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**REASONS OF COMMUNICATIVE FAILURES WHEN USING**  
**PROVERBS IN RUSSIAN-CHINESE COMMUNICATION**

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**Abstract**

The article is devoted to the problem of studying the occurrence of communicative failures in intercultural communication. The novelty of the work is seen in the fact that the authors analyze the causes of communicative failures when using paremias: ignorance of the value system of ethnic groups, the symbolic meaning of the image of an animal in culture; the "loss" of a zoolexeme or the inclusion of a zoonym component, its transformation in a stable metaphorical structure. The paper shows that for the successful application of proverbs and sayings in speech, it is necessary to take into account the pragmatic equivalence of the paremia: extra-linguistic reaction of speakers of different structured languages. The language acts not only as a carrier of ethnoculture, but also as a translator of the emotional world of the nation, therefore, for effective communication it is necessary to accurately transmit information from one language to the equivalent information of another language. Using the example of the functioning of paremias in speech, culturally conditioned/situational violations of communicative norms are shown (mistakes of foreigners and native speakers who are not attentive enough to their interlocutors). Ignorance of the code in intercultural communication is the main reason for failure. The results can be applied both in the theoretical field – in fundamental research on intercultural communication, paremiology, and in practical use when teaching Russian and Chinese as a foreign language at higher educational institution and school.

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## 1. Introduction

It is not by chance that communicative mistakes and failures are the object of research in various sciences. The XXI century is a time of blurring of boundaries between countries in different spheres of communication. For communicators, an adequate understanding of the message becomes important, regardless of the cultural code. The study of communicative errors and their types becomes relevant (Epikhina, 2014). The author notes that among the most significant and interesting research areas one can single out the “science of errors” by Nikkel, semiotic defectology by Nikitin, interlanguage deviatology, as well as erratology" (Epikhina, 2014). Modern linguists distinguish three main groups of communicative errors: systemic (Norman, 2020), normative (Zemskaya, 2000) and situational errors (Leontovich, 2005). The subject of scientific study in the article is situational errors – violations in the speech of the participants of the act, which do not interfere with the speech event, but cause complications in understanding due to the inappropriateness of the utterance. Situational error is one of the reasons leading to failure in the communication process. In turn, communicative failure is characterized by the lack of achievement of the set communicative goal in the speech act, lack of understanding by communicators of verbalized information. The possibility of making mistakes increases when Russian and Chinese – representatives of different ethnic groups – come into intercultural contact.

The typologies of errors developed by linguists in Russian and Chinese linguistics were compared by Gu Junling and Huang Zhonglian, revealing common and different approaches to the concept of “communicative error” when translating from one language to another. These scientists have tested and presented a new system of classification of translation errors: static classification (errors in morphology, semantics, and pragmatics) and dynamic classification (misunderstanding, incorrect transformation and incorrect expression) (Gu & Huang, 2016). At the same time, the authors analyzed errors only in written texts, bypassing oral communication, which respondents most often encounter.

## 2. Problem Statement

The methodological basis for the scientific search was an approach from the point of view of intercultural communication. The study of intercultural communication was put in line with philosophical ideas (Hall, 1968) and today has acquired many positions and views on the changing communicative systems of peoples (Klyukanov, 2021; Smakman, 2019). Leading scientists in the field of Chinese theoretical direction, considering issues closely related to the problems that relate to the building of cross-cultural ties, including communication arising between cultures, Hu Wenzhong (2011), Jia Yuxin and Liu Xun (2000) draw one of the conclusions in his work, offering us the definition of the term “intercultural communication” as communication between people of different cultural backgrounds. From a psychological point of view, the compilation and decoding of information is the communication of people of a different cultural nature.

It is the lack of understanding of the specific accompanying context, the functional orientation of expression, shades of meaning that cannot be instantly conjectured that contribute to the emergence of situations of misunderstanding and failures in communication in modern socioculturally marked communicative situations of communication between representatives of different countries and ethnic

groups. New educational dictionaries are unique, allowing to teach to avoid mistakes already at the stage of mastering a non-native language and culture (Nikitina, 2021).

### **3. Research Questions**

150 Russian and 150 Chinese paremias with a zoonym component, collected by continuous sampling in the National Corpus of the Russian Language and the National Corpus of the Chinese Language, were the material for studying the causes of communicative failures. Referring specifically to corpora, and not to traditional paremiological dictionaries of different periods, allows us to explore the use of paremias in different contexts: from colloquial, journalistic and artistic to strict business.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the scientific description is to identify the types of communicative failures and analyze the reasons for their appearance in Russian–Chinese communication when using paremias with ignorance of the cultural component in the semantics of the zoolexeme.

### **5. Research Methods**

To achieve the goal, the method of linguistic introspection, the method of dictionary definitions and comparative analysis were used.

### **6. Findings**

The fundamental differences in the cultural code of the Russian and Chinese ethnic groups determine the inevitable difficulties in communication, up to the emergence of barriers from misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the connotation of expression due to their cultural characteristics.

When learning any foreign language, a person has to get acquainted not only with someone else's grammar, but also with someone else's worldview. Traditionally, lexical and phraseological units filled with figurative meaning more than literal are the most difficult to absorb. They make speech more expressive, rich and emotional, but impose greater responsibility when used in situations of intercultural communication. In the realities of each culture, there have always been objects, images, phenomena that can be taken among people of the same mentality as a sample of one quality or another, an image of cowardice or bravery, wealth or poverty, understandable to all native speakers. Most often, people turn to images of the fauna for this purpose, endowing animals with positive or negative characteristics. The frequency of the use of zoonyms in proverbs and sayings of each language is recorded by dictionaries. Paremias (proverbs and sayings), constructed using zoonyms, most often concentrate their metaphorical, figurative meaning in the zoolexeme. In many ways, such paroemias cannot be translated literally, and it can be difficult to find an equivalent – in different cultures there are different ideas on the assessment of specific qualities. In general, the semantics of ethnozoological categories appears to be one of the most difficult when translated into Russian (Goddard, 2018).

In the cultures we are considering, the bases on which paremias were created are differentiated. Russian paremias are based on the Christian tradition and worldview, mixed with some features of the pagan view of the world. Chinese paremias are based on a mythological picture of the world, filled with its own meanings, and therefore national cultural and speech norms differ significantly for one communicative object.

The driving factor leading to failure in communication is often a specific value system. For the Chinese, the dominant positive characteristics are collective consciousness and lifestyle, a high degree of respect for people around them, whereas in the realities of Russian society there has been a departure from collectivism in favor of individuality. Among Russians, it is generally believed that independence in judgments and partly in behavior is rather a positive than a negative characteristic. We observe this difference of worldviews on the example of paremias: here is a Chinese paremia, which includes a zoonym component, through which positive coloring and the commendable presence of such qualities as modesty and humility are transmitted: 横眉冷对千夫指，俯首甘为孺子牛 – Frowning my eyebrows, I look with cold contempt at the condemning finger of a nobleman, (but bowing my head, I am ready, like a buffalo, to serve a child). To a Russian, such humility as subjugation is unacceptable. The Chinese language's paremias are often euphemistic, ornate, while the Russians are sharp, harsh, showing the contrastivity of actions from humility to riot.

When a paremia is included in speech, one of the common mistakes is the use of a unit without a basic component for another culture: rus. Don't feed a wolf, but he's still looking into the forest – chn. 江山易改 本性难移 (It is easier to move mountains and rivers than to change a person's character); chn. 塞翁失马，焉知非福 (An old man from the border lost a horse, isn't it lucky) (the horse returned, bringing another one with him) – rus. There would be no happiness, but misfortune helped.

On the other hand, the communicator, with maximum consideration of the cultural characteristics of another ethnic group, includes a zoonym in the paremia, despite its absence in the source language. To convey the precise meaning, the speaker tries to find an analogue among the proverbs and sayings of a foreign language: rus. Near the king, near death – chn. 伴君如伴虎 (Friendship with the master is like friendship with a tiger, that is, the behavior of the strong and powerful is unpredictable, the mercy of the master can be replaced by anger at any moment); chn. 擒贼先擒王 (If you catch bandits, start with the leader) – rus. Take the bull by the horns.

Replacing the key zoolexeme with one that is significant for one's own culture allows one to express the connotation and symbolic meaning of the image of an animal or bird, fish as much as possible: chn. 不入虎穴，焉得虎子 (Without climbing into the tiger's lair, you will not catch a tiger cub) – rus. If you are afraid of wolves, keep out of the woods.

Some lexemes that have the meaning of "wild animal" may have a cultural component that is invisible at first glance, unreadable from the position of the bearer of the Russian mentality, but metaphorically understandable to the bearer of the Chinese mentality. So, for example: tigers, monkeys, deer and mandarin. For example, a mandarin is a sign of the endless love of a man and a woman, adoration of the elderly: 只羡鸳鸯不羡仙 – to envy a pair of mandarins, not eternal life; 棒打鸳鸯 – to

separate lovers or spouses, to disperse mandarins with a stick; 鸳鸯失偶，永不重交 – after the loss of a loved one, a mandarin will never find it.

In Russian paroemias, the lexemes "bear", "wolf", "fox", "hare", "mouse", etc. are functioning. Of those animals that are commonly called domestic, in paroemias with components-zoonyms, a dog, a horse, a cat, a chicken are most often found. The linguocultural component of the paremias with these lexical kernels basically do not coincide.

One of the factors leading to a communicative failure is the inappropriate use of paremias with a bright national emotive marking. The inclusion in the speech stream of Russian speakers in contact with Chinese proverbs "*Friends say that euthanasia is the best way, otherwise the dog will eventually die on its own* (朋友都说安乐死是更好的方式，否则狗终究自己死)" forms a feeling of awkwardness, resentment. The rapprochement of a person with a dog in a metaphorical sense carries with it a negative assessment, emphasizing the features reprehensible in Chinese culture. In comparison, "*He ran as fast as a dog*" will sound an insult to a Chinese, while a Russian will not see any meaning in it, except "quickly, nearby".

The interpretation of a proverb or saying by a foreigner will depend on the symbolic meanings accepted in his native culture. The grossest mistake is the use of the paroemia 蛇龙混杂 in the conversation of native speakers of the Russian language – *Mom does not allow me to play with bad children mixed with snakes and dragons* (mix with snakes and dragons) means that good and bad people unite and become good. In the above example, the paremia has a negative connotation. The Russian in the process of communication transferred the evaluation of the snake and dragon from the Slavic culture to the Chinese, which led to a communicative failure.

For example, the translation of the sentence 他是个不善于交往的人，每当到了一个新环境，就像害群之马，不敢和大家交流。 from Chinese to Russian as "This is a man who is not very good in communication. Whenever he comes to a new environment, he is afraid to communicate with others like Hai Qun Zhi Ma". The paremia 害群之马 Hai Qun Zhi Ma is used in the meaning – the nag harms the herd and is understood here as "a bad person harms the group". The traditional understanding of the Chinese paremia "the horse is afraid of the herd" is transformed in context and leads to a situational error.

The inclusion in the description of a person of a paremia that does not correspond to the situation is incorrect: 人人都说他是一个吝啬的人，获得什么好的东西都不愿意与大家分享，自己一个人偷偷留下，真的是猫总是藏好自己的爪子– All said that he was avaricious man, he didn't want to share something good with others, he secretly left himself like a cat, always hiding their claws. 猫总是藏好自己的爪子 (The cat always hides its claws) is also used to describe a person, but characterizes an insincere person, "to know a person by sight, but not to know his soul".

Offer is communicative failed 打赢这场战役我们势在必得，敌方的粮食和军火都消耗光了，已然是煮熟的鸭子 – We will definitely win this battle, the enemy's food and weapons used up, they like boiled duck. We are talking about the hopeless situation of the enemy, while the paremia 煮熟的鸭子 (like a boiled duck) describes a stubborn person, resilient, hard, like the lips of a boiled duck.

In intercultural communication, it is most difficult to use equivalent paremias describing historical realities, features of religion, rituals, holidays in the presence of the thematic group itself in another

language: rus. A hungry Frenchman and a crow are happy – chn. Pigeons like to fly to prosperous families (pigeons are eaten in poor Chinese families).

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the irrelevant symbolic meanings behind zoolexemes in the structure of proverbs and sayings. There are common features between Russian and Chinese paremias and, accordingly, the understanding of images – the comparison with a wolf is interpreted by everyone the same way, the symbolic figure of a bear is marked polar, for Russians it is rather a positive image, and for the Chinese it is a negative one. Pets, which were used for hard work and in many ways made a person's life more satisfying and easier, have positive features in paremias. For the Chinese it is a cow and a horse, and for the Russians it is a bull and a horse.

## 7. Conclusion

A cluster with zoolexemes appears as a frequency group of paremias in the communication of representatives of different peoples, since man has associated himself with living beings around since ancient times.

Ethnospecificity is manifested in the replacement of zoolexemes that are iconic for the culture of the country: rus. The cat is out of the house, the mice are dancing – chn. There is no tiger on the mountain, the monkey should be the king of the mountain 山中无老虎 猴子称大王; rus. Cowardly as a hare–chn. Cowardly as a mouse 胆小如鼠; rus. (Live) like a cat with a dog – chn. Chickens and dogs do not feel at ease (it is difficult to live together) 鸡犬不宁. Inappropriate use of paremias in speech sometimes causes a comic effect or puts a foreigner in an awkward position, offends. All this reduces the motivation of intercultural communication, leads to the appearance of fear of communication.

Understanding the meaning of paremia and the relevance of Russian and Chinese communication in a speech situation allows you to avoid communication failures that lead to conflicts.

Due to the increase in contacts between Russians and Chinese in different spheres of life, the question of the adequacy of the communication process becomes important. One of the indicators of the level of foreign language proficiency in live speech is the paremiological foundation. Even in informal business communication, partners try to show respect for someone else's culture and its knowledge. The correct use of paremia in a speech situation will help to avoid communication failures. Problems in communication are often caused by a large number of non-equivalent paremias, the replacement of basic zoolexemes in the source language, in the misunderstanding of different evaluativeness. The communication process itself took place, but the information is decoded by the addressee mistakenly. It is the ignorance of the code in intercultural communication that causes failure. A communicative error / failure is caused by an unmotivated or incorrect application of the culture – paremia in a communication situation.

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