

漢英對照 成語詞典

Chinese Idioms  
And Their English  
Equivalents

陳永楨·陳善慈編著 商務印書館



漢英  
對照

# 成語詞典

# Chinese Idioms And Their English Equivalents

陳永楨·陳善慈編著 商務印書館

## 漢英對照成語詞典

編著者——陳永楨 陳善慈

出版者——商務印書館香港分館

香港鰂魚涌芬尼街2號五樓

印刷者——中華商務聯合印刷（香港）有限公司

香港九龍炮仗街75號

版 次——1983年4月初版

1983年11月重印

© 1983 商務印書館香港分館

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors wish to express their deepest gratitude to Dr. Lee Siu-Kong ( 李少剛 ), Dip. Ed. (H.K.), D.I.C., Ph.D. (London), the second author's husband, for his untiring assistance in the editing of the book and in reading the manuscript, and for his writing of "A Guide to the Use of this Dictionary" and 本詞典使用法 which appear on the pages hereafter.

# 序 言

學習一種語言，能學會它的語音，詞匯和語法，只能說是掌握了它的基礎，若要精通這種語言，還得掌握大量成語（包括習語，諺語等），因為成語是每一種民族語言的精髓部分。

漢語和英語都有很豐富和精煉的成語。出版的成語典籍委實不少，可惜都屬於註釋性質，難得找到一本漢英成語對照的書，讓兩種成語本身並列對照，相映成趣，藉此可以表現出兩種不同文化的語言的優點。編者正要在這書裏作這種新嘗試。

學習單詞有所謂同義詞，反義詞；編者認為學習漢英成語也可以利用同義成語和反義成語來加深對每個成語的認識，鞏固記憶，和作為逐漸擴大成語範圍的學習手段。

本書收集了可作對照的漢成語 4,079 條，英成語約 7,000 條。為了使外籍學者學習漢成語的方便，本書把每條成語標上漢語拼音，附上直譯（literal translation），並對有典故和特別艱深的成語提供出處，以增加讀者對中國文學的興趣和鑑賞力。

新嘗試本身就意味着不成熟，加之編者水平有限，謬誤之處在所難免，敬希國內外讀者不吝指正。

此書蒙李博士少剛不辭辛勞，審查成語出處，校閱全稿，並親筆撰“本詞典使用法”一文，謹此誌謝。

陳永楨

1981 年 6 月於廣州

## FOREWORD

The Chinese people has been considered by the westerners to be a peace-loving people who are philosophical in their attitude toward life. The westerners are often impressed by the wise or ingenious sayings in their everyday expressions in conversation and writing. Indeed Chinese people are fond of wisdom and knowledge which have been handed down by the sages and great philosophers through the ages. Whether they can live up to the ideals and wisdom is another matter, but at least the wise sayings containing advice and warning can serve as a kind of guidance of wisdom and moral codes in their everyday life.

However, idioms and proverbs are not unique to the Chinese language; they exist probably in every language and the English language is reputed for its richness in expressive, idiomatic and proverbial phrases. One English writer said "take fifty of their current proverbial sayings — they embody the concentrated wisdom of the race, and the man who orders his life according to their teaching cannot go far wrong."

What is an idiom? An idiom is a form of expression peculiar to a language. It is formed of a group of words which, in most cases, taken together convey a meaning of its own different from the individual words of the group when they are taken alone. For maintaining the characteristics of brevity, balance in form, or rhyme, the arrangement of words in an idiom is often strange, seemingly illogical, or even grammatically incorrect. It is therefore usually unwise and impossible to translate word by word an idiom from one language into another and yet to maintain the original meaning of the idiom.

When an idiom carries a message of moral or philosophical teaching it becomes a proverb. A proverb is defined as a popular, short, pithy saying with words of advice or warning, or a wise general comment on a situation. These sayings being short, to the point, condensed in form and with positive qualities, are easy to remember. For examples:

(1) Simple and short:

0051 百煉成鋼 ————— Practice makes perfect.

0298 財可通神 ————— Money talks.

## (2) Balance in form:

3719 欲速則不達 ——— More haste, less speed.

3076 先到先得 ——— First come, first served.

3258 旋得旋失 ——— Easy come, easy go.

## (3) Written in rhyme:

1095 互忍互讓 ——— Live and let live.

3879 只要功夫深，—— Little strokes fell great oaks.

鐵柱磨成針

Idioms and proverbs of both languages, Chinese and English, naturally come from different origins, and in both languages some sayings have been assimilated by the common people and have become so popular that the users are no longer aware of their origins. These sayings express a truth which summarizes everyday experience. For examples:

2907 未雨綢繆 ——— Make hay while the sun shines.

3028 勿誤農時

0348 趁熱打鐵 ——— Strike while the iron is hot.

0659 鼎力支持 ——— Put one's hand to the plough.

1919 牛不喝水，—— You may lead a horse to water, but  
難按得牛頭低 you cannot make him drink.

All these might have their origins in farm work and would have developed out of common-sense experience of farming.

Many English proverbs come from the English Bible; for examples:

The spirit is willing, but the flesh is ——— 力不從心 (1602); 心有  
weak. 餘而力不足 (3195)

A soft answer turneth away wrath. ——— 忍一句，息一怒 (2246)

Spare the rod and spoil the child. ——— 棒頭出孝子 (0076)

Shakespeare, next to the Bible in English language, is definitely the greatest source of English proverbs. Other English sources of proverbs are quotations from the famous writers such as Pope, Herrick and Benjamin Franklin, to quote a few. The following are some of the examples:

A rose by any other name would ——— 有麝自然香 (3665)  
smell as sweet (Shakespeare).

Sweet are the uses of adversity. ——— 塞翁失馬，焉知非福  
(Shakespeare). (2301)

A little learning is a dangerous ——— 一知半解 (3495)  
thing (Pope).

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may ——— 花開堪折直須折，莫待  
(Herrick). 無花空折枝 (1104)

Early to bed and early to rise, ——— 早眠早起 (3764)  
makes a man healthy, wealthy,  
and wise (Benjamin Franklin).

Although China has had no national religion, she has quite a number of great scholar-philosophers whose teachings have influenced directly or indirectly the moral and social principles of the people. Among these famous philosophers were Confucius ( 孔子 ), Mencius ( 孟子 ), and Lao Zi ( 老子 ). Confucius is the most well-known and his teaching was recorded in the famous writing, Confucian Analects ( 論語 ). For examples:

0235 不念舊惡(論語) ——— Forgive and forget.

3013 五十而知天命 ——— Life is half spent before we know  
( 論語 ) what it is.

0315 惻隱之心，仁之 ——— Milk of human kindness.  
端也(孟子)

3257 玄之又玄(老子) ——— Explaining what is unknown by what  
is still unknown.

The Chinese literary classics which are full of idioms and proverbs, and quotations from different famous scholars and poets, are also sources of many Chinese idiomatic and proverbial sayings. Thus:

2494 士爲知己者用 ——— Respect a man, he will do the more.  
(史記)

1179 禍兮福所倚 ——— Every cloud has a silver lining.  
(史記)

1368 進退維谷(詩經) ——— In the horns of a dilemma.

1826 明哲保身(詩經) ——— Be worldly wise and play safe.

2228 人微言輕(韓愈) ——— Poor man's reasons are not heard.

2398 深思熟慮(蘇軾) ——— Put it through the meat grinder.

One important and interesting finding from working on this book is that languages of different cultures, customs, and traditions in countries so far apart geographically and with hardly any communication in ancient times could have developed similar metaphorical idioms and proverbs as can be seen in many examples in this volume. This should not be a surprise if the proverbial sayings represent the accumulated wisdom of the people acquired through experiences in life, as human nature is the same every-



where and has undergone very little change in the human history.

Many who come to either of the two languages as a foreigner, e.g. a Chinese to the English language, may be able to see in the idioms and proverbs of a foreign language the old truths in a different light and also may develop a deeper understanding of the foreign culture and mentality.

Idioms are not a separate part of a language but rather they form quite an essential part of the general vocabulary of the language. The general tendencies of present-day language usage are towards more idiomatic expressions in speaking and writing. This collection of over 4,000 Chinese idioms and proverbs and 7,000 English ones is aimed at guiding the learners of either language to the correct use of these idioms and proverbs. Of course mastery of them comes only through constant practice and experience, and especially communication with the people of the language.

In closing, a word about the story of how this work has come to realization of a wish of the authors may not be out of place. In late 1979 the first author of this book, my elder brother, sent me from Canton, China, the preliminary manuscript, a collection of thousands of Chinese idioms and their English equivalents for my comments. This interested me tremendously, and I earnestly thought, and naturally still think, that the collection should be made into a book-form for publication so as to let the scholars and students of the same interest all over the world share the fruit of many years' work and our joint effort.

Spring Chen

University of Hong Kong  
28 August, 1981

## 本詞典使用法

本書共收漢成語 4,079 條，及與其意義相同、可作相互對照之英成語約 7,000 條。此處成語一詞包括習語、諺語、俚語、常用語等。中國人日常生活中所講的，報紙雜誌上所閱讀到的，及普通書籍所引用的漢成語都包括在內。

排列次序是按每條成語句首該漢字之漢語拼音字母、聲調、及其筆畫數而定。從書首之音序表內可以看出，先是按漢語拼音字母順序排列；若字母相同則要看其聲調，依照陰平 -，陽平 ˊ，上聲 ˇ，去聲 ˋ 之次序而排列；若字母聲調兩者均同，則再按筆畫數之多少而排列。本書每條漢成語自有一個條目號碼 (Code Number)，冠在成語之前；全書條目號碼由 0001 起至 4079 止。

在每條漢成語後，先標出其漢語拼音及聲調符號（陰平 -，陽平 ˊ，上聲 ˇ，去聲 ˋ，輕聲則不用符號）。其次把成語直譯成英語，盡可能逐字譯出，後面用 (lit.) 縮語表示。漢語拼音及漢英直譯主要是供外國讀者之用，但中國讀者亦可藉此確知該漢成語之標準讀音，並通過直譯複習英語詞匯與擴大詞匯量。

其後便開列出與該漢成語相對照之英成語，由一條至四、五條不等。各條英成語間在意義上可有若干差別；外國讀者可藉此以增加對漢成語之了解，而中國讀者可由此學習表達同一漢成語之不同英文句子。英成語句中遇有某詞可用其他詞代替的，本書把可代用之詞用括號附入。此外，所列英成語有些是以介詞如 of, to, with 等結尾的，為的是可隨時靈活套用，因此末端概不加句點 (full stop)。

再後便是同義成語及反義成語，先漢後英，每條附有條目號碼以便翻閱參考；由一同義或反義成語可引至另一同義或反義成語，起着連鎖作用，由是增大成語量並加深對該成語含義的認識。但並非每一漢成語必有同義成語和反義成語。

漢成語不少源出於古詩文，或有典故。了解成語來源可增加對漢語古籍的認識，培養對中國古典文學的鑑賞能力，故結尾一項是該漢成語的出處與典故。

下面是本書幾條項目較齊全的漢英成語對照例子：

2767 同甘共苦 *tóng gān gòng kǔ*

*Sharing joy and sorrow together.*

(lit.)

**Friendships multiply joys and divide griefs.**

**A sorrow shared is but half a trouble, but a joy that is shared is a joy made double.**

**In weal or woe.**

[同義] 有福同享，有禍同當

See 3647

*For better or for worse.*

[反義] 有酒有肉多兄弟，急難何曾見一人

See 3651

*In time of prosperity friends will be plenty; in time of adversity not one among twenty.*

晉書·應詹傳：『詹與分甘共苦，情若兄弟。』

2145 求人不如求己 *qiú rén bù rú qiú jǐ*

*Asking others for help is not as good as asking oneself. (lit.)*

**Better do it than wish it done.**

**Better spare to have thine own than ask of other men.**

[同義] 事必躬親

See 2506

*If you want a thing done well, do it yourself.*

[反義] 因人成事

See 3574

*Come in through the cabin window.*

貴耳集：『宋孝宗見觀音像，手持數珠，問何用，僧淨輝對曰，念

觀世音菩薩。問自念則甚，對曰，  
求人不如求己。」

2279 如魚得水 rú yú dé shuǐ

*Like fish getting water. (lit.)*

**Feel oneself at home.**

**Like a duck to water.**

**To be in one's element.**

〔同義〕優哉悠哉 See 3631

*Free and easy.*

〔反義〕涸轍之鮒 See 1054

*A fish out of water.*

三國志·蜀志·諸葛亮傳：『孤（劉備自稱）之有孔明，猶魚之有水也。』

若要找尋某漢成語是否在本書內，可查音序表或漢成語條目筆畫索引。此索引按成語首字筆畫數目多少而排列，由一畫至二十九畫。同畫數之字很多，則又須看該字如何起筆而定。起筆分七種，按、（點）、一（橫）、ㄇ（橫折）、丨（直）、ㄥ（直折）、丿（撇）、㇏（撇折）先後次序排列。若起筆亦相同，如同爲〔、〕起的，又將偏旁與頂蓋分爲：丿，㇏，㇏，㇏，㇏，㇏各組排列，以便易於找尋。首漢字完全相同之各成語則按第二漢字筆畫多少而定先後。若爲首兩漢字均相同，則按第三漢字之筆畫多少排列，餘類推。

若要找尋某一英成語是否在本書內，可查書末之英成語索引。此索引按英文字母順序（alphabetical order）編排。但成語以冠詞 a, an, the 開始，或以不定動詞（infinitive）的標記 to 與 to be 開始的，則不在計算之內。中國讀者從這索引可找到與之相當的漢成語以了解該英成語之意義，外國讀者找到了相當的漢成語後還可在其下看見其他與之相對照的若干英成語，加深對該漢成語之認識。

本詞典可供下列四種讀者使用：（一）學習英國語文的中國人；（二）母語爲英語而欲學習漢語文者；（三）漢英與英漢翻譯工作者；

(四)學習漢英兩種語文的外國學者。無論對於那一類讀者，這詞典是一本有用的工具書。

## A Guide To the Use of This Dictionary

This book contains just over 4,000 entries of the most well-known Chinese phrases, idioms and proverbs and nearly 7,000 entries of their English equivalents. These are the Chinese idioms one would use or come across in ordinary spoken language, in newspapers, and in other reading materials — in short, in everyday life of the Chinese people in the past and present.

Each entry of the Chinese idiom is followed by the phonetical transcription of each character based on the latest standardized romanization, i.e. the Hanyu Pinyin ( 漢語拼音 ), and then the literal translation, (lit.), of the idiom. The literal translation given here is to translate as nearly as possible the Chinese idiom word by word into English so that the readers could learn not only the meaning of the individual characters but also the gist of the idiom without consulting a Chinese dictionary.

Now comes the English equivalent of the Chinese idiom; to each Chinese entry there may be one, two, three or more English idioms. Non-Chinese readers may find these equivalents helpful to further understand the meaning of the Chinese idiom whereas the Chinese readers can learn the different ways of expressing an idiom in good and proper English. Even synonyms in both languages often have subtle differences in meaning between them.

Then follows a Synonym or an Antonym or both; in the latter case the Synonym comes first. Each Chinese Synonym and Antonym is also followed by English equivalent. These synonym and antonym idioms, Chinese or English, may be in some rare cases new additions, or may have been cited more than once. However, the readers will become more familiar with them, the more frequently the idioms appear.

Lastly, whenever available, there appears the origin of the Chinese idiom, being a quotation from some Chinese classics or literature.

Here are a few examples of the entries:

1224 集思廣益 jí sī guǎng yì  
*Collecting ideas to broaden benef-  
 its.*

**Lay our heads together.  
Two heads are better than one.  
In the multitude of counsellors  
there is safety.**

[同義] 一人計短，二人計長

See 3447

***Four eyes see more than two.***

[反義] 獨斷獨行 See 0677

***Take the law into one's own hand.***  
諸葛丞相集：「夫參署者，集衆思，  
廣忠益也。」

1234 既往不咎 jì wǎng bù jiù  
***What is past is not condemned.***  
(lit.)

**Let bygones be bygones.**

**Let the dead bury the dead.**

**Forgive and forget.**

[同義] 不念舊惡 See 0235

***Bury the hatchet.***

[反義] 翻老帳 See 0739

***Rake out old grievances.***

論語·八佾：「成事不說，遂事不  
諫，既往不咎。」

2280 如願以償 rú yuàn yǐ cháng  
***To have fulfilled one's wish.***  
(lit.)

**The prayer is answered.**

**Long looked for comes at last.**

**A dream comes true.**

**To have one's will.**

**Bring home the bacon.**

[同義] 正中下懷 See 3845

***After one's own heart.***

[反義] 大失所望 See 0550

***Fish for herring and catch a  
sprat.***

黃庭堅：「政當爲公乞如願。」

Quoting the origins is meant to arouse literary interest and appreciation of the Chinese Classics in which the beauty of the language is abundantly

revealed.

The Chinese idioms of this book are arranged according to the alphabetical order of their first character and where the first character of more than one idiom is the same, they are arranged according to the alphabetical order of the second character, or of the third, and so on. Where the alphabetical order of the first character of the idioms is the same, they are arranged according to the tonic order of the first character (cf. Yinxubiao, 音序表). Each entry is given a code number, in increasing order (0001-4079).

For looking up a Chinese idiom, a Chinese Index according to the number of strokes of the first character is provided and each idiom is followed by the entry's code number. In this Index, the Chinese entries are arranged according to the increasing number of strokes of the first character. Where the number of strokes of the first character in more than one entry is the same, they are then arranged according to the increasing number of strokes of the second character, or of the third, and so on.

In the English Index, also provided, the English idioms are arranged in alphabetical order of the first word (except the articles, 'a', 'an', and 'the'; 'to' and 'to be') in each expression. At the end of each English idiom, one or more code numbers of one or more Chinese entries are quoted where the English idiom may be found.

This book may be used by 4 categories of readers:

- (1) Chinese scholars learning English;
- (2) Non-Chinese scholars of English-speaking countries learning Chinese;
- (3) Scholars who are doing translation work of these two languages;
- (4) Scholars other than the above categories who are using these two languages.

It is hoped that they may all find this book interesting and useful.

Lee Siu Kong  
D.I.C. Ph. D (London)

August, 1981  
Hong Kong



# 目 錄

## Contents

序 言 .....	陳永楨	5
Foreword .....	Spring Chen	6—9
本詞典使用法 .....		10—13
A Guide to the Use of This Dictionary .....		14—16
音序表 ( YINXUBIAO—Tonic Order Table ) .....		17—36
詞典正文 ( The Dictionary ) .....		1—479
條目筆劃索引 ( Chinese Characters Strokes Index ) .....		480—521
英文索引 ( English Index ) .....		522—600
附 錄： ( Appendices )		
漢語拼音方案 ( Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic		
Alphabet ) .....		601—603
標準漢語拼音與 Wade 氏漢字拼音對照表 ( Standard Hanyu		
Pinyin Versus Wade Romanization ) .....		604
簡化字檢字表 ( Simplified Versions of Chinese		
characters ) .....		605—625