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## In the Heart of Hearts of International Relations: National Humor Through Idiomatic Perspective

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Abstract: The problem of international relations is a burning issue of modern global society. In this article I suggest that comparative analysis of idioms with a 'heart' component and culture stereotypes of international relations given in jokes should be formative to our understanding of underlying international policy mechanisms in modern China, Japan, Great Britain and North America. The burning issue of multiculturalism and studying foreign cultures in conditions of preserving national identity is a key concept for successful international relations policy. The problem is exacerbated by complex international psychological stereotypes which do not contribute to mutual understanding of residents with multicultural backgrounds. I propose the idea of cooperative multicultural understanding through studying idioms. For centuries the development of idiomatic systems (phraseological systems) was regarded as a culturally unique individual process, governed by extralinguistic reasons: politics, time factors and cross-cultural contacts. I analyze idioms (phraseological units) with a 'heart' component, belonging to 4 idiomatic systems (phraseological systems): (Chinese, Japanese, British and American). With the help of on-line electronic linguistic corpuses (Chinese corpus), KOTONOHA (Japanese corpus), BNC (British National Corpus) and COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) I identify tendencies common to all these systems, which is conducive to our mutual understanding in modern global environment.

**Key words:** International relations • Culture • Stereotype • Comparative linguistics • Idiom • Phraseology • corpus linguistics • China • Japan and North America

## INTRODUCTION

International relations are the subject of serious talks of top political think- tanks. Modern conflicts of The East and The West have been the subject matter of reflection for centuries. For example, China-the USA relationships are analyzed from diachronically by distinguished authors of the past and present: 'From the beginning of the nineteenth century to the 1900s, Chinese perceptions of Americans were equally mixed. In the early nineteenth century, the Chinese in general tended to view Westerners as uncivilized barbarians and Americans were associated with such traits as avarice, waywardness weak intelligence in the eyes of many Chinese...There were, however, other Chinese who were less negative, some idealizing the United States as a land of plenty and one notable Chinese thinker, Wei Yuan, characterized the Americans as 'docile, good-natured, mild and honest'. In the 1880s and 1890s, the tensions in Sino-American relations influenced many Chinese to see the Americans in a negative light, criticizing the

Americans for their racial attitudes and expansionist ambitions, even going so far as to characterize the United States as a 'floating hell', a denunciation that the United States was certainly not as just and democratic as it portrayed itself to be' [1-5].

In this article I try to take a less serious approach to the problem of international relations. Senses and ideas reflected in jokes and idioms are sure to be eye-openers to key policy issues. I suggest that analysis of jokes with international stereotypes and idioms with a 'heart' component should throw light on nature of international relations of the present and the future. In my analysis I and idioms (phraseological units), study jokes belonging to 4 idiomatic systems (phraseological systems): (Chinese, Japanese, British and American). With the help of on-line electronic linguistic corpuses (Chinese corpus), KOTONOHA (Balanced Corpus of Contemporary Written Japanese), BNC (British National Corpus), COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) I single out national stereotypes connected with relations and.

**International Relations in Jokes:** The first joke reflects the idea of hidden hostility. Though on the surface of things the participants of the story seem to be friendly and polite, they are plotting against one another in darkness. 'One day, an Asian man, an American man and a French girl were on a train. Along the ride, there was a short but dark tunnel. When they entered the tunnel, a kissing sound, then a slapping sound was heard. Once outside, everyone could see a large red mark on the American's face. The French girl thought, 'That American probably tried to kiss me, but accidentally kissed the Asian and he slapped him.' The American thought, 'The Asian tried to kiss the French girl and she tried to slap him, but accidentally slapped me.' Now, the Asian thought, 'that was great! Me kiss pretty French girl and slap crazy American! Can't wait for next tunnel!' [6].

'In reality any analysis of the social fabric, structure and dynamics of a society needs at least something to say about the lines of conflict which divide it, as well as the strategies and practices of power mobilized precisely to *constitute* and *construct* whatever gets understood as society' [7].

Contrary to the first episode the next story is devoted to an open hostility case. 'An airplane takes off from the airport. The captain is Jewish and the first officer is Chinese. It's the first time they've flown together and it's obvious by the silence that they don't get along. After thirty minutes, the Jewish Captain speaks, 'I don't like Chinese.' The First Officer replies, 'Ooooh, no like Chinese? Why ees that?' The Captain says, 'You bombed Pearl Harbor. That's why I don't like Chinese.' The F.O. says, 'Nooooo, noooo... Chinese not bomb Pearl Harbah. That Japanese, not Chinese.' And the Captain answers, 'Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese... it doesn't matter, they're all alike.' Another thirty minutes of silence. Finally the F.O. says, 'No like Jew.' The Captain replies, 'Why not? Why don't you like Jews?' F.O. says, 'Jews sink Titanic.' The Captain tries to correct him, 'No, no. The Jews didn't sink the Titanic. It was an iceberg.' The F.O. replies,' Iceberg, Goldberg, Rosenberg, no mattah. All

The next joke is about Japanese cultural stereotypes we see in modern world everywhere. Japanese words in the joke do not need translation, because in modern global society people in most parts of the world hear these words at every coener. 'Recent reports indicate the Japanese banking crisis shows no sings of improving. If anything, it's getting worse. Following last week's news that Origami Bank had folded, it was today learned that Sumo Bank has gone belly up. Bonsai Bank plans to cut

back some of its branches. Karaoke Bank is up for sale and is going for a song. Meanwhile, shares in Kamikaze Bank have nose-dived and 500 jobs at Karate Bank will be chopped. Analysts report that there is something fishy going on at Sushi Bank and staff there fear they may get a raw deal' [9].

Having analyzed humor presentations, now we proceed to language stereotypes, presented in idioms with a 'heart' component.

Chinese Idioms: In this part of our research we provide Chinese associations with heart, realized in idioms. My analysis of the Chinese idioms includes the analysis of 4-character idioms. "In Chinese lexical system Chinese idioms are a typical unit. As an individual type in the domain of idioms, most Chinese idioms have some unique qualities. One of the design features of most Chinese idioms on the dimension of form characteristics is the four-character form the Chinese lexicon provides an exact number of the characters in such a unit. According to the statistics given in Zhou [10], up to 95.57% entries in Dictionary of Chinese Idioms are four characters. The uniformity in form regulates to a large extent some other linguistic characteristics of Chinese idioms, specifically phonological and semantic distribution. Compatible with the rhythmical arrangement and prosodic features represented by the two-plus-two syllables, a great number of Chinese idioms consist of double substructures, mostly parallel with each other [11]. Branded with a distinct national style, Chinese idioms mirror the esthetic pursuit of symmetry deeply embedded in oriental thinking" [12].

For analyzing Chinese idioms frequencies I used Chinese corpus at Leeds University. I provide each idiom with the frequency index, illustrating its usage frequency in the Internet and business Chinese.

Bìng4 rù4 gāo1 huāng1 - 'the disease got inside and occupied its place between the diaphragm and lungs' - a fatal disease [the Internet - 191; business Chinese - 91]. It was believed in ancient China that the heart fat, which is accumulated between the diaphragm and lungs, was a fatal disease, which can't be cured. Bāo1 cáng2 huò4 xīn1 - 'to keep evil ideas on one's heart'- to have evil plans [the Internet - 32; business Chinese - 13]. Chì4 dăn3 zhōng1 xīn1 - 'a red cholecyst and a devoted heart'-honest, open hearted [the Internet - 44; business Chinese - 52]. Dà4 kuài4 rén2 xīn1 - 'a big happiness in a human's heart' - a big excitement [the Internet - 168; business Chinese - 48]. Găn3 rén2 fèi4 fū3 - 'to feel something deep at heart'- to cut one to the quick [the

Internet – 147; business Chinese – 119].  $K\tilde{u}3 \ k\tilde{o}u3 \ p\acute{o}2 \ xin4$  – 'a bitter mouth and the heart of an old woman' – a person, who gives good advice [the Internet – 437; business Chinese – 258].  $Q\acute{i}2 \ x\bar{i}n1 \ xi\acute{e}2 \ li4$  – 'with one heart' – unilaterally [the Internet – 350; business Chinese – 483].  $H\acute{e}2 \ zh\bar{o}ng1 \ g\acute{o}ng4 \ ji4$  – 'to help each other with united hearts' – to act hand in hand [the Internet – 34; business Chinese – 174].

This brief collection demonstrates that in China 'heart' is associated with united, unilateral efforts. It is possible to assume that international relations policies are also achieved by the Chinese through united actions.

**Japanese Idioms:** Japanese phraseology is described through frequency indexes, which I got using corpus data. KOTONOHA on-line Balanced Corpus of Contemporary Written Japanese submits the contexts of a considerable time period between 1880 to 2008. *Kokoro* ('heart') in Japanese is analysed alongside with *ki* ('spiritual energy'). Let's consider the following examples.

*Kokoro ni tomeru* – 'to leave in heart' – to remember. [70 entries. Date: 1880–2008.17 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male - 50, female - 25]. Kokoro o kusuguru -'to tickle one's heart'- to be frivolous, to make one laugh. [76 entries. Date: 1890–2008. 46 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male - 37, female - 18]. Kokoroni kizamu - 'to be cut in one's heart'- to be unforgetable. [78 entries. Date: 1850-2008. 24 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male – 52, female – 18]. Kokoro o kudaku - 'to break one's heart' - to be excited, to worry. [79 entries. Date: 1880-2008.14 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male - 54, female - 28]. Kokoro o mukeru - 'to direct one's heart' - to pay attention to something [80 entries. Date: 1880–2008. 12 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male - 62, female - 25]. Kokoro o ubau - 'to steal one's heart' - to charm, to fascinate. [138 entries. Date: 1860-2008. 27 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male – 95, female – 25].

**Spiritual Energy:** Component (*ki*) is more manifest in Japanese culture.

Ki ga arai – 'the spirit is rude' – quarrelsome. [25 entries. Date: 1870–2008. 10 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male – 13, female – 4]. Ki ga aseru – 'the spirit hurries up' – impatient. [5 entries. Date: 1930–2005. 24 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male – 52, female – 18]. Ki ga kuruu – 'the spirit gets crazy' – to get crazy [202 entries. Date: 1860–2008. 58 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male – 103, female – 42]. Ki ga fureru – 'the spirit touches' – to get crazy [5 entries. Date:

1930–2008. 5 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male -7, female -3]. Ki ga chigau - 'the spirit differs' - to get crazy [64 entries. Date: 1840-2008. 26 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male – 39, female – 6]. *Ki ga hen* ni naru - 'spirit gets strange'- to get crazy. [38 entries. Date: 1900-2008. 5 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male - 36, female - 9]. Ki ga kusaru - 'the spirit gets worse' - to be in low spirits. [2 entries. Date: 1890-1950. Speaker's sex: male -1, female -2]. Ki ga mijikai - 'the spirit is short'- hot-tempered. [31 entries. Date: 1900–2008. 8 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male - 17, female - 10]. Ki ga nagai - 'the spirit is long' sluggish. [17 entries. Date: 1920-2008. 5 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male – 11, female – 4]. Ki ga momeru - 'the spirit changes' - to worry, to get excited. [3 entries. Date: 1910–1950. Speaker's sex: male – 3, female -1]. Ki ga okeru - 'the spirit feels ill at ease' - not to feel at home. [2 entries. Date: 2005, 2008.]. Ki ga susumanai – 'the spirit does not move'- to be reluctant to do something. [91 entries. Date: 1860-2008. 18 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male – 60, female – 40]. Ki ga tatsu - 'the spirit gets up' - 1) to show up; 2) to get excited. [94 entries. Date: 1860-2008. 15 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male - 60, female - 35]. Ki ga chiisai – 'the spirit is small' – a coward. [44 entries. Date: 1880–2008. 17 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male - 18, female - 11]. Ki ga ochiru - 'the spirit falls down' - to lose popularity, fame [47 entries. Date: 1820–2008. 19 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male - 18, female - 11].

Ki ga togameru - 'the spirit reproaches' - to feel pangs of conscience. [15 entries. Date: 1930-2005. 3 entries during 2000-2005. Speaker's sex: male – 6, female -7]. Ki ga to:ku naru - 'the spirit becomes light' - to go off in a swoon. [99 entries. Date: 1880-2008. 13 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male – 65, female – 25]. Ki ga tento: suru - 'the spirit gets upside down' - to get off-balance. [99 entries. Date: 1800-2008. 22 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male – 70, female – 20]. Ki ga utoi - 'the spirit disposes' - to become inactive. [99 entries. Date: 1830–2008. 20 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male -54, female -15]. Ki ga haru - «the spirit grows» - to feel ill at ease. [26 entries. Date: 1910–2008. 5 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male - 13, female - 6]. Ki ga hayai - 'the spirit is quick' - hottempered. [43 entries. 1870–2008. 33 entries during 2000-2008. M – 15, female – 5]. Ki ni kuwanai – 'the spirit can't eat' - to irritate. [89 entries. Date: 1870-2008. 39 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male - 52, female - 15]. Ki ni makeru - 'to be defeated by the spirit'

- to be under the weather. [6 entries. Date: 1920–2008. 5 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male – 2, female -4]. Ki ni sawaru - 'to disturb one's spirit' - to irritate. [65 entries. Date: 1900–2008. 24 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male – 34, female – 17]. Ki ni somu – 'to be painted according to one's spirit' - not to one's liking. [16 entries. Date: 1920–2008. 3 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male -11, female -7]. Ki ni yamu - 'to be ill with one's spirit' - to take close to one's heart. [58 entries. Date: 1890–2008. 11 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male – 45, female – 15]. Ki no yowai – 'the spirit is weak' - a coward. [96 entries. Date: 1890-2008. 23 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male – 57, female - 20]. Ki o kaneru - 'to disturb the spirit' - to doubt, to feel ill at ease. [4 entries. Date: 1910-2005. 1 entry during 2000-2005. Speaker's sex: male - 3, female - 0]. Ki o mawasu - ki o mawasu - 'to rotate the spirit' - to be jealous, to be suspicious [60 entries. Date: 1800-2008. 12 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male - 45, female -13].

Idioms with the Highest Frequencies: Ki ga hikeru – 'to pull one's spirit' - to feel ill at ease. [119 entries. Date: 1920-2008. 82 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male – 34, female – 13]. Ki ga nukeru – 'the spirit falls out' - to be depressed. [125 entries. Date: 1880-2008. 46 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male – 52, female – 13]. Ki ga omoi – 'the spirit is heavy' – inactive. [155 entries. Date: 1870–2008. 65 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male - 70, female - 30]. Ki ni kakaru - 'to stick to one's spirit' - to excite, to make restless. [227 entries. Date: 1870–2008. 50 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male – 80, female – 45]. Ki ga kawaru – 'the spirit changes' - to be capricious. [226 entries. Date: 1850–2008. 80 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male - 100, female - 25]. Ki o ushinau - 'to lose one's spirit' – to fall into a swoon. [418 entries. Date: 1800–2008. 48 entries during 2000-2008. Speaker's sex: male - 75, female – 35]. Ki ni naru – 'to become a spirit' – to trouble, to excite. [10725 entries. Date: 1800-2008].

**Spirit:** Component is an important aspect of Japanese identity. As Takeshi Hamamura and Liman Man Wai Li rightfully stress: "To the extent that cultural identification anchors the self-system and implicates a wide range of psychological processes, a perception of cultural identification may facilitate social understanding. As such, cultural identification may be actively discerned in social interactions. Among a group of friends, a

perception of cultural identification would be relatively straightforward through intimate knowledge of one another. One intriguing question is whether people with no knowledge of one another are able to discern others' cultural identification" [13].

The analysis of Japanese idioms shows, that *energy* and *spiritual values* are of paramount importance in Japanese policy making. While dealing with Japanese negotiators it is important to take into consideration their ethical sensitiveness.

British and North American Idioms: 'The English language in Britain evolves constantly. Foreign words have long been de rigueur (pilfered most notably from the French) and today they're absorbed from all over the place. In 2007, for example, the word wiki found its way into the Oxford English Dictionary, derived from a Hawaiian word meaning quick but now meaning quick but now applied to a certain type of Internet site. ... Metaphor and simile are equally prone to rapid evolution. The British love new, glib phrases (it's a country where pretty much anything can go 'pear-shaped', particularly when it's 'cheap as chips'), repeated interminably for a couple of years until some intangible social code decides they're 'past their sell-by date'... urban Britain is particularly inventive, it's multicultural streets generating a new tongue for the 21st century with the unstoppable rise of Jafaican. Despite the name, experts claim it's not actually an affectation but a shift in language born of multicultural mingling in post-war Britain, most notably with the mix of Jamaican, West African and Bangladeshi cultures. Such has been Jafaican's growth that today you'll find youngsters from Tower Hamlets to Torquay calling each other 'blud' and discussing whether those 'skets' is butters' [14].

In many ways English is a dividing factor even to native speakers. 'In any discussion of nationalism, identity, or current affairs, language is never 'innocent'. The choice of words reveals the underlying outlook of the speaker. So for example the word 'foreign' in English is much more hostile ...than the German ausländer. Latent British xenophobia is revealed in the offensive tabloid expression 'Johnny Foreigner'. ... to Welsh is to cheat or renege; to Scotch is to thwart, to squash, to prevent; an Irish lanyard is an untidy rope. In other words the names of the three 'subsidiary' nations in the British Isles have negative connotations in the language of the dominate one. Thus national prejudice is encoded in the English language' [15].

In my study I decided to combine British and American variants. Idioms are analyzed by checking frequencies using BNC (British National Corpora) and COCA (Corpora of Contemporary American). This type of analysis is very important as it helps demonstrate to which variety of modern English, British or American, this or that idiom belongs.

To have one's heart on one's sleeve – an open-hearted person. [BNC – 1; COCA – 24 (2012-1990)]. Heart of stone – wicked, cruel. [BNC – 8; COCA – 39 (2012-1990)]. Cold heart – cruel [BNC – 4; COCA – 41 (2012-1990)]. Hard heart – cruel [BNC – 7; COCA – 18 (2012-1990)]. To speak from the heart – to speak honestly [BNC – 12; COCA – 74 (2012-1990)]. From the bottom of one's heart – to speak honestly. [BNC – 15; COCA – 137 (2012-1990)]. Heart of gold – a kind person. [BNC – 29; COCA – 125 (2012-1990)]. Heavy heart – distressed. [BNC – 39; COCA – 94 (2012-1990)]. Light heart – to make one's mind easy. [BNC – 11; COCA – 15 (2012-1990)]. By heart – from memory. [BNC – 173; COCA – 675 (2012-1990)].

**Idioms with the Highest Frequencies:** *Heart-to-heart* – an honest talk [BNC – 15; COCA – 145 (2012-1990)].

To take to heart -1) to take close to one's heart. [BNC -19; COCA -177 (2012-1990)]

Good [BNC – 49; COCA – 247 (2012-1990)] / kind [BNC – 24; COCA – 61 (2012-1990)] / soft [BNC – 6; COCA – 31 (2011-1990)] / tender [BNC – 3; COCA – 43 (2012-1990)] / warm [BNC – 14; COCA – 31 (2012-1990)] heart – a kind heart.

*With all one's heart* – very honestly [BNC – 58; COCA – 423 (2012-1990)]. At heart – very deeply. [BNC – 271; COCA – 1278 (2012-1990)].

To break smb.'s heart - to charm, to fascinate [BNC - 92; COCA - 919 (2012-1990)].

The analysis presented shows it very clearly that Anglo-Saxon idioms with a 'heart' component are driven with emotions of honesty and dedication. Americans are dedicated to result-achievement and policy implementation.

## **CONCLUSION**

"The basis for all stereotyping is the differential perception of groups. Without such differentiation between groups, stereotyping cannot occur" [16].

J. Wilson stresses that stereotypes "... have been shown to be remarkably resilient to change" [17].

In this article I have provided both a humor perspective and a balanced analysis of different nation's emotional stereotypes. We've identified key concepts dominant in policy making. *Heart* is viewed as a principle value, which is realized differently by representatives of different nations. Global international relations system has to adjust itself to these important distinctive features. Since language governs our mindset I conclude that by showing common 'heart' idiom trends modern politicians have a powerful tool of stressing equality of cognitive mechanisms to their people in the epoch of global market.

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