Chinese Paroemias as Intertextual Insertions
in American Mass Media and Social Media Discourse

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Abstract: Mass media and social media discourse was analyzed to reveal the techniques of integration of Chinese sayings and proverbs to the contemporary American verbal communication. The study was conducted via the methodological approach of intertextuality, according to which borrowed proverbs and sayings may be considered in-texts by being references to the fragments of the source culture.

The paper aims at investigating the causes and consequences of the incorporation of Chinese paroemias into American mass media and social media discourse. The Chinese proverbs and sayings entering the American verbal culture undergo transformation of axiology, imagery and content. The degree of the paroemialogeme modulation depends on the discourse pragmatics and the vector of the Chinese and American axiological interaction. The Chinese paroemias functioning in American mass media and social media discourse mark the current trends of American cultural cognition.

Keywords: Theory of intertextuality, paroemial in-texts, Chinese paroemias, American mass media and social media discourse

1. Introduction

Since the time when post-structuralist theorist Julia Kristeva successfully managed to combine Bakhtin's theory of dialogism (1930) with Ferdinand de Saussure's semiology (1974) and introduced the term "intertextuality" for the first time (Kristeva, 1980, pp. 64-91), the idea of text interactions has become generally recognized within literary and cultural studies. However, as Graham Allen (2000) puts it, despite the fact that the term is widely used, it remains the subject of such a diversity of interpretations and is defined so variously, that it is anything but a commonly understood notion (p. 2). Such an ambiguity of definition of the term can be explained by the fact that different scientific approaches (e.g. philosophical, linguistic, literary criticism, etc.) to the study of intertextuality imply its various practical applications. In this connection different aspects of the theory become relevant for the analysis within the bounds of a particular approach.

At the same time, this diversity of practical applications and interpretations can demonstrate flexibility of the theory. Depending on changes in scientific paradigms, the theory has for instance been employed to uphold speculations on text semantics: Roland Barthes used the theory to discredit the existence of stable and certain meaning of the text, proclaiming "the death" of the author and as a consequence the plurality of the text's meaning (Barthes, 1977, p. 148), while Gerard Genette and Michael Riffaterre deployed the same theory to argue oppositely that the text possesses literal stability and certainty (Allen, 2000, p. 97; Genette,

1982, p. 18; Riffaterre, 1978, p. 19).

In spite of all the differences, the existing interpretations of intertextuality are based on a common assumption that any text represents the elements of some prior text or a set of texts, whether the text is considered a unity belonging to the language system or a codified message reflecting the code of culture. According to John Fiske (1987):

> The theory of intertextuality proposes that any one text is necessarily read in relationship to others and that a range of text knowledge is brought to bear upon it. These relationships do not take the form of specific allusions from one text to another and there is no need for readers to be familiar with specific or the same texts to read intertextually. Intertextuality exists rather in the space *between* texts. (p. 108).

This is very important from the pragmatic viewpoint, since in this study we proceed on the assumption that an average native speaker of English is unable to identify and trace the original Chinese pre-text upon which the meaning of the borrowed proverb is created. The understanding and interpretation of the meaning is always subjective and individual, determined by reader's own worldview and cultural background.

On the other hand, since the phenomenon of intertexuality is investigated scientifically, and is an issue of academic research, an analytic approach to it should be applied. Contemporarily most scientists single out definite markers of intertextuality such as allusion, calque, and citation to trace and analyze the relationships which exist between texts. The idea of paroemias (sayings and proverbs) being admitted into this set is not unanimously accepted and the problem has yet to be investigated (Kostygina, 2003).

However, we consider it methodologically reasonable to apply the theory of intertextuality to the study of Chinese paroemias currently entering American mass media and social media discourse. A methodologically reasonable approach is one which suggests an innovative and promising standpoint, proposes an unconventional attitude to the material (language or other), and sets new objectives providing the research with a valid theoretical base, instrumental categories, and methods which help obtain new results. Intertexuality is a methodologically reasonable approach to the paroemia study presented in the paper, because it enhances and expands knowledge on the object of the research (in this case – borrowed proverbs and sayings), and promises new original findings and conclusions, which cannot be obtained via other scientific approaches (either structural or functional). We apply the intertextuality methodology to the research of Chinese borrowed (or incidentally used) paroemias in American discourse as a means of investigating intercultural, inter-language, and inter-cognitive interaction, revealing one cut-slice of panchronic evolution of human culture. On the other hand, the intertextuality theory itself may benefit from being applied to the material under study, in terms of an expanded view of in-texts as an interaction of cognitive phenomena, such as worldviews, and not just as allusions to prior texts.

Such an approach also enables to give an unconventional definition of a proverb, the area that still presents a problem for researchers. As stated by Lau, Tokofsky and Winick, "one of the great paradoxes of the proverb is that it is generally understood to epitomize simplicity and common sense, but it turns out to be both complex and hard to define." (Lau, Tokofsky & Winick, 2004, p. 2). According to Mieder (2004), the existing variety of definitions ranges from

philosophical considerations to cut-and-dry lexicographical definitions (p. 2). However, there have been successful attempts to combine existing definitions to see the essence of proverbs in a new light. For example, Winick (2003) integrates structural and functional approaches alongside with intertextual theory to answer the question of what proverbs are and what they do:

> Proverbs are brief (sentence-length) entextualized utterances, which derive a sense of wisdom, wit and authority from explicit and intentional intertextual reference to a tradition of previous similar wisdom utterances. This intertextual reference may take many forms, including replication (i.e., repetition of the text from previous contexts), imitation (i.e., modeling a new utterance after a previous utterance), or the use of features (rhyme, alliteration, meter, ascription to the elders, etc.) associated with previous wisdom sayings. Finally, proverbs address recurrent social situations in a strategic way. (p. 595).

By creating an intertextual link to previous utterances that communicate folk wisdom, proverbs transmit "codes" of culture from generation to generation and from one nation to the other. Being intertextual insertions, paroemias serve as vivid examples of "culture-marked" forms of language, which are in constant dialogue with culture phenomena.

Since foreign language paroemias are the subject of our consideration and they are sometimes apt to undergo changes in form or meaning in the process of incorporation into a different culture, it is crucial for us to broach the problem of rigidity of proverbs' form, a question that was studied by Taylor (1962), Barley (1972), Röhrich (1973), Green (1975) and Norrick (1985). The scholars highlighted that "fixedness of form in proverbs, as in all idiomatic units of language, follows from the necessity that they be recognizable as such to members of the linguistic community" (Norrick, 1985, p. 43). However, as Norrick puts it:

> The condition of recognizability does not require total frozenness of proverbs; it only limits their variability. But given recognizablity on the basis of kernel alone, familiar proverbs may exhibit quite a wide range of variation. So fixedness in proverbs is only relative, allowing for simultaneous standard variants and some structural and lexical alternation in the standard, stored forms. Proverbs are never completely frozen (p. 46).

Furthermore, taking into account the relationships between Intertextuality and Semiotics, it is possible to consider intertextuality as a sign system of interacting codes. Being one of the means of transmitting information, intertextuality performs a meaning-making function. The mechanism of meaning production is identical to the processes found in language: it is created at the intersection of signified and signifier. Thus, intertextual insertion can be viewed as signifier, while the signified represents the connotative meaning of this particular insertion. Connotation involves secondary meaning and "is the starting point of a code (which will never be reconstituted), the articulation of a voice which is woven into the text" (Barthes, 1974, p. 9). These codes perform "the reader's *own way* of registering intertextual avenues of meaning" (Allen, 2000, p. 84). This leads to the notion of infinity of meanings and variation of forms. Only the context might explain a particular text and clarify the meaning.

Thus, the present study is based on the assumption that though variable both in form or meaning in a heterocultural environment, Chinese paroemias (sayings, proverbs, and aphorisms)

function in American mass media and social media discourse as intertextual insertions by being references to the fragments of the source culture.

2. Methods

2.1. Materials

The research was done on the material of more than 190 Chinese paroemias usage found in American and English-language social media and mass media discourse, including online versions of American newspapers *The New York Times, The Denver Post, Daily News America,* microblogs, forums and commentaries which the newspaper articles were followed by, as well as the other American Internet-based blogs, forums, and websites. While selecting the material we made a distinction as to the author's ethnicity, where it was possible, since we proceeded on the assumption that the usage of Chinese paroemias by American English native speakers *only* can be indicative for the process of true and stable incorporation of Chinese sayings, proverbs, or aphorisms into American verbal communication.

2.2. Procedure

From the above-mentioned sources, using random sampling we selected the fragments of discourse in which Chinese paroemias were accompanied by the phrases *Chinese proverb*, *Chinese saying*, or *Chinese wisdom*. On that stage of analyzing the material we consulted the *ABC Dictionary of Chinese Proverbs*, *Dictionary of 1000 Chinese Idioms, 100 Commonly Used Chinese Proverbs,* and *Chinese Proverbs and Popular Sayings Dictionary* to check the origin of all the paroemias that were marked in American mass media and social media discourse as Chinese. Thus we formed the list of Chinese paroemias which we intended to subject to the intexual analysis.

In the second stage, we analyzed those examples of American discourse in which the previously selected Chinese paroemias (those that were already on the list) were used without glossing or any reference to their origin.

To explore the degree of adaptation of Chinese paroemias to the mainstream American worldview we tried to reveal whether and in what ways the initial meaning and implication of Chinese proverbs were retained in American interpretation. It was crucial for us to study the cultural background of any Chinese proverb or aphorism (i.e. to consider parables or the historical epoch it came from) to see what meaning it currently has and what kind of folk wisdom it communicates in its natural context. Special attention was given to the ways and extent of Chinese proverbs' transformation in American cultural environment, since these processes lead to the interaction between two worldviews. We applied the content-processing approach to the fragments of mass media and social media texts, which contained Chinese paroemia, to analyze its implication and the values associated with it in a new context.

3. Results

The Chinese paroemias functioning in American mass media and social media discourse indicate the process of a conspicuous Sino-American cognitive interaction. Being heterocultural intertextual insertions in American discourse, Chinese paroemias contribute to the process of transmitting worldly wisdom not only from one nation to the other, but also between civilizations: from East to West.

The study of the borrowed Chinese proverbs and sayings in American verbal communication provided evidence that the Chinese paroemias bear the imprint of the source (China) cultural values. Chinese paroemias have rich cultural background and even in the new contextual environment of American mass media and social media discourse they serve as 'hyperlinks' to the parables of Chinese philosophical teachings.

All the analyzed examples reveal close connection between the previous and present meanings and connotations of the Chinese paroemias. However, entering different (American) speech community, paroemia semantics is subject to modulation. This leads to a various degree of transformation of figurative, value, and content components of Chinese paroemias.

The frequent usage of the words "ancient", "old", "wise" which accompany Chinese paroemias functioning in American discourse indicate the image of China in speakers' minds being tightly connected with the concepts of *wisdom*, *true values*, *old tradition, ancient civilization*, and *philosophy*. Being axiomatic in speakers' minds, Chinese proverbs and sayings make the utterance well-grounded and reasonable:

> An *old* Chinese proverb says, "Every step leaves its print." One recent small step forward has been taken by SIGNAL, a non-governmental, independent non-profit Israeli organization. This advance, aimed at increasing academic relations between Israel and China, may at this stage be relatively small, and not a giant leap for mankind, but *it is the first step in the thousand-mile journey* that will leave its prints on academic and student exchanges between the two countries (Curtis, 2014).

> "The mountains are high, and the emperor is far away," Mr. Saich said, echoing an *ancient* proverb that suggests that China hasn't changed as much since the Communist Revolution as it might seem (Schlefer, 2014).

Judging by the contemporary usage of Chinese proverbs and sayings in American discourse we state that thematically the scenarios in which proverbs and sayings are employed generally refer to the sphere of international relations between the USA and China, or diverse China-, or Asia-related topics: politics, economics, culture, social issues, and business. By classifying the collected data (153 Chinese paroemias usage authored by Americans) into 7 categories that correspond to the topic of the article or commentary, we determined the percentage of Chinese proverbs usage in each sphere:
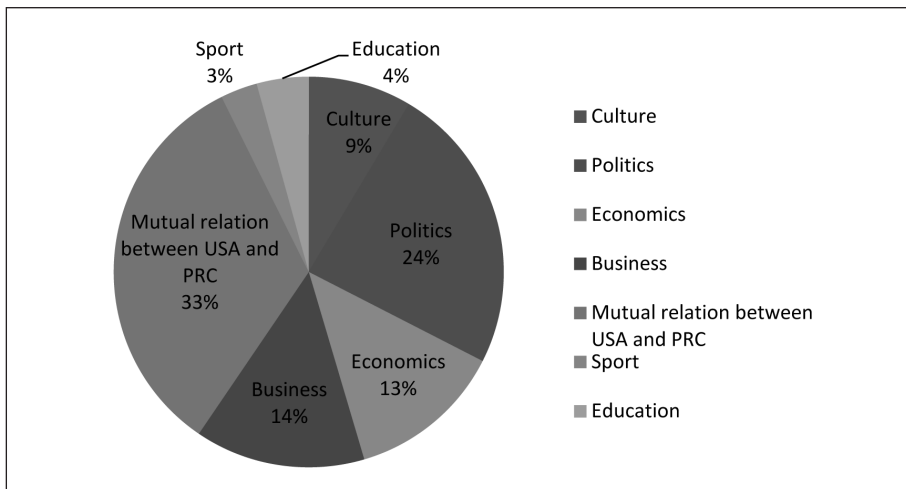
Figure 1. Percentage of Chinese Paroemias Usage in Relation to the Topic Covered

However, Chinese proverbs and sayings are also widely used in American discourse in contexts not related to China. In the latter case the transformation of various components of Chinese paroemias is much more extensible, and such usage is "playing fast and loose" with the facts. We also faced the difficulty of tracing the Chinese prototype considering such examples.

Thus, all the data fall into two categories: 1) the proverbs which remain unchanged and retain original meanings in American interpretation, and 2) the proverbs which undergo modification and change in meaning based on American culture.

Table 1. Proverbs That Retain Original Meaning in American Context

Chinese Proverb	Translation	Examples from American Mass Media and Social Media Discourse
百善孝為先	[of the] hundred goodnesses, filial piety is the first	A Chinese proverb calls filial piety "*the first among 100 virtues*," and the ancient philosopher Confucius credited it as the bedrock of social harmony. Examples of family loyalty abound: A popular song urges grown children to visit their parents often. Communities hold "best children" contests, complete with cash prizes. One county even made filial piety a condition for the promotion of local officials (Five things to know about China's new aged care law, 2013).
摸着石頭過河	To wade the river by groping for stones	*One must cross the river by feeling the stones*. This is the signature Chinese method of experimenting with reforms and moving forward when you are more sure of whether you can move on a broad front (Hot Topics: The Renminbi steps out: crossing the river by feeling the stones, n.d.).

一山不能存二虎	Two tigers cannot live on one mountain	There is a saying in Chinese: "*Two tigers cannot live in the same mountain*." It refers to the reality of two leaders who often cannot survive and thrive in the same realm. I think it applies to many of our ministry settings where two equally qualified and charismatic male leaders or two gifted and vocal female leaders have difficulty working together in the same realm (Sun, 2012).
食在中國,味在四川	China is the place for food, but Sichuan is the place for flavour	A Chinese saying claims, "*China is the place for food, Sichuan is the place for flavor*." Sichuan peppercorn and red chiles contribute much of that earthy flavor. As a chef described it to me, the two "cooperate." Together, they provide both kinds of spiciness integral to Sichuan (Szechwan) cooking: "ma" meaning the biting, numbing flavor of Sichuan peppercorn, and "la" meaning spicy-hot (Dukes, n.d.).
人心齊泰山移	When people are of one mind, Mount Tai can be moved	"Good morning and Zhongxin Huanying (Chinese pinyin for 'sincerely welcome you')," said U.S. State Secretary Hillary Clinton in her opening remarks as a way to show her hospitality. … She wrapped up her speech with a Chinese proverb "*when people are of one mind and heart, they can move Mountain Tai*," which is a sacred mountain in northern China near Confucius' home (Language, cultural exchange warm up China-U.S. strategic, economic dialogue, 2009).
風雨同舟	(lit.) in the same boat under wind and rain; (fig.) to stick together in hard times	U.S. Secretary of Treasury Timothy Geithner, who will co-host the "Economic Track" of the dialogue with Chinese Vice Premier Wang Qishan, noted the need for the United States and China to act together amid the global economic crisis by citing in Chinese language a Chinese idiom "*Taking the same boat through rain and wind*." (Language, cultural exchange warm up China-U.S. strategic, economic dialogue, 2009).
溫故知新	To recall the past to understand the future	There is a Chinese proverb: "*Consider the past, and you shall know the future.*" Surely, we have known setbacks and challenges over the last 30 years. Our relationship has not been without disagreement and difficulty. But the notion that we must be adversaries is not predestined -- not when we consider the past. Indeed, because of our cooperation, both the United States and China are more prosperous and more secure. We have seen what is possible when we build upon our mutual interests, and engage on the basis of mutual respect (Remarks by President Barack Obama at Town Hall Meeting with Future Chinese Leaders, 2009).

| 殺鷄嚇猴 | Kill the chicken to scare the monkey | There's a Chinese proverb that talks about "*killing the chicken to scare the monkey*." The old saying holds that it's smarter to punish or do away with a lesser animal (a chicken) as a lesson to a higher or more important one (a monkey) that you can't afford to get rid of. Hopefully, the monkey will take the hint and fall into line. One wonders if this is what China's doing with Japan and the U.S (Tsuruoka, 2010). |

The above mentioned examples function in mass media and social media discourses as the sources from which American people would learn Chinese culture, traditions, common beliefs and way of life.

The second group includes examples that display certain modifications of the original Chinese pre-text both in form and meaning, which can be considered as the result of Chinese proverbs' integration into the American cultural community. At this stage most Chinese proverbs are used in contexts not related to China issues:

Table 2. Chinese Proverbs That Undergo Transformations

Proverb	Translation	Examples from American Mass Media and Social Media Discourse
十年樹木 百年樹人	[It takes] ten years to grow people, [but] a hundred years to rear people	There is a Chinese proverb which says, "*If you want one year of prosperity, grow grain. If you want 10 years of prosperity, grow trees. If you want 100 years of prosperity, grow people.*" For long-term, sustainable success, organizations need to "grow people" (Mossop, 2013).
千里之行，始於足下	[A] thousand *league's* journey begins from under [one's] foot	On one of my training hikes I came across the saying, "The journey of a thousand *miles* begins with a single step." That's the secret, Saints. Any one of us can do it, just by taking that single step (Pullum, n.d.).
師傅領進門，修行在個人	The master leads [the student] into the door [i.e., teaches the trade], [but] the perfection [of the apprentice's skill] lies in the individual [apprentice's own effort]	"*Teachers open the door, but you must enter by yourself.*" -Chinese Proverb We are presented with an abundant amount of opportunity on a daily basis, and all we have to do is act on it. It's that simple. For you and for me, we have different teachers. But what matters, is if we listen or not (Culinary Karma, n.d.).

不聞不若聞之，聞之不若見之，見之不若知之，知之不若行之；學至於行之而止矣 Xun-zi（荀子, 312-230 B.C.)	Not hearing is not as good as hearing, hearing is not as good as seeing, seeing is not as good as mentally knowing, mentally knowing is not as good as acting; true learning continues up to the point that action comes forth	In 450BC Confucius is reputed to have said: "*Tell Me and I Will Forget; Show Me and I May Remember; Involve Me and I Will Understand*." The ethos of this statement is often quoted as being a tenet underpinning many learning and teaching pedagogies (Mobbs, n.d.).
與君一席談，勝讀十年書	One evening's conversation with a gentlemen is worth more than ten years of study	There is a Chinese proverb that reads, "*A single conversation across the table with a wise person is worth a month's study of books*". Good Conversations. I live for these. These may just be my favorite part of life, for there are few things better than sharing yourself with a person as they share with you, openly (Rains, n.d.).

4. Discussion

4.1. Intertextuality Approach to the Study of Paroemias

Due to the frequency of usage, paroemias are not exactly associated with the author's name, and in speaker's mind they become nameless just like words are nameless, according to Bakhtin (1986). Like words, paroemias are no longer perceived as the other person's phrases, and they have no connection with any particular text produced by the author.

On the other hand, it is reasonable to assume that paroemia may function like a text, and perform the same role as any text does. As in the case of a text, which according to Lotman (1992) represents a codified message and serves as a carrier of constant information that has to be communicated, paroemia may serve the same purpose. So, supposing both a text and a paroemia are "containers" of a particular invariable sense, which the addresser communicates to addressee, a paroemia may be assumed to function as a text within the other text (Kurchanova, 2001; Kostygina, 2003; Suhovej, 1989). And furthermore, from the intertextual standpoint paroemia may be considered a specific kind of precedential text that is recurrently employed readymade in any new text for various purposes.

Another intertextual function of paroemia deals with the capability of a text to produce

new meanings and serve as a source of sense plurality. This function constitutes one of the main means of culture evolution. As is widely known, one and the same paroemia may have different meanings depending on the context of its usage. For instance, the saying *a friend in need is a friend indeed* that has the basic meaning - "a real friend is that friend, who helps you by means of his actions when you are in need", at the same time may mean entirely different things, which result in various types of ambiguity. Thus, owing to the syntactic ambiguity the saying communicates the following meaning – "someone who feels close enough to you to be able to ask you for help when he is in need is really your friend", since without the context it remains unclear – who is in need, the speaker or his friend (Mieder, 2004). The meaning of a proverb depends directly on the context of its usage. In this case it is possible to talk about paroemic ambiguity where one and the same phrase has different meanings (Permiakov, 1988).

An additional crucial characteristic of a text that may be relevant to the intertextual interpretation of a paroemia features the ability of a text to serve as a container of cultural property of the people and accumulate significant information in terms of its axiological values. This function correlates with the main function of paroemias, which may be defined as a reproduced transferable culture code that provides information about social and historical experience of the nation and its mentality. Paroemias reflect cognition of the world in language, preserving the experience of this process and ensuring its communication to descendants.

This way, by performing all the above mentioned functions, paroemia appears to be a text in the other text, creating stable links with the previous utterances and traditions and translating folk wisdom from one generation to the next.

With this in mind we expand the intertextual interpretation of paroemias, considering them on the one hand culture-loaded precedential texts capable of producing new meanings within new contexts, and on the other – the means of transmitting culture-determined modes of cognition (either from one generation to the next, or from one culture to the other). In this sense the intertextual is intertwined not only with the inter-cultural, but also with the inter-cognitive. We assume that this is a valid methodological principle of the intertextual analysis of borrowed paroemias, as further elaborated below.

4.2. Chinese Paroemias in American Mass Media and Social Media

Relying on the analyzed examples, it was determined that in general Chinese paroemias are widely used in those spheres that directly refer to China- or Asia-related themes. This can be illustrated by the following abstracts from American mass media discourse:

My concern is that the authorities want to make an example of Liu Xiaobo… I think the statement is that they want to scare the intellectuals," Bequelin said. "This is the old trick of *killing a chicken to frighten the monkeys*" (Koester, 2008).

Dai Xu, a Chinese Air Force Colonel, is arguing for a short, decisive war with one of China's neighbors - Vietnam, the Philippines, or Japan - in order to establish sovereignty over the Pacific region without risking war with the United States. This is the "*kill a chicken to scare the monkeys*" philosophy (Xenakis, 2013).

Banco Delta was a symbolic target. We were trying to *kill the chicken to scare the monkeys*. And the monkeys were big Chinese banks doing business in North Korea... and we're not talking about tens of millions, we're talking hundreds of millions." David Asher, oral testimony, April 18, 2007 (Nickglais, 2013).

In should be particularly noted that despite the fact that these examples concern the topic of mutual relation between the USA and China, there is no direct reference to the Chinese origin of paroemia. In fact the usage of paroemia *killing the chicken to scare the monkey* refers to traditional Chinese idiomatic expression (called Chengyu) 殺鷄嚇猴 that has the figurative meaning "to punish someone as an example to others" (Herzberg & Herzberg, 2012, p. 117).

The authors of the newspaper articles do not give any glossing, or interpretation of the proverb. Its meaning is supposed to be drawn from the easily-recognizable metaphor and the context. Though the employed images (*chicken*, *monkey*) are not something extraordinary for an American reader, still their co-occurrence is not easily explained, and may raise questions. Why not *a chicken* and *a dog*, for instance, or *a chicken* and *a cow*? So, evidently some cultural background is lost in American discourse. But the images are much better explained and become clear through recurrent associations. For example, folklore co-occurrence of a chicken and a monkey in northern countries like Russia or Sweden, is completely out of the question.

The example above shows that both the value and the figurative component of the Chinese prototype is retained in the American variant. The Chinese idiom functions here as a precedent phenomenon due to its recurrent usage, while the American variant produces a stable associative relation with it, and can be viewed as a language realization of an intertextual connection. It is noteworthy that the same idiom was also detected in a context not related to China, where it also demonstrated the retention of value and meaning components:

This is an obvious case of what the Chinese call 殺鷄嚇猴 (shā jī xià hóu) - Kill the chicken to frighten the monkeys. Send these 13 patriotic Americans to jail and there will be no more angry activists on the White House fence. It's a shame that somebody in the Justice Department doesn't apply 殺鷄嚇猴 to the Wall Street meltdown, home foreclosure fraud, or torture (Psychodrew, 2011).

The following fragment displays the example of the Chinese wisdom being opposed to a non-Chinese paroemia:

Ultimately attempts to impose an artificial consciousness on the public lead instead to the development of a revolutionary consciousness. Appeasement to terrorism in the west can eventually become a challenge to the legitimacy of the elites themselves. Either the king provides the king's justice or the crown slips off. The Chinese have a proverb. "*Kill a chicken to frighten the monkey*." But there is another proverb, "*monkey see, monkey do*" (Fernandez, 2010).

According to the *American Idioms and Expression Dictionary* the expression "monkey see, monkey do" has a negative figurative meaning "to copy something that someone else does". The example illustrates how the Chinese idiom forms a contradictory relation with the American idiom by means of intertextual connection. To understand the author's pragmatics

here means to trace a complex network of interrelation and interplay between two paroemial fragments, belonging to different cultures.

Chinese paroemias retain their figurativeness and meaning in an unchanged form while entering American culture, if both nations' views on any kind of phenomenon or fact coincide or are at least similar. In this connection the adoption of the following Chinese paroemia, which constitutes a part of a proclamation made by Mao Zedong is of interest for analysis.

The saying 婦女能頂半邊天 – *Women can hold up half the sky* (Rohsenow, 2003, p. 41) promotes the idea of gender equality and implies that women are capable of doing all the things that men can do. It is worth taking into consideration the fact that before the Constitution of 1954 which proclaimed gender equality, China had been a country that was characterized by patriarchal culture, where women played a subordinate role in society: they did not have the right to vote and had to obey men. When the Communist party came to power, the situation began to change: women gained access to education and labor so as to increase the economic power of the country. Women, who were "holding up half the sky", became an integral part of the stable social and economic development of China.

The American mindset features the same notion of gender equality, and it is in the core of American axiology. Similar values stimulated the adoption of the Chinese aphorism and promoted its common usage in American mass media. This way, in the article "Women in History: Holding Up Half the Sky", bringing to light the achievements of Bessie Coleman, who was the first African American female pilot, capable of overcoming gender and racial biases, the phrase *sky-holders* creates an intertextual reference to the Chinese aphorism and emphasizes women's role in achieving global progress:

> It is important for NASA to inspire the next generation of all of the *sky-holders* — scientists, engineers, and explorers – to aim high and reach new heights for the improvement of humankind. If we are going *to do our part in holding up the sky*, we have to get beyond the notion of a glass ceiling and change the self-limiting behaviors to reach these heights (Cureton, 2011).

Thus, the expression "Women hold up half the sky" has become part of American culture too, since there are many materials devoted to this idea on the Internet (e.g. "Half the Sky movement" (www.halftheskymovement.org), "Women Hold Up Half the Sky" on Facebook (www.facebook.com/WomenHoldUpHalfTheSky), African American Women organization in California (http://www.skirball.org/half-the-sky), etc.). Obviously native speakers of English do not associate this proverb with the Chinese slogan, which was initially coined by Mao Zedong, and do not catch the allusion to the Chinese pre-text either. The study and analysis of its first usage in American discourse is of much interest for further scientific investigation, since such research will show the dynamics of its actualization in American context.

However, despite the general tendency to recognize gender equality, women in both countries are still confronted with barriers and prejudices on the path to career success and happiness. Uneven distribution of household duties and responsibilities is one of the main reasons. This situation is clearly reflected in another Chinese expression - 女主內男主外 (nüzhunei, nanzhuwai) - *women belong at home, men belong in public*. For example, the article «China's Entrenched Gender Gap» reveals the position of contemporary women in China,

where the aim of the message is achieved by means of an intertextual relation between two sayings that belong to Chinese culture:

> Mao declared his commitment to gender equality through his famous saying that "*women hold up half the sky*." But the state-imposed equal employment of women and men failed to transform underlying gender relations … Most Chinese men and women still believe in the saying that "*men belong in public, women belong at home*" (nanzhuwai, nüzhunei) (Fincher, 2013).

The saying *men belong in public, women belong at home* penetrates into American culture, retaining its value and figurative component:

> Enter Smart Girl Politics, an organization dedicated to advancing conservative female candidates, from the school board to Congress. "No one is saying 'less women in politics,'" says Rebecca Wales, Director of Communications for SGP. "I do sometimes hear, '*women belong in the home*.' (Hess, 2011).

However, the next example illustrates the changing of the intentional component, when the word "women" indicates only the group of women who are married and have children, thus becoming more precise and narrower in its sense:

> When someone says, "*Wives belong at home with the children*," many people, especially ideological feminists and liberal journalists, go ballistic over the sexism they see directed at women. What they don't realize — because they've trained themselves to ignore men's side to the gender coin and are hence blind to anti-male sexism — is that "*Wives belong at home with the children*" means the husband belongs away from the home and away from the children. It means he must leave the home and the people he loves and go to a workplace where he is often surrounded by, as CBSNews.com columnist Steve Tobak puts it, "sniper employees ready to shoot you in the back the minute you turn around" … The statement's sexism, which feminists and the mainstream media see as applying only to women, is in fact two-way and equally hurtful — or helpful, depending on your ideology — to both sexes ("Wives belong at home with kids", 2012).

Besides changing the intentional component, the value constituent has been changed as well: in this context the paroemia acquires the opposite meaning, stressing the unenviable position of a man, who has to leave his beloved family and go to stressful work, so that the woman has the opportunity not to work and stay at home. In this case paroemic ambiguity is based on intertextual interplay and the meaning of the expression *wives belong at home with the children* can be understood if the interconnection between two reproducible phenomena is traced.

It also should be noted that in many cases there exist English equivalents for Chinese proverbs, as they "contain universal human experiences and insights" (Mieder, 2004, p. 11). This notion raises the question of the universality of proverbs, since in spite of originality and specificity of forms, all national proverbs convey similar meaning, which can be explained by the universality of human cognitive processes. Thus, the above mentioned Chinese proverb –

"Men belong in public, women belong at home" is parallel to the proverb "The husband is the bread winner of a family", which has been part of American culture and tradition.

However, if we take into consideration the whole palette of meanings that any proverb conveys (i.e. values, imagery, cultural context), it will be hardly possible to talk about universality and similarity of national proverbs. The same meaning is expressed by employing different images and devices, which makes most proverbs unique and culture-specific. The stylistic devices upon which the meaning of a foreign proverb is created are sometimes more vivid and notable than those found in the native language. We consider this reason to be one of the main motives why any culture borrows foreign idiomatic expressions.

However, intentional, figurative, and value components of a foreign paroemial intext are sometimes lost or transformed while entering the other culture. The example taken from *Daily News America*, clearly illustrates this statement: "Obama toasted the American and Chinese peoples, referring to a Chinese proverb that guarantees "*100 years of prosperity"* to nations that focus on people" (Defrank, 2011) The author of the article refers to Barack Obama's speech made during the official dinner with Chinese President Hu Jintao:

> …I'm told that there is a Chinese proverb that says: *If you want one year of prosperity, then grow grain. If you want 10 years of prosperity, then grow trees. But if you want 100 years of prosperity, then you grow people* ("Remarks by President Obama and President Hu of the People's Republic of China in an Exchange toasts at State Dinner", 2011).

The President of the USA in his speech refers to the Chinese wisdom proverb 十年樹木，百年樹人 that means *It takes ten years to grow trees, but a hundred years to rear people* and highlights the laborious and long process of upbringing (Rohsenow, 2003, p. 138). Being a culturally marked unit, the paroemia provides information about the axiological component of the Chinese mindset and worldview. However, in the process of incorporating into a different speech community the shift towards American axiology occurs. Since the American national worldview is characterized by having a sacred attitude to democracy and strong belief that the well-being of any single individual leads to prosperity of the country as a whole, the initial meaning of the Chinese prototype is transformed in this direction. At the same time the value component of the Chinese paroemial intext was retained due to the fact that both cultures have the same view on the laborious and time-consuming process of upbringing.

This transformation makes a proverb more comprehensible for English speakers and results in its integration into their culture. The following example demonstrates how the Chinese proverb is functioning in American context:

> I think my interest in the program is captured in a Chinese proverb: 'If you want one year of prosperity, grow grain. If you want 10 years of prosperity, grow trees. If you want 100 years of prosperity, grow people.' I am excited by the opportunity to be involved in the educational and enrichment opportunities offered through youth programs led by Clemson faculty and staff." (Harkey, n.d.)

This way, the integration of Chinese paroemias into American culture can be best demonstrated by the examples of their usage in contexts not related to China. Simplicity of

images, which constitute the above mentioned Chinese proverbs, promotes their entering the American linguistic community.

5. Conclusion

The economic growth of China and the rise of China on the international scene has contributed to a closer cultural contact between the USA and the PRC. Chinese paroemias functioning in American mass media and social media discourse mark the current trends of American cultural cognition.

The question of considering proverbs, sayings and aphorisms as forms of intertextuality is still hotly disputable. However, the method of intertextual approach to the study of Chinese paroemias currently entering American mass and social media discourse proved to be methodologically reasonable. Borrowed expressions are considered in-texts since they act as 'hyperlinks' to the fragments of the source (Chinese) culture.

Chinese paroemias, while entering American discourse, undergo a various degree of transformation of their figurative, value, and content components. On the other hand, they always bear the imprint of Chinese cultural values and beliefs, which are associated in speakers' minds with the concepts of *wisdom*, *truth*, *old tradition*, *ancient civilization*, and *philosophy*. Therefore, employing Chinese proverbs and sayings makes the utterance more reasonable and axiomatic.

The transfer of readymade frequently reproduced paroemias from one speech community to the other, and forming an intertextual link, results in interaction of two mindsets, and two cultures. As a reproducible culture code, intertextuality contributes to the process of communication of worldly wisdom from one generation to the other and from one nation to the other.

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