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## **Cross-Cultural Perspectives on the Differences in Food and Culinary Customs between the Chinese and Shona Societies with figurative Language as Point of Reference**

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### **Abstract**

The present study falls under social linguistics. In this study we attempt to use figurative language to compare Chinese and Shona societies. The central argument of the research is anchored by the claim that, figurative languages are an important repository of the culture. Therefore, figurative language (hence, cultural knowledge) should be given an important position in the field of Second Language Teaching. Referring to one type of figurative language, Bromley (1984) further pointed out that, idioms "... add confusion and difficulty to learning of language and so they occupy a special position in teaching of language and reading". The research is expected to prove that language is an important repository and conduit of cultural knowledge. The research therefore advocates awareness of cultural conflict between speakers of different languages during various economic, political or social interactions. The figurative language will be grouped into 4 categories according to which aspect they show differences, namely; availability, edibility, cooking methods and eating customs.

**Keywords:** Figurative Language, Shona Culture, Chinese Culture, Food Habits, Culinary Customs.

### **Introduction**

Figurative language includes non-literal expressions such as idioms, proverbs, metaphors and similes. In this paper the phrase "idiomatic expressions" will sometimes be used as a representative for all other figurative language.

While there are certain similarities between the Shona and Chinese people, however, there are significant differences between these two cultures in terms of their dietary patterns and

culinary customs. This paper will attempt to unravel these cultural differences between the Chinese and the Shona people as portrayed in figurative language. Mandova and Chingombe (2013) posited that; the Shona proverb, is a product of the historical and cultural experiences of the Shona people, unravels the worldview of the Shona people. Similarly, Xie (2012) asserts that, the pragmatic meaning of the Chinese proverbs do not only contain the discourse meaning of language itself, but also contain social knowledge and emotional meaning and rhetoric senses. Chinese idiomatic phrases summarize the experiences and objective truth of the various aspects of a human society. Chinese idiomatic phrases like those in the Shona language are so many. Idiomatic phrases are a mirror of the culture of a people, they reflect societal values and ethos.

Chinese language (mandarin) is the common language of China mainland and its speakers are influenced by an Asiatic culture known as Chinese culture. On the other hand, Shona is an African language which falls under a language class called Bantu language. The Shona standard dialect is mainly spoken in Zimbabwe and other neighboring countries such as Mozambique, Zambia and Botswana. The Shona speakers are influenced by a type of cultural philosophy known as '*ubuntu*', which means 'being human'.

Because of the geographical distance, China and Zimbabwe have different climatic and topographic conditions which determine their flora and fauna. This in turn have a bearing on the differences in the type of foodstuffs available for these two societies. China and Zimbabwe also have different historical backgrounds, and different cultural ideologies. These differences also influence the kind of foodstuffs a society accepts as food, how to prepare it as well as certain culinary customs.

### **Justification of the Research**

Intercultural communication has become a key aspect in the modern world as the world becomes a global village. Bilateral relations between China and many African countries, including Zimbabwe continue to strengthen. In order to achieve successful and flexible communication and exchange of knowledge, people need to be familiar with the differences in their cultures. In light of this, Zhang (2007) once said that , because idiomatic phrases are the essence of language, so, translation have to deal with the contradiction of language and culture, not only translating the image, connotation, rhetoric, it has to also decode differences in cultural features, so as to reach the best level of cultural communication". Referring to African proverbs, Makamani (2012: 1) asserts that, "they have a role to play not only in the economic development of the continent, but also in maintaining positive social relations with the rest of the world as is demanded by modern diplomacy and the quest for dignified social existence".

From figurative languages we can infer kinds and nature of foodstuff a society eats, cooking methods and the eating habits. Lamp (2017) remarked that, once you grow up in a distinct culture, it is bound to influence your lifestyle, your belief system and perhaps your diet.

Figurative language are widely used in any languages of the world and their frequency of use is high, yet they are difficult to understand. Rodriguez and Winnberg (2013) commented that, figurative expressions such as idioms are used frequently in everyday situation and therefore need to be addressed by teachers. Statistics compiled by Cooper show that speakers (and writers) use about 1.08 novel figures of speech and 4.08 idioms per minute. The statistical data suggests that in a lifespan of 60 years a person can use over 20 million idioms (Cooper, 1998:225). This

justifies the importance of studying figurative language. Therefore there is need to prioritize the teaching of second language.

There exist a huge cultural gap between different societies, like in the case of Chinese and Shona societies. Hence, figurative language should therefore be given an important place in the field of Teaching Second Language (TSL).

Food is very important at any level of interaction, from casual to formal level; from local to international level. Every level of interaction is not dissociated from food hence, the study of food customs and habits is worth paying attention to. The Shona people have a proverb, *ukama igasva, hunozadziswa nekudya*. This means that, relationships are hardly complete unless you partake of a meal together. Therefore, this study that involves the aspects of food within two different cultures is very important in second language acquisition. Also, as Thyab (2016) puts it; it is quite natural for non native speakers of a given language to get confused or misuse idioms because they do not lack knowledge of the base of the expressions as well as the vivid image which forms such basis. The selection of this study area is therefore relevant for the benefit of second language learners.

### **Literature Review**

Many social linguists have produced several studies on Chinese and Shona idiomatic phrases. For instance, Qing Xue Herzberg and Larry Herzberg (eds) (2012), discussed Chinese proverbs and popular sayings with observations from culture and language. Sridar Maita and Karunakaran (2013). analyzed acquisition of idioms and their teaching. Sridar Maita and Karunakaran's research highlighted the importance of idioms in the context of English as a second language. Mandova and Chingombe (2013) in their article 'The Shona Proverbs as an Expression of UNHU/UBUNTU' also discussed the impact of Shona proverbs in expressing the value of humanity in Shona culture.

However, at present researches on idiomatic phrases that compare Shona and other cultures seem to be still limited. Comparison of Chinese idiomatic phrases and those of other languages may include Cai zhuo (2012) who compared the image of woman in Chinese and Japanese idiomatic expressions. Zhao Yiping and Lu Zhaosu (2012) also researched on the Chinese and Japanese idiomatic phrases to unravel the differences between the two societies in terms of environmental, historical background, cultural background, religious belief, life style and way of thinking.

The present study therefore seems to be the first to compare figurative language in Chinese and Shona societies. This research will therefore help add on the existing body of knowledge and second language learning resources.

### **Summary of Data Collection**

The paper attempt to deal with figurative language containing foods and eating habits that can expose how the Shona culture is different from Chinese culture. The data collection process was therefore a rigorous task to determine if certain foodstuffs are really unique to one society and not to the other. Below are the methods which were employed to come up with conclusions. However, some of the methods employed in this study can be subject to debate.

### Personal Experience

At the time of write up of this article the researchers have had 10 years experience of direct interaction with the Chinese community, Chinese language and Chinese culture. Precisely half of the period was spent among the Chinese society environment (i.e in China Mainland). Therefore some conclusions were partly drawn from the knowledge acquired through experience about Chinese food and eating habits.

### Desk Study

Large quantity of figurative expressions (in some cases including their meanings) were collected from various literary works, and searching from the internet. There were many figurative expressions which were difficult to analyze based on personal experience in the Chinese society only. Personal experience was shallow to confirm certain situations and behavioral acts. In these cases the authors had to depend on published materials such as published books, articles, thesis and information from the internet.

### Inter-Personal Inquiry and Group Discussion

Sometimes published materials and internet information could not provide certain details. For instance, it was hard to determine whether the Chinese once used *bonde* (reed mat) or whether the Chinese people eat mice (*mbeva*) or not. As a result the authors consulted relevant informants from the Chinese society through the Chinese social media, *Wechat* and *QQ*. The authors also had an opportunity to present this study to the Chinese students at Hebei University who were doing Masters Degree in Teaching Chinese to Foreigners (2015 and 2016). These students and their supervisors presented their views and comments as part of a discussion on the Chinese situation against the given Shona background. Though this method was useful in the process of data collection, in some cases, information obtained through inter-personal enquiry was not very representative or useful.

### Research Scope

The figurative expressions presented in this study are just a smaller part of the whole complex expressions available in these two languages. For example, when the Shona people start or finish eating they normally clap hands, and utter words of appreciation to the cooker or the breadwinner, *pamusoroi* (may you allow me to start eating) and *mazvita, taguta* (thank you) respectively. These customs do not exist among the Chinese who have the customs of urging others to start eating, for examples, 请吃饭 *qing chifan* (please have a meal), or just start eating silently, that is if the individuals involved are usually together everyday. These and others seem not to be appearing in any figurative language, hence may not be discussed in this paper.

Certain habits related to foodstuffs were not really unique but also found in other parts of the world. For example, there are many Chinese idioms and proverbs related to watermelons, radish, corn, beans and many other plants, but because they seem to have since been introduced long back in Zimbabwe, and are also in many other parts of the world, so idiom with such foodstuffs were not considered. Some aspects about Chinese habits were not very easy to determine or prove. For example, it was not easy to determine if the Chinese eat mice and or to



what extent they accept mice as meat.

Despite having integrating all the above data collection methods, there could be some other figurative expressions which still remain debatable. Also, there could be even wider room to add some more striking example of figurative expressions. Therefore, the present research may not have exhausted and comprehensively completed the intended task, hence further studies and recommendations are very necessary in order to provide resourceful and varied arguments with regard to use, nature and differences between Chinese and Shona food and culinary customs.

### **Analysis of selected figurative language based on existence or availability.**

Some kinds of foodstuffs are common in China but not found in Zimbabwe, and the reverse is true. This is probably because of the following reasons; The kinds of food or raw material used to make certain kinds of foods are not common in both societies. These will conveniently be analyzed under **existence**. Also, the two societies have common raw materials but, they make different foodstuffs out of them. For example, there is maize in Zimbabwe and China but the Shona people make their staple food, *sadza*, out of maize meal flour (commonly known as *hupfu* [mealie meal]). The Chinese also have maize flour, known as 玉米粉(yumi fen), but they do not make *sadza* out of it. These will be analyzed under **availability**.

#### **(i) Existence**

In Chinese society the following foodstuffs exist while they do not exist in the Shona society; dumplings, bean curd, noodles, rice-pudding, Steamed buns, Sticky dumplings and Jujube. Below we will analyze the habits and cultural acts related to these foodstuffs as well as the various figurative expressions which are directly or indirectly linked to them.

#### *Dumplings 饺子jiaozi*

In Chinese there many idioms, proverbs and the so called two-part allegoric sayings that have to do with dumplings. Dumplings are a typical representative of Chinese traditional delicacy. It is customary among the Chinese, particularly in the southern part of China to eat dumplings during the New Year eve. Due to the fact that dumplings are a common favourite food in China there are so many sayings relate to this foodstuff as shown below:

i) 好吃不过饺子 *haochi buguo jiaozi*. The is old Chinese saying describes the outstanding deliciousness of dumplings.

ii) 饺子露馅---皮开肉绽 *jiaozi lou xian---pi kai rou zhan*. This is a two-part allegoric saying that can be translated as “dumpling exposes the stuffing”. It means exposing the hidden, and hence equivalent to “*kufukura hapwa*” (exposing armpits) in Shona and “to let the cat out of the bag” in English.

iii) 茶壶里面煮饺子 *chahu limian zhu jiaozi* .to boil dumplings in a teapot is used when one has some word but because of some reasons can't speak them out.

iv) 哑巴吃饺子---心里有数 *yaba chi jiaozi ---xinli youshu* “the dumb eating dumplings” . A dumb person enjoying the delicious dumplings will have no way to verbally express the feeling. Hence this two-part allegoric means to know something in heart.

v) 饺子馅内容丰富-----包罗万象 *jiaozi xian nei fengfu* “dumplings stuffing is rich in content”. It saying is also use to describe the richness of something it terms of its content.

### Bean curd (tofu) 豆腐 *doufu*

Tofu also is common type of food among the Chinese. It is made from soya bean milk and has been made in China for thousands of years. Bean curd is almost non-available in the Shona culture. Below are few saying related to tofu:

i) 刀子嘴豆腐心 *daozi zui doufu xin*. literary means “mouth like a knife, heart like tofu”. In English it is equivalent to “one’s bark is worse than one’s bite”. It mean one sounds unkind but actually very kind hearted.

ii) 要想人长寿，多吃豆腐小吃肉 *yao xiang ren changshou, duochi doufu xiaochi rou*. This proverb means that if one wants to live long, one has to eat more of tofu and less meat.

iii) 心急吃不了热豆腐 *xin ji chibuliao doufu*. (a person in hurry cannot eat hot tofu ) Tofu is thought to be one of the hottest foods in China, especially that which has just came out from the oven. This idiom means; we should do things following proper procedures, not hurriedly.

iv) 豆腐做墙基 *doufu zuo qiangji* (a bean curd foundation). Bean curd if very soft and weak. Its sponginess can similar to lump of clot blood. So allegory is use to refer to a foundation or basis that is not firm.

v) 吃豆腐咯了牙 *chi doufu ge le ya*. (to munch hard the bean curd). This means a strange or curious occurrence or to use too much effort where it is not necessary.

### Noodles 面条 *mian tiao*

The Chinese make a kind of staple food called noodles which is made from wheat dough or rice flower. Noodles were a very popular. Chinese staple food during the Han dynasty and are still a well known staple food for the Northern Chinese people. They are also found in shops, supermarkets and even booth and vendor stands along roadside in small sachets readily packed with ingredients, commonly known as 方便面 *fangbianmian* (instant noodles). Below are few among the several Chinese figurative expressions related to noodles:

1) 吃面条找头子 *chi miantiao zhao touzi* (to look for the end tip while eating noodles). This expression means to do excessively and unnecessarily.

2) 拿根面条去上吊 *na gen miantiao qu shangdiao*. (to take a string of noodle to hang oneself).

3) 一根筷子吃面 *yi gen kuaizi chi mian*. ( eating noodles with one chopstick). It means working alone, without assistance from others.

### Rice-pudding 粽子 *zongzi*.

This is a special Chinese food which is commonly eaten during one of the Chinese traditional festivals known as the Dragon Boat Festival. It is also not found in Shona culture. Below is one of the figurative expression related to it; 吃了端午粽，才把棉衣送 *chi le duanwuzong, cai ba mianyi song*. (to give cotton clothes as present, or keep back in monarch after one has eaten the rice pudding of the dragon boat festival). This proverb is very much based on scientific facts. The dragon boat festival is traditionally celebrated on the 5<sup>th</sup> of the 5<sup>th</sup> month of the Chinese lunar calendar. This is the time when winter ends and temperatures start to gradually become warmer. So eating dragon boat rice puddings metaphorically represents the end of winter and approaching of summer.

#### Steamed buns 馒头 *mantou*.

Steamed buns are very popular staple food among the Chinese. They are different from the western round buns but they look more like *sadza*, in appearance though they have a harder feel. The Chinese also use it to feed dogs.

i) 馒头打饿狗---有去无回 *mantou da e gou---you qu wu hui*. (To strike a dog with steamed bun). Striking a dog with steamed bun, the steamed bun will be eaten. Hence, this saying is used to mean, "would never come back alive". It is equivalent to the English expression "cross the Rubicon".

ii) 卖馒头的掺石灰 ---面不改色 *mai mantou de chan shihui--mian bu gai se*. (seller of steamed buns, even if he mixes with whitewash, the color does not change), this expression describes a situation where it can be difficult to observe treachery on something.

#### Sticky dumplings 元宵 *yuanyao*

Hotpot is a cooking method popular in the Chinese society, but not found in the Shona society. There is also a popular saying related to this saying which says; 肉锅里煮元宵--混蛋 *rouguo li zhu yuanyao*. (to boil sticky dumplings in meat pot). It is used to revile a person, describing stupidity.

#### Jujube 枣 *zao*

This is a kind of fruit, which originated from China where it was cultivated for more than 40,000 years and later spread to other parts of the world such as Europe, America and India. It is also known by the following names, Chinese date or *tsao*. This kind of a fruit is not common in Zimbabwe. Jujube is known for its high nutritious content and has also been used in Chinese medicine to treat various ailments. Thus, in Chinese there is a proverb, 一天吃枣，一生不知老 *yi tian chi zao, yisheng buzhi lao* (eating Chinese date one day, never get aged in lifetime).

While there are many different foods that exist in Chinese culture that do not exist in Shona culture, there are also certain foods found in Shona culture that do not exist in Chinese culture. These foodstuffs also form the basis of some interesting Shona figurative expressions which are not found in Chinese culture. Below we will discuss the Zimbabwean staple food known as *sadza*.

*Sadza*



*Sadza* is made with fine maize flour and or traditional cereal such as finger millet. It is a staple food for most southern African countries like Zimbabwe Mozambique, Zambia, Botswana and Malawi. In east and North African counties it is also known as *fufu* or *ugali*. Below are some few Shona figurative expressions related to *sadza*.

*Nhamo youmwe hairambirwi sadza* (one cannot give up or refuse to eat *sadza* because of another person's problem). This proverb does not really discourage helping those with problems. Rather, it emphasizes the fact that, when one has a problem, others can only sympathize but may not actually take up the actual suffering with you, so they may not do much sacrifices on your behalf. They go on with their normal life(rhetorically represented here by "eating *sadza*" which symbolizes that life is going on as usual) .

In Shona, "*munya*" is metaphorical for a task that unfinished or overdue. *Duramwazwi : Shona-English Dictionary* defines *munya* as "left over *sadza*" (*sadza* that has stayed overnight". For example one can say, *basa rechikoro rave munya* (my homework is now stayed *sadza*), meaning homework is overdue.

The Chinese expression 不当饭吃 *bu dang fan chi*, (*is not food to eat/ cannot be eaten*) means something is not worth considering. It is equivalent to the Shona expression, "*kuti -nodyiwa here?*" . The Shona alternative for this expression is, "*kuti isadza here?*" (is it *sadza* to eat). In this case *sadza* has been used metaphorically to represent food. If non-native Shona learner who does not have knowledge of the staple diet of the Shona may find it difficult comprehend the meaning.

### Analysis of Selected Figurative Language based on Edibility

Differences in beliefs rites and ideology cause some societies to eat certain things that may not be accepted as food by other societies. For instance, the Shona people do not accept donkey meat as food and do not make any kinds of foodstuffs out of it. So donkey meat is not edible for the Shona.

The figurative expressions that will be analyzed in this paper will be mainly those that the food source should be common in both societies but one society cannot eat it because of cultural, social or religious reasons, for instance, the case of donkey or dog meat which is socially unaccepted as food among the Shona. This is different from the Chinese who do not eat baobab fruits. Below we will analyze various foods that are edible in Chinese culture which are not edible in Shona culture.

#### Donkey meat 驴肉 *lurou*

In Chinese proverb, 要长寿吃驴肉,要健康喝驴汤 "*yao changshou, chi lurou; yao jiankang, he lu tang*" (to leave longer, eat donkey meat; to stay health; drink donkey soup); also expressed as follows: 吃了驴肝肺能活一百岁 "*chi le lu ganfei, nenghuo yibai sui!*" (eating the lung and liver of the donkey, you can live a 100 years!). We can infer from these proverbs that donkey meat can be eaten in China or parts of China, yet in Shona culture, donkey meat is regarded as unfit for consumption.

The proverb天上龙肉地下驴肉, “*tian shang longrou, dixia longrou*” (dragon meat on heavens, donkey meat on earth). Contrary, Zimbabweans do not eat donkey meat. In Shona there is a saying “*Kufambira dhongi rakaora*”(to travel for rotten donkey meat). It is used when one goes somewhere and fail to get what he expected there. This saying shows that donkey meat is associated with bad things, unlucky and other unaccepted things.

#### Dog meat狗肉*gourou*

The eating of dog meat has been recorded in many parts of the world and has always been debatable, with some societies viewing it as immoral, thus it is seemingly a sensitive issue. This research will therefore depend more on published works of predecessors to for authenticity. From my personal experience in part of the Chinese society, dogs meat is not found everywhere like beef pork and chicken as might be thought. The Chinese who eat dog meat is probably very little.

However, it is not debatable that dog meat is a delicacy for the Chinese people. Qian Hong (2017) discussion on the problems of the Anti Cruelty to Animal Act once said, “Although people usually say that a dog is a friend of mankind, but Asian countries like China; Korea; North Korea; Vietnam all have the custom of eating dog meat...”. What is rather debatable, even within the Chinese society itself, is whether or not it is ethical to eat dog meat. Reporter Wang Xinhe in *The Procuratorate Daily of 18 June 2014*, published a report titled: *Eating dog meat: A right or bad habit*.

Xiao (2000) writing about methods of cooking dog meat, commented that: “dog meat has mellow taste, its aroma overflows, it is a food good to supplement for winter”. Wang Xianglin(1988) also wrote the article *Dog Meat can not be on table*. In the article the writer pointed out that it is against customs to serve visitors with dog meat among the named Chinese societies. From this it can therefore be inferred that, dog meat is eaten but it is customarily impolite to serve it to visitors. In the same article, the writer also included a saying which commends the delicacy of well cooked(boiled ) dog meat:狗肉滚三滚 · 神仙也难忍*gourou gun san gun,shenxian ye nanren (Dog meat,boiled thrice, it is hard for even the immortal resist it )*. It is also expressed as ,狗肉之香佛难耐*gourou zhi xiang fo nan nai(the fragrance of dog meat, even the Buddha can not resist it )*.

In the Shona culture, dog meat is not accepted as food as is the case in Chinese culture. Unlike in Shona where there are no expressions related to dog meat, in Chinese language there a number of expressions that are related to dog meat. Below are some examples of idioms.

i)挂羊肉卖狗肉*gua yangrou mai gourou* (to hang a sheep’s head when selling dog meat ). This is idiom is used to express that one tries to use good things to market bad things. From this idiom we can only understand that dog meat is not better than mutton, but one cannot tell if it can or cannot be also eaten.

吃狗肉念佛经*chi gourou nian fojing* (eating dog meat while reading the Buddhist scripture ). From this proverb one can tell that, dog meat is immoral for the Buddhists, but, might still want to know if it also to other Chinese people who are not Buddhists.

It can be observed that most of the saying related to dog meat tend to be presented with both sides of the coin, that is as a delicious and nutritious on one side, but immoral on the other side. From foreigners' view point it can be challenging to judge the truth about the dog meat by merely looking at the idioms. In Shona there is an idiom about eating dog, "*kudya imbwa idya hono*" (to eat dog, eat a male one). Here, "hono" (male) actually represent "big dog". If one eats a puppy or small dog, people will still say one has eaten a dog, as will be equally immoral as one who has eaten a big dog. This idiom therefore means, if one intends to do evil he has to do to its greatest extend.

While there are so many unique Chinese special foods that are not acceptable in Shona, there are also few types of foods that exist in Shona which are not accepted as food in Chinese culture. For instance, in Shona culture there is "*madora*" also known as mopani worms. The scientific name for this worm is *Gonimbrasia belina*. This type of worm has rough scary outer skin. It is normally dried and salted before it can be eaten. In Shona culture eating *madora* seem to be something that is quite honuorable as revealed in one of the common saying "*kudya madora, kudya namambo*" (Eating the *madora* is like eating with the Kings). Kings are known for eating heavy delicious meals. This saying thus means that *madora* is a delicious dish. While this type of food is a special delicacy in Zimbabwe, some Chinese people whom the researchers met in Zimbabwe were scared to eat *madora*. They argued that this was 虫子 '*Chongzi*'. *Chongzi* is a Chinese word that means an "insect". This implies that Chinese people may view *madora* as inedible insects. We should however note that there is a possibility that there are other Chinese people who eat *madora*.

The research found out that, placed on the equal footing, there are more kinds of foods that the Shona people do not accept as food, but which the Chinese can eat, than which the Shona eat but the Chinese cannot. In other words it was not easy to come up with an edible substance with is eaten but the Shona, but which the Chinese can not eat. It was therefore even harder to find any figurative language for this paper to accomplish its intended task on the SHONA part of this category.

### **Analysis of Selected Figurative Language based on Cooking Methods**

Cooking methods in the two cultures under this study are also influential in terms of creation of figurative expressions. In Chinese language there is the figurative expression; 围着火锅吃西瓜-心里甜丝丝 *weizhe huoguo chi xigua—Xinli tiansisi* (to surround the hotpot eating watermelon).

This allegory means to feel so pleasantly sweet in heart. The 火锅 (*huoguo*) known as hotpot is Chinese culinary culture which is thought to have originated during the Jin Dynasty. When the Chinese people are preparing the hotpot dish they normally surround the pot as a family, friends, colleagues or classmates, it is normally regarded as the most exciting food preparation method since everyone will participate in the process of cooking. Thus the aspect of surrounding something as a group is linked to hotpot. Hotpot is a mixture of a variety of foodstuffs such as vegetable; meat; mushrooms; *toufu*; dumpling and others, put together in a simmering pot of soup on a dinning table. This kind of preparing and eating is not common in Shona society. Hence, saying that allude to hotpot can make learner obtain knowledge about part of the Chinese cuisine.

To a very large extent, the Chinese people and Shona people prepare certain dishes in different ways as shown in some of the following expressions:

i) *Regai dzive shiri mazai haana muto* (leave them ([eggs] to develop into mature bird, eggs cannot be cooked with soup). This Shona proverb discourages dating the underage. This saying is generally used to encourage people to wait for the right time than taking premature action. The Shona basically have only two ways of preparing eggs, either boiling or frying them. For both ways, no liquid will be in the eggs. The Chinese also prepare the same way but they also have more other way whereby eggs will be put into soup. Therefore, the notion that “*mazai haana muto*”(eggs cannot be cooked with soup) in the Shona proverbs shows the different ways of preparing food in these two cultures. The way the Chinese cook a dish called 西红柿炒鸡蛋 *xihongxi chao jidan*, (stir-fried eggs with tomatoes) which is fried eggs with a lot of soup and tomatoes soup is totally unique not available in Shona culture. The Chinese also have a soup dish called “*jidan tang*” (chicken egg soup).

ii) *Chakanaka chakanaka mukaka haurungwi* (milk is readily good for drinking, adding salt rather spoils the taste). This proverb means we should appreciate good things as they are, unnecessary perfections will rather spoil them.

We can derive certain aspect on the differences between the Chinese and Shona people in terms of dietary issues. In Shona the verb “*runga*” basically means to add salt in relish. One can therefore make an inference that, milk is a nice relish that does not need to be added some salt. In Shona dietary system milk can be served as the main or sub-relish for staple food (*sadza*). Milk is probably the only kind of relish that that cannot be added salt (*haurungwi*). Nowadays refined milk and natural sour milk are sold in shops and supermarket (for example, *lacto; maas, hodzeko* etc ), some choose to eat with *sadza* while some eat it with bread or just drink without these. This is different from Chinese society which does not treat milk as relish which can be eaten as the main dish.

To a certain extent, we can also infer the differences in tastes. The Shona people, add more salt to relishes (greens and meat), while the Chinese put very little or mostly not at all.

### **Analysis of Selected Figurative Language based on Eating Customs, Habits and Beliefs.**

In Chinese and Shona there are certain figurative expressions that are derived from the eating customs, habits and beliefs. In Chinese ‘chopsticks’ *kuaizi* are one of the items that has a number of expressions related Chinese people’s eating habits and beliefs.

The Chinese people customarily use chopstick for eating. The Shona people directly use hands to pick food. This is still common in Zimbabwe, especially in rural areas. In Chinese there a number of proverbs that use “chopsticks”. Below are some of them:

i) 一根筷子容易折，一把筷子难断 “*yi gen kuaizi rongyi zhe, yi ba kauizi nan zheduan*”, (one chopstick is easily broken, but a bunch of chopstick is hard to break ).

ii) 一根筷子拣不了菜 “*yi gen kuazi jia buliao cai*” (one chopstick doesn’t pick food)

iii) 一根筷子拣花生米 *yi geng kuaizi jian huashengmi*. (one chopstick picking a grain of groundnut). This saying is used to refer to show discord or commotion. One strand of chopstick trying to pick a groundnut will definitely stir up all the groundnuts in the bowl.

iv) 一根筷子吃面 *yi gen kuaizi chi mian*. (one chopstick eating noodles) working on ones own or on-one-one hit. All the above figurative expressions are used to encourage cooperation. Chopsticks work as pair when eating. It is not possible for one chopstick to successfully pick up food hence this forms the base of Chinese people's understanding of unity and cooperation.

The above sayings are equivalent to Shona proverbs such as, "*Chara chimwe hanchitswanyi inda*" (one finger cannot crush lice); "*rume rimwe harikombi churu*" (one man can not surround the entire anthill); "*mushandirapamwe wemajuru wakavaka churu*" (the collaborative effort of termites led to the successful building of an anthill).

In Chinese culture drinking beer is a common culture which is part and parcel of their dietary system. Drinking beer during meals is normally used to symbolize unity. One of such Chinese expressions related to the issue of drinking and unity is;

i) 无酒不成席 *wu jiu bu cheng xi*. (no beer, no banquet). This is an idiom that means, friends sitting and eating together without drinking is not ideal. This Chinese custom of drinking while dining is common among the Chinese, but not among the Shona culture.

ii) "酒肉朋友 *jiu rou pengyou*" (fare weather friends) is another proverb that promotes unity through drinking together in Chinese eating customs is. This expression is literally translated as follows; "friend at wine and meat". "Wine" and "meat" are metaphoric for *dinning*. this expression reflects the Chinese drinking and dining custom.

iii) 酒足饭饱 *jiu zu fan bao*. (having dined and wined to satiety), is another idiom that allude to the custom of dining and drinking among the Chinese.

In the modern day Shona culture, drinking while dining started with the advent of more fashionable picnics in the form of the so called "*braaing*", popularly known in local language as *kogocha* or "*gochi-gochi*". Such dining habits are more common in cities, towns and growth points. People drink, *roasting meat* and can have main meal with friends and or with family members.

In Shona culture there is a common type of relish called "*muto*" which also is quite influential as a source of Shona figurative expressions. The term *muto* can be translated to 'soup' in English and *tang* 汤 in Chinese. However, the concept of *muto* is not understood the same way in these 替我 languages. In Shona culture *muto* generally refers to the little liquid that remains after relish(meat or vegetables) has been cooked. Its amount can be increased by adding more little water or reduced by letting it heat away from the pot or actively pour it out if one does not want relish with soup. In Shona diet, soup is eaten through staple food, that is, by dipping or spreading it over the main course /main dish such as *sadza*, bread or rice.

In Chinese diet, soup is specially prepared as a separate dish in liquid state. It can be flavored using some raw vegetables, eggs or meat. It is drunk from a separate bowl, unlike *muto* which is eaten through dipping the main dish into the relish.



In Shona culture, *muto* (soup) and *kuseva muto* (dipping something into the soup) is often used figuratively to symbolize earning a living (food and or wealthy). This is most probably because it is generally widely accepted that the primary objective of working or earning is the need to 'fill the stomachs' and survive, while other wants are secondary.

In the Shona primitive society family members used to eat from the same plate and or bowl, in three groups; young children; the teenagers and adults. Hence in Shona there is the expression: *kuseva mundiro imwe chete* (dipping from the same dish) which is used to mean "being members of the same family" or "blood brother and sisters". In Shona culture it is general knowledge that *kuseva* (dipping) is implied to *muto* (soup) rather than any other kind of liquid food, and what is being dipped into the soup is the *musuwa* (mossel of *sadza*).

There could be some sense of competition for the food for the people eating from the same bowl especially if the food is not adequate. The more people there are, the more intense the competition. Hence, in Shona culture there is a proverb *Kuwanda huuya asi kwakapedza muto* (it is beneficial to be more, but more people will finish the soup).

In the traditional Shona culture, when eating *sadza* with meat or fish as relish, usually people have to eat with soup (and vegetables, if available) for a short while before picking up meat or fish. The picking of meat pieces is done following the order of seniority. The older one will pick the bigger piece of meat first, followed by the second elder person up until the youngest has picked the last piece which normally will be the smallest piece. If the oldest delays, the younger may become impatient and sometimes push the eldest one into picking his or her meat share. Related to this, in Shona there is a figurative saying "*kukuwara /kunzwa nemuto*"(suffering/obsessed with the soup). This means that means one 'cannot continue dipping the soup'. The saying is used to indicate that one cannot continue doing something which is less important yet better things are available.

In primitive Shona culture, marriage was also done by order of seniority. If the elder brother delays, the younger brother(s) would be impatient, use this saying to urge him into action so that their turn comes. So "getting married" is likened to 'picking' of a meat piece. Therefore, in Shona culture they use expression "*nhongai nyama, takuvara nemuto*" (pick up the meat brother, we cannot continue anymore dipping in the soup ).

*Nzou mutupo pana vanhu paseri ava machikichori* ( An elephant is totem to some people, but to some its a delicacy/meal). The proverb alludes to the Shona custom that a clan of a certain totem should eat that totems. For examples, people of the Elephant totem should pay due respect to elephants, and not eat meat from them. The proverb means, people or things can be holy or respected in one society while in the other they are just ordinary. This Shona proverb reveal the Shona custom and belief and custom of totem. The concept of totem in Shona culture is related to but a bit different from the Chinese twelve zodiac animals. In Shona culture, a clan cannot eat meat from animal that belongs to its totem, rather the totem animal should be treated with respect.

## Conclusion

From the few expressions selected above, it can be seen that a learner with no experience or knowledge about these culinary and eating customs will find it difficult to comprehend the meaning conveyed, hence resulting in communication barrier(misunderstanding or total failure to comprehend meaning). An interesting phenomena is the existence of certain terms in the first

language that do not have any equivalent terms in the target language. This proves that there exists a cultural gap in terms of food customs between the two societies.

It can also be observed that, as learners learn or acquire the expressions within the target language, they will obtain vast knowledge with regard to what kind of foods do the native speakers eat, how they eat as well as their eating customs. Hence, this research proves and agrees with the view of many social linguists that language and culture are inextricably intertwined. Thus, figurative language should be viewed as an important component of second language teaching.

From this research it can be observed that figurative sayings that are unique to Shona only are much limited than those that are unique to Chinese. This phenomenon is likely to be a result of many reasons. We can claim that the characteristics of the Shona society are almost entirely engulfed within those of the Chinese society. This could be because China mainland covers a bigger area and has a rich long uninterrupted cultural heritage; hence it is characterized by diversity in culture and climate within the same country. Also, it is important to note that there are 56 ethnic groups in China while there only 13 ethnic groups in Zimbabwe. Therefore, the majority of food and habits that exist in various Chinese Cultural landscape also exist in Shona culture.

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