order for readers to have a deep understanding of the meaning, sometimes annotations are marked. Such as: "Cold tofu and shallot--One green and one white (completely clear-cut or innocent)". In Chinese, the first Chinese characters for cyan(qingse) and innocence(qingbai) are pronounced qing.

3. The Evolution of Chinese Xiehouyu

3.1. The Emergence and Development of New Chinese Xiehouyu

The change and development of Chinese Xiehouyu are first reflected in the development of the times and the emergence of new things. Some Chinese Xiehouyu will use new words and things to describe something, such as: "hanging a thermos on the plane-high level (bottle)". In 1903, the Wright Brothers invented the world's first airplane. With the advancement of science and technology and the emergence of new things, people have created many new Chinese Xiehouyu based on new things, which also reflects the rich creativity and imagination of the Chinese people. There also are many other Chinese Xiehouyu, such as: "The train came in and out of the station--There are many tracks", "Working on the computer--Clever calculations (One's methods are more than human)", etc. These are all following the development of society, and everyone keeps up with the trend, thus creating Chinese Xiehouyu that did not exist before. Secondly, many Chinese Xiehouyu have developed from the original written language to the current spoken language, "A cent of vinegar--It's cheap and sour". At the same time, with the development of information technology and the popularity of WeChat, Weibo and other APPs, the presentation form of Chinese Xiehouyu has also changed. In the past, Chinese Xiehouyu may appear in books or spoken orally, but now Chinese Xiehouyu conforms to the trend of the times and is presented in the form of emoticons. A simple emoticon can also express what people want to express.

3.2. The Fading and Demise of the Old Chinese Xiehouyu

While many new Chinese Xiehouyu are produced, many old Chinese Xiehouyu are gradually fading and dying. Such as: "Pregnant daughter-in-law--Grandson inside (somebody

pretends to be pitiable)". These allegories are too vulgar in the eyes of the public today, and they also discriminate against some special groups of people. These allegories sayings will not only gradually disappear, but we will also criticize the emergence of such allegories. There are also some Chinese Xiehouyu about feudal thought that are gradually disappearing. For example: "The emperor implements amnesty--Blessing" and so on.

4. Conclusion

Chinese Xiehouyu is the wealth of the language treasure house of our country, and it is the product of the wisdom created by the Chinese nation for thousands of years. Whether it is original or new, Chinese Xiehouyu always uses the method of image thinking and uses vivid metaphors to explain the facts and experiences in an easy and interesting way. This gives people a way to connect with them more in an understandable and a fun way. If we don't use figurative descriptions but use abstract expressions, it will not give people a more colorful and lively impression. The image metaphors of Chinese Xiehouyu can produce artistic appeal and receive excellent expressive effects. This is because the metaphor itself can arouse people's imagination. From this to that, it is the most prominent feature of Chinese Xiehouyu express emotions and explain the truth by means of metaphors. Therefore, absorbing Chinese is undoubtedly very beneficial to carry out comprehensive and in-depth research on Chinese. However, with the development of society, many Chinese Xiehouyu have become vulgar and out of style. When we face this situation, we must criticize and resist using it. Therefore, how to standardize Chinese Xiehouyu is also a question worth thinking about in the future.

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