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**A STUDY OF *CHENGYU* TYPE IDIOMS IN CHINESE LANGUAGE ON THE
EXAMPLE OF THE ANALECTS**

BACHELOR THESIS

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INTRODUCTION

Idioms are in a sense conventionalized multiword expressions that are present in every language. Often, but not always, they have a non-literal meaning so that they cannot be understood from the meanings of its individual elements. Idioms usually reflect a very specific grammatical, syntactic and structural character of a given language.

Idiomatic expressions in the Chinese language are somewhat special compared to other languages. Idioms are mostly a part of oral culture, whereas Chinese idioms are mostly literary and are prevalent in Chinese writing. They started forming in ancient China and reflect the beauty and difficulty of the classical Chinese language.

Chinese language cannot offer a single term for the concept “idiom”. “Idiom” in Chinese language is a collective term that incorporates several types of idiomatic expressions: *yanyu* 谚语, *chengyu* 成语, *suyu* 俗语, *cusuyu* 粗俗语, *guanyongyu* 惯用语 and *xiehouyu* 歇后语. *Yanyu* are usually famous sayings of any length with an easy-to-understand meaning. *Suyu* are folk-language idioms of any length, neither very structured nor formal. *Cusuyu* are vulgar *suyu* idioms. *Guanyongyu* are habitual sayings. *Xiehouyu* are allegorical sayings with a two-part structure, first part usually being a riddle and the second being the answer to the riddle. *Chengyu* idioms stand out from this group as a very specific type of idiomatic expressions in Chinese language because of their specific structure and origins. *Chengyu* are fixed idiomatic expressions derived from classical Chinese literature.

The thesis presents a detailed research of *chengyu* type idioms in Chinese language. The research is a study of various *chengyu* definitions and structure, *chengyu* sources and translation strategies. The theoretical base is then applied to the study of *chengyu* in *Analects*, a Confucian classic.

The choice of the research subject is inspired by the author’s interest in classical Chinese language and the translation strategies of idiomatic expressions. Moreover, the reason for choosing *chengyu* from *Lunyu* is to create a research methodology precisely for idioms.

The research focuses on providing answers to the following questions: a) what is *chengyu*; b) what are the origins of *chengyu*; c) what is the internal structure of *chengyu*; d) what grammatical functions do *chengyu* idioms have; e) how to translate *chengyu* into other languages; f) how is the theory applicable to the analysis of *chengyu* in *Analects*.

The study of *chengyu* belongs to linguistics as the study of language. Most of the research is empirical since it is the result of collecting and analysing the appropriate data about *chengyu* from different sources. The research benefits from combining both main research methods: quantitative and qualitative. Qualitative data in this study helps to create a new definition of *chengyu*, define *chengyu*'s grammatical, syntactic and structural characteristics, and talk about translation strategies. Quantitative data in this study is the analysis of the table with the information about *chengyu* from Analects. The analysis of the table shows how many and to what extent do the *chengyu* idioms from Analects fit into the newly derived definition of *chengyu*.

The thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is a multilingual research of the *chengyu* definitions in literature and other academic research. Compared and contrasted are the definitions in English, Russian, Estonian and Chinese languages in order to create a new definition for further use. The last subchapter thus describes the new definition and outlines the main characteristics of *chengyu*.

The second chapter represents the research of the *chengyu*'s origins. The first subchapter defines the main texts of classical Chinese literature since they are the main source of *chengyu* idioms. The second subchapter defines *chengyu* that have formed in the modern Chinese language.

The third chapter concerns the structural and grammatical functions of *chengyu*. The first subchapter focuses on the peculiarities of *chengyu*'s inner structure since they are examples of classical Chinese grammar. The second subchapter then proceeds to discuss the inner grammatical structure, displaying the types of relationship between the characters in *chengyu*. The third subchapter provides an overview of the main grammatical functions of *chengyu* in a sentence.

The fourth chapter is the main body of the research. It is the step-by-step analysis of the collected *chengyu* from Analects using the theory from the first chapter. The main goal of the chapter is to show how well the idiomatic expressions from Analects fit into the newly derived definition, what grammatical and structural features they possess, discuss the process of formation of these *chengyu*.

The fifth chapter concerns the translation strategies of *chengyu* into other languages. At first, the general theory is introduced with the help of randomly selected *chengyu*. Then,

the theories of translation are applied to the *chengyu* from Analects to point out the difficulties of such translation.

The appendices part includes two *chengyu* tables that are used in the thesis. The first appendix is a collection of *chengyu* used in the theory part of this thesis. The *chengyu* are listed in the order of their appearance. All of them have the *pinyin* and English translation parts along with references to the pages in the thesis. The second appendix is the main table with the research of *chengyu* in Analects. The *chengyu* are organised by the order of their appearance in Analects and contain necessary explanations.

1. THE RESEARCH OF *CHENGYU* DEFINITIONS

Conducting a proper research of *chengyu* definitions proved to be a rather difficult task since there is very little information provided regarding this topic in English, Russian and especially Estonian language. Most of the research is done in Chinese language. This chapter thus is a multilingual research of the *chengyu* definitions in literature and academic papers. Compared and contrasted are the definitions in these languages in order to create a new definition for further use in research. The chapter focuses on distinguishing the common features in the found definitions and providing if necessary the critique of these definitions. Special attention is paid to the sources of definitions since they are most likely to be literal translations of definitions in Chinese literature.

Proper and correct definitions are crucial to any serious discipline. The aim of the research is to create a new “dictionary” definition, which is an explanation of a word that is already in use but unfamiliar to the person looking for an explanation. In this case the reader of the thesis will be considered as the person who is unfamiliar with the proper explanation of the word *chengyu*.

The creation of a new definition is done with regard to the Standard Theory of Definition. The theory can be divided into two parts:

- 1) A good definition should be subject to two criteria – the criterion of eliminability (this stands for the fact that the new definition should be able to explain all the previous definitions of *chengyu*) and the criterion of conservativeness (this stands for the fact that the new definition should only define *chengyu* and not provide any additional information).
- 2) A good definition is created according to the rules, which in turn ensure that all the above criteria are met. For example, it is usually said that new definitions are of more importance in the research than the old ones since they are created in the process of working with other (older) definitions. A definition is considered good if it does not mention the word that is being defined. These two facts are concluded from the criterion of eliminability. Furthermore, a new definition should be considered correct. A new definition should not function as a proof that other definitions are correct or incorrect, otherwise this new definition is not to be considered conservative. (Belnap 1993: 117)

1.1. Definitions from research in Estonian language

In Estonian there is little information about Chinese language structure. There is practically no research defining any specifics of Chinese idioms let alone *chengyu*. However, there is sufficient work done with regard to idioms in general. Most of the definitions that are currently used in Estonian are borrowed from sources written in other languages and are mainly exact translations rather than new definitions.

For example, Eisen (1929: 5) writes in his book the following: “Idioms are short and easily remembered phrases. A correct idiom should not only contain words of wisdom but also be presented in a form of a poem so as to be considered beautiful in terms of language.”

Krikmann and Sarv (1980: 5) in turn argue that idioms are mainly phrases that came to our modern language from the past in the form of phrases about nature, ethics, society or private life.

The Institute of the Estonian Language (2014) provides the following definition: “An idiom is a type of fixed expression, an assembly of words, the meaning of which cannot be understood by combining the meaning of the words in it. The word *idiom* is used to denote a specific word formation that is not usually found in other languages.”

These definitions are, of course, mostly general explanations of the term *idiom*. Even though the review of Estonian literature gave no definition of *chengyu*, the general information found will still contribute to creating a foundation for the new definition.

1.2. Definitions from research in Russian language

A review of literature and articles in Russian language proved that there is sufficient research done not only regarding idiomatic expressions in Chinese language but also about *chengyu*. Most of the research does not have any reference links to the literature in English or Chinese which makes it look like that the definitions in Russian are the result of independent research. However, this cannot be taken for a fact, since the research simply might lack necessary references while actually presenting a borrowed translated definition.

Vasilieva (2013: 47) in her article claims that: “*Chengyu* is a fixed phraseological phrase (usually made up from four words), which is constructed according to the rules of the ancient Chinese language, semantically monolithic, expressive, has a much generalized

non-literal meaning, and acts as an independent member in a sentence”. Vasilieva has borrowed this definition from the textbook about phraseology in Chinese language.¹

Kozhevnikov (2005:13) provides a very detailed description of the *chengyu* characteristics in his dictionary. He states that *chengyu* are constructed according to the rules of ancient Chinese language. Usually, they are constructed from the words that are no longer in use which are outdated monosyllabic words. *Chengyu* originate from ancient literary works in Chinese language and are, in fact, precise or modified quotations. The authorship of most *chengyu* idioms is known and presented in *chengyu* dictionaries.

Chen Shuan (2013: 69) defines *chengyu* in his article as phraseological expressions that have developed in Chinese language as independent units, mostly tetrasyllabic. He states that they are rhythmical phrases and sentences, full of archaisms, and reflect the true reality of the Chinese ethnos.

It should be noted that most of the Russian research uses the word “phraseological” in the definitions of *chengyu*, however, researchers writing in English, Chinese and Estonian rarely use this word. It is only logical to question the use of this term while defining *chengyu*. Is “phraseological phrase” the most correct way to define *chengyu*?

The term “phraseology” gained its popularity with the help of Soviet scholars who adopted it from a French source and it became a base for most Russian idiomatic research (Petronela 2010: 60). However, “phraseological phrase” as a term in the particular case of *chengyu* does not really reflect the true meaning, since it only concerns the lexical function of the idiom. Kavka and Jerzy (2004: 55) argue that the term “idiomatology” is more appropriate than “phraseology” when talking about idioms. This way it allows us to regard the study of idioms as a truly linguistic discipline, since when speaking about idioms we speak about phonology, morphology, philology and so on.

This brings us to the conclusion that the expression “idiomatic phrase” should be used in the definition process of the *chengyu*. The use of “phraseological expression” is not entirely suitable.

¹ Voitshovitch, Irina 2007 = Войцехович, Ирина 2007. Практическая фразеология современного китайского языка. Москва: АСТ, Восток-Запад.

1.3. Definitions from research in English language

Most of the research done in English concerns the term “idiom” and does not mention much about *chengyu*. However, since *chengyu* is a certain type of Chinese idioms, the general information about idioms in Chinese language is very useful for the future definition of *chengyu*.

Another aspect of the English-language bibliography should be taken into consideration. Most of the definitions are taken from Chinese sources so that in reality we still see the Chinese perspective rather than an independent foreign research.

For example, Wu (1995) has done a thorough research in his English paper about the definition of idioms in Chinese dictionaries, representative academic works and has also provided some generalized definitions of idioms. The goal of his research was to establish a solid base for further research of *chengyu*. An interesting fact is that Wu keeps using the term “idiom” whereas the discussed matter is definitely *chengyu* and not idiomatic expressions in general. In fact, he uses the term “*chengyu*” only in one sentence. This pattern is not only present in Wu’s research but in most of the research done in English language. For some reason the researchers insist upon using the term “idiom” when the research is clearly about *chengyu*.

Wu argues that the best definition is provided by Ma, who in turn took the definition from a Chinese dictionary. He states that idiom is a type of fixed phrase that usually takes a four-character form. Idioms have distinct structure and known origins. The meanings of some idioms can be easily deduced from looking at the independent characters, whereas some of the idioms can only be understood with reference to their source. (Ma 1978: 2)

Wu points out that using a dictionary as a source for a good definition is not very wise, since the best definitions are provided in academic publications. He argues that one of the best definitions in academic works belongs to Shi: “An idiom is a set phrase, shaped through the practice of the language for ages of constant use. Its meaning cannot be simply inferred from its constituents. Its structure cannot be freely changed, nor could its constituents be replaced by any other elements unless it is required for a specific need or purpose. An idiom functions as one lexeme in full expressions or sentences. However, it behaves more vividly and symbolically than its synonyms represented by common lexemes.” (Shi 1979: 8)

Rohsenow wrote an article about Chinese idioms where he explained the term “idiom” in its most broad meaning. Later on he defines *chengyu* as a certain type of Chinese idioms. He states that *chengyu* are fixed (usually four-character) literary expressions that employ the vocabulary and structures of classical Chinese of literary Sinitic (*wenyan*), often coming from or containing allusions to situations in classical written work. (Rohsenow 2001: 149-150)

Shuang Xiao writes in his Ph.D. thesis the following statement about *chengyu*: “*Chengyu* are mostly derived from ancient literature. The meaning of a *chengyu* usually surpasses the sum of the meanings carried by the four characters, as *chengyu* are often intimately linked with the myth, story or historical fact from which they are derived. As such, *chengyu* do not follow the usual grammatical structure and syntax of the modern Chinese spoken language, and are instead highly compact and synthetic”. (Shuang 2007: 2-3)

Interesting is also the definition provided by Yu Yang *et al.* (2006: 755) where they provide a comparison of Chinese and English idioms. They point out that idioms in English and Chinese are both expressions established by long-term usage and are recognized through practice. However, unlike idioms in English, most idioms in Chinese language are of standard length and are composed of exactly four characters.

It should be noted, that a lot of research done in English is actually done by Chinese scholars who benefit from the use of Chinese sources in their researches.

Some questions arose from the research of the definitions in the English language. Most of the definitions used the term “proverb” whereas the author of this thesis substituted them for the term “idiom”. How different are the terms “proverb” and “idiom”? Do they convey the same thought? There is a clear difference between these terms and every dictionary makes it clear. An idiom is an expression that has a figurative meaning and does not always allow for normal rules of grammar. A proverb, on the other hand, is a simple saying usually containing words of wisdom.

This brings us to the conclusion that the term “idiom” is more suitable than “proverb” thus the author of this thesis avoids the usage of the latter one.

1.4. Definitions from research in Chinese language

Probably one of the best examples of research about *chengyu* written in Chinese language can be attributed to Zeng Xiangling. He did a thorough research in his Ph.D. thesis about the change of *chengyu* definition through time. It turned out that the study of *chengyu* as an independent research began only in the second half of the 20th century. The first fundamental book about *chengyu* was in fact published in Malaysia in 1979. The earliest definition of *chengyu* dates back to 1959 and appeared in Zhou Zumo book “*Hanyu cihui jianghuai*” (2006 [1959]).

Zhou writes that *chengyu* is a phrase or a short sentence that has developed through years of constant use. Most of them represent the heritage of ancient literary language. The terms can be used in the modern Chinese language; however, the structure of the term not necessarily has to be the same as the one in ancient literary language. Their structure is fixed and mostly is defined by four characters. Their completeness and modern form developed through constant use in time and that is why they are called *chengyu*. *Chengyu* can be translated from Chinese as “completed saying” or “fixed expression”.

To compare, Zeng provides another a definition in his Ph.D. thesis from a relatively recently published book by Zhu Jianing where he writes the following: “*Chengyu* is a defined phrase which cannot be understood literally. They have a long history and are familiar to people. They are short, but they stand for a larger meaning. Usually they are quoted by people for expressing their opinions.”

Zeng also points out that one of the recent good definitions is attributed to Xu Weihuan who shortly defines *chengyu* as specific type of idioms in a form of phrase or saying that developed in language. (Zeng 2010: 6)

A critical comment should be made about the definitions in Chinese language. Mostly, they are extremely long if compared to the ones found in other languages. A good definition not necessarily has to be half a page long, sometimes the main definition should be as precise and compact as possible; otherwise the reader might get confused. However, the Standard Theory of Definition does not speak about nor define the size of a good definition.

1.5. New *chengyu* definition and characteristics

This subchapter is the result of working through the various definitions of *chengyu* in order to create a new “dictionary” definition according to the Standard Theory. When creating the new definition, the rules of the theory were taken into account along with the critical comments to the previous subchapters. The new definition is thus as follows:

“*Chengyu* is a certain type of compact Chinese idiomatic expressions (usually four characters) that are mostly derived from classical Chinese literature and follow the structure and grammar rules of classical Chinese language.”

This definition should be considered as a good, since it follows all the rules established by the Standard Theory of Definition. The above definition incorporates the information presented in all studied definitions of *chengyu*, thus it meets the criterion of eliminability. The definition can also be considered of more importance since it is created in the process of working with and improving the older definitions. It only defines *chengyu* and does not provide any side information. It is good because it does not repeatedly mention the defined term. And in the end, the author does not state that the new definition is the only correct definition of *chengyu*, thus it meets the criterion of conservativeness.

2. THE ORIGINS OF CHENGYU

Most of the research about *chengyu* is usually done with concern to the classical Chinese literature like “Book of Songs” or “Romance of the Three Kingdoms” since the *chengyu* found in these books are considered most important and beautiful. And, as a contrary there is neither real research nor sufficient information about *chengyu* that came to the modern Chinese from the ancient Chinese language. Also, there is very little written about the *chengyu* that developed already in the modern Chinese language. How many *chengyu* approximately are there in Chinese language? Most of *chengyu* dictionaries agree on a rough approximate number of 48,000 *chengyu*, 90% of which are composed from four characters (Liu 2009). One of the biggest *chengyu* dictionaries², for example, presents the reader with 24,808 *chengyu*.

Looking back at the research of definitions in the previous chapter it is clear that most of the *chengyu* originated from the ancient written Chinese language, the key word here being written. There are plenty of records about *chengyu* that originated from legendary stories, fables, events in history and direct quotations from famous literary works.

There are several ways of dividing *chengyu* into groups. Most of the works propose a simple division. It is the least complicated one since it proposes the division of *chengyu* only into two groups: 1) *chengyu* that originated from written work (with a clear record of their origin) and 2) *chengyu* that developed and passed orally through history (with no clear record of their origin). This division seems incomplete and inaccurate.

The second division of *chengyu* is complicated since it involves groups and subgroups:

CHENGYU	
Ancient <i>chengyu</i>	Modern <i>chengyu</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Chengyu</i> from mythology, ancient fables and historical tales• <i>Chengyu</i> from classical texts• Ancient <i>chengyu</i> that are passed orally without any record of their origin	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Chengyu</i> from modern art (literature, music)• <i>Chengyu</i> that are combinations of old ones• <i>Chengyu</i> that originated in the internet

Table 1. Classification of *chengyu*

² Guo, Ling; Wang, Anquan; Zhou, Shumin 2007 =郭, 玲; 王, 安全; 周, 澍民。汉语成语大辞典。上海: 上海辞书出版社。

An interesting research has been done in order to show the most prolific period in Chinese history for the development and appearance of *chengyu*. The research is based on the analysis of the origins of *chengyu* presented in the “*Hanyu chengyu kaoshi cidian*” dictionary³. The dictionary is a careful examination of the origins and the changing meanings of 7,606 four-character or set phrases and about 10,000 of their variant forms. In addition, the dictionary provides bisyllabic abbreviations of *chengyu*.

The total number of the entries in the dictionary is 7,606, among which 7,264 are labelled as *chengyu*, 342 are labelled as non-*chengyu* (*yanyu* and *suyu*). Among the 7,606 entries in the dictionary 6,593 provide the information about their origin and the remaining 671 do not provide such information. Statistically, this information has generated a table that shows the *chengyu* origins through Chinese history. (Zhang 2006)

Period	Time frame	Years	Chengyu count	Percent
春秋以前 Before Spring and Autumn	2070-771 BC	1299	88	1,21%
春秋 Spring and Autumn	771-256 BC	295	320	4,41%
战国 Warring States	476-221 BC	255	232	3,19%
秦 Qin	221-206 BC	15	1	0,01%
两汉 Han	206-9 AD and 25-220	410	479	6,59%
三国 Three Kingdoms	220-265	45	96	1,32%
两晋 Jin	265-317 and 317-420	155	198	2,73%
南朝 Southern Dynasties	420-589	169	270	3,72%
北朝 Northern Dynasties	386-581	195	71	0,98%
隋 Sui	581	37	16	0,22%
唐 Tang	618-907	289	711	9,79%
五代 Five Dynasties	907-690	53	75	1,03%
两宋 Song	960-1127 and 1127-1279	319	1251	17,22%
金 Jin	1115-1234	119	36	0,50%
元 Yuan	1271-1369	97	401	5,52%
明 Ming	1368-1644	276	854	11,76%
清 Qing	1636-1912	276	1494	20,57%
Modern/Unknown	1912-2014	102	671	9,24%
Total			7264	100,00%

Table 2. *Chengyu* origins through Chinese history

³ Liu, Jiexiu 2003 = 刘，洁修。汉语成语考释词典。北京：商务印书馆。

The original table consisted from three columns – period, number of *chengyu* and the percentage value. The author of this thesis added two additional columns – time frame of the dynasty and the total count of the years that the dynasty existed. The reason for doing so is that the information in the table otherwise provides a very biased information. One cannot say, for example, that Qing dynasty among others is the most literary creative dynasty since it displays the highest number of *chengyu*.

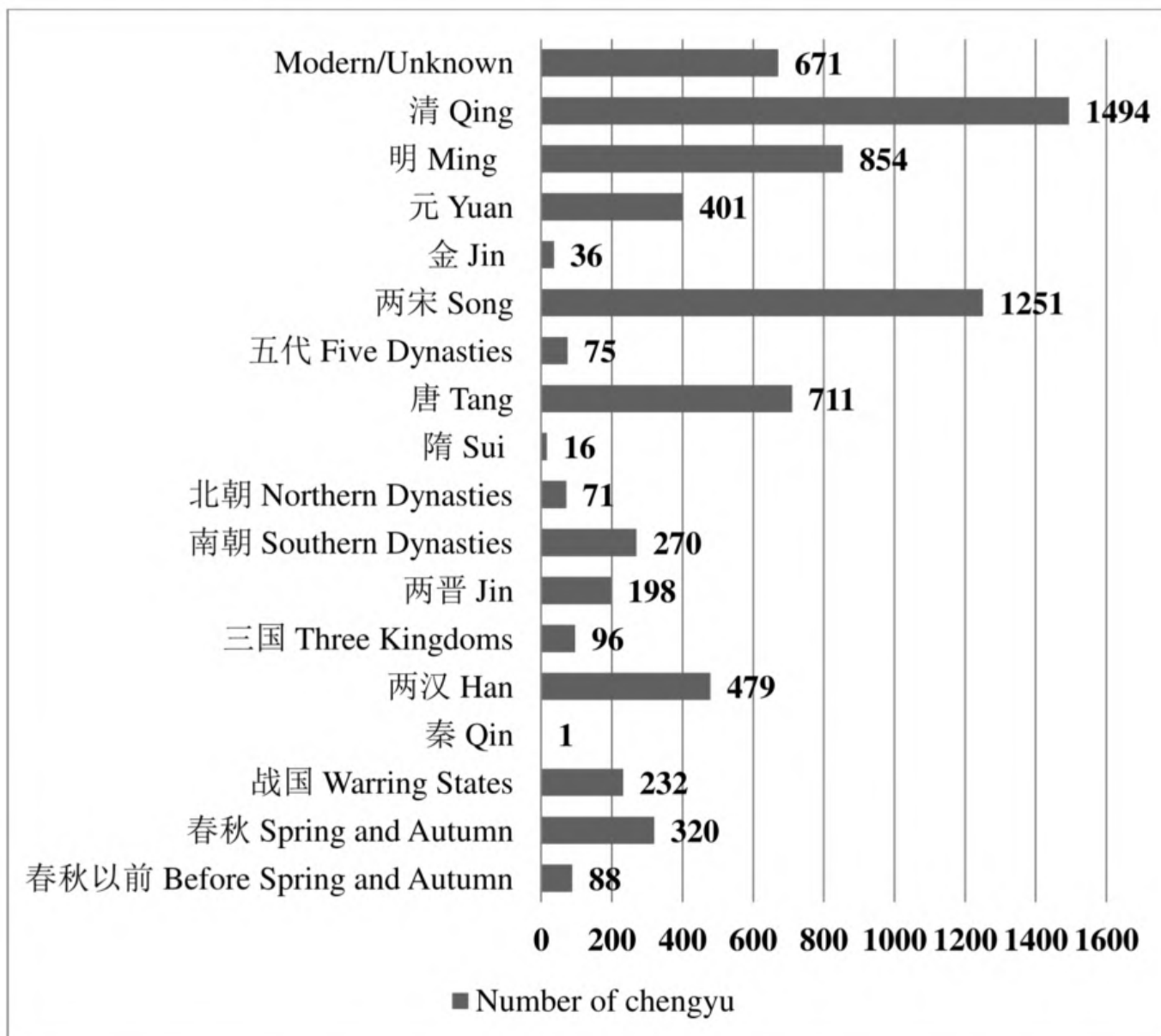


Diagram 1. Number of *chengyu* per dynasty

The following diagram is a graphical representation of the table. How comparable are the numbers? Some dynasties existed briefly in the history of China, some – co-existed at the same time, some cover a very long period of time. For example, it would be wise to try and compose a new diagram with the distribution of *chengyu* per year of the dynasty. The next graphical representation does not display all of the following dynasties; some of them are combined together since their timeframe also overlap partly.

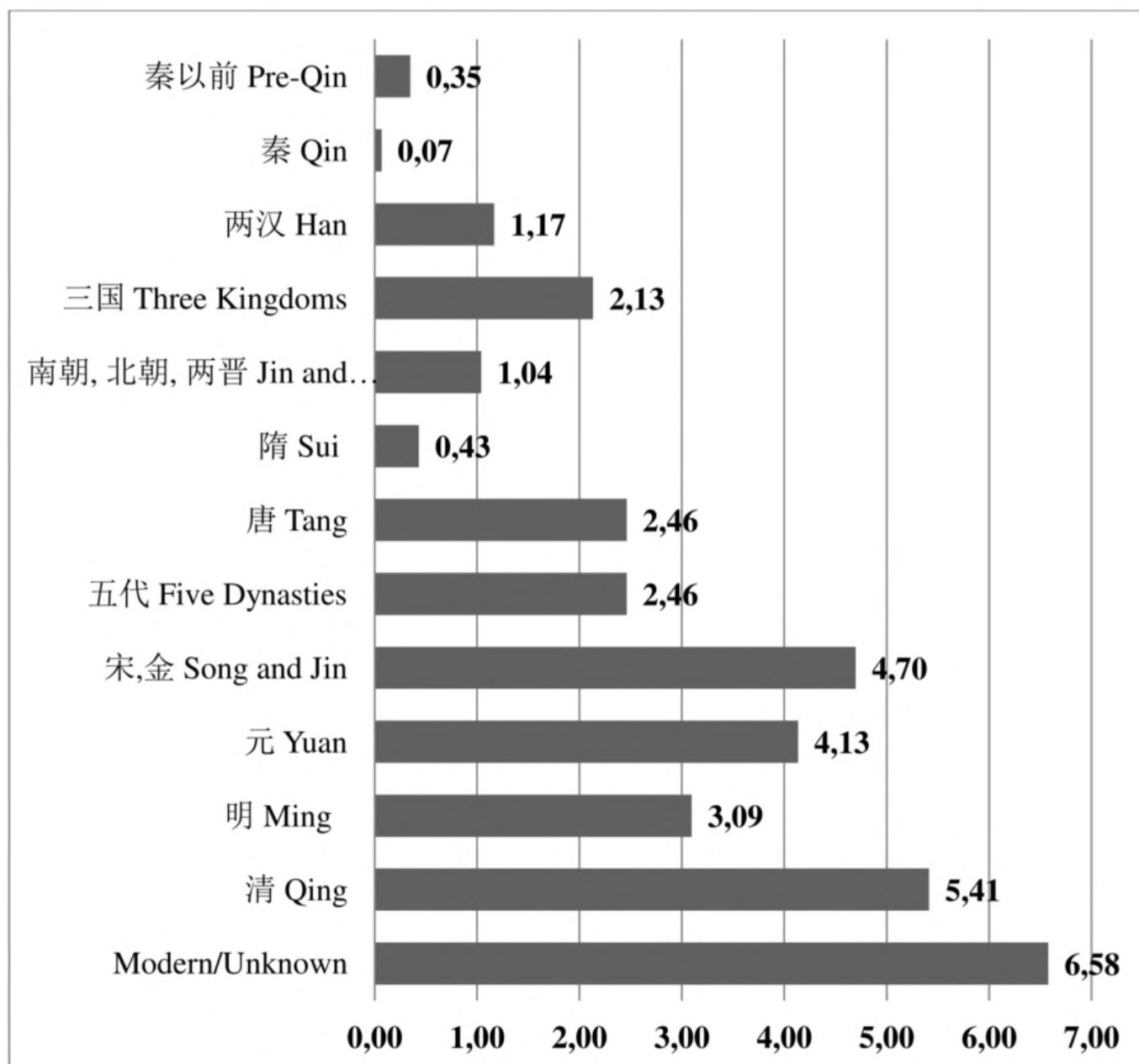


Diagram 2. Chengyu per year of history

The comparison between the diagrams clearly presents different results. The modern period produces most *chengyu* per year whereas Qing dynasty is actually the period with the largest amount of *chengyu* produced.

The development of Chinese literature should also be taken into consideration when analysing the results. So many *chengyu* have appeared from the classical texts which date back to Warring States period. However, when we look at the graphs and the tables, that period does not stand out greatly among others. One would also expect Tang dynasty to display higher results as it is considered as the Golden Age of Chinese art and literature.

The following subchapters speak about *chengyu* according to the group divisions.

2.1. The old *chengyu* idioms

It is somehow agreed that the richest period for *chengyu* is the Warring States period, since most of the *chengyu* originated from the historical chronicles of that time. The majority of old *chengyu* presented in the dictionaries have information of the author and the name of the original text. The group of old *chengyu* is thus divided into three categories: 1) *chengyu* from mythology, ancient fables and historical tales; 2) *chengyu* from classical texts and 3) *chengyu* that developed orally.

2.1.1. *Chengyu* from mythology, ancient fables and historical tales

Practically all *chengyu* that originate from mythology, ancient fables and historical tables are difficult to understand without knowing the actual story behind them. A good example would be *chengyu* 精卫填海. The literal translation of this *chengyu* is “Jing Wei tries to fill up the sea”. In order to understand the figural meaning of this *chengyu* one has to address the myth about Princess Jing Wei. She was the youngest daughter of Emperor Yan, who died at sea. Just before the waves swallowed her, she turned into a beautiful bird who swore to fill the sea up to gain revenge. Every day she flew between the land and sea, carrying small stones and tree branches and dropping them into the sea. Even when the sea spirit told her to stop because she would never fill the sea, Jing Wei replied that she will fulfil her task no matter how long it will take. Thus, the *chengyu* actually means “to be determined in the face of impossible odds”. It is used to describe people who are firm and persistent and will never stop until they reach their goal. (Wang 2010: 18)

2.1.2. *Chengyu* from classical texts

It is difficult to provide a full list of *chengyu* that originated from classical Chinese texts. Presented next are just some of them to demonstrate that classical texts are a very rich source of idiomatic expressions. For example, the “Book of Songs” officially has 177 *chengyu*. Since the “Book of Songs” is composed in a form of poems with each line having mostly four characters, all of the *chengyu* are exactly four characters long. Since the four-character form is the most traditional form of *chengyu*, it means that *chengyu* that originated “Book of Songs” most likely did not undergo any changes.

The “Spring and Autumn Annals” is the origin of 255 *chengyu*. However, the dictionaries usually do not make it clear, but the research done in Chinese proposes that most of the *chengyu* originated from the “Three Commentaries on Spring and Autumn Annals”.

Confucius’ “Analects” officially has 173 *chengyu*. One of the most famous ones is 不耻下问 which means “not feel ashamed to ask and learn from one’s subordinates”. The *chengyu* kept its original form through time, in the “Analects” it is presented in the same structure.

Worth mentioning also are the following classical texts: “Mengzi” officially has 136 *chengyu* and “Zhuangzi” is officially the source of 161 *chengyu*, Sima Qian’s “Records of the Grand Historian” officially have 265 *chengyu*. The “Book of Han”, which is basically a continuation of the “Records of the Grand Historian”, presents 156 *chengyu*. Only from the Tang dynasty poems there is a record of 310 *chengyu* and Song dynasty poems officially have 140 *chengyu*. (Wang 2010: 13)

The word “officially” is used when talking about these numbers because the texts are revised and commented and simply read all the time and people create new *chengyu*.

2.1.3. *Chengyu* that developed orally in ancient times

A good example of such *chengyu* would be 胸有成竹, which is considered to have appeared during Song dynasty. At that time there lived a person named Wen Yuke, who was very famous for his bamboo paintings. His paintings were so good, picturing even the smallest details, which made them look like real bamboo. Seeing this, Wen’s friend Chao Buzhi said: “与可画竹，胸中有成竹”, which means “Yuke paints the bamboos with their ready image in his mind”. Later on this phrase was shortened to 胸有成竹 which means “to plan in advance”. (*To have a Well-thought-out Plan*. 2008)

Some *chengyu* are true mirrors of a whole period in Chinese history. They developed under the influence of several aspects in Chinese culture: history, literature, art, art of war, religion, ethics, moral and so on. For example, a good example of such *chengyu* would be 蟒袍玉带, which is not really used today. This means “dragon clothes and a belt with jades” and is a description of the clothes worn by the Ming and Qing dynasty officials. So this *chengyu* was used at that time to talk about these officials. Nowadays, this *chengyu* is

probably only used when describing the opera performers who play kings, generals and prime-ministers. (Wang 2010: 15)

2.2. Modern *chengyu* idioms

All of the *chengyu* definitions clearly state that they originated from classical Chinese texts, however, one should understand that the formation of *chengyu* is a perpetual process. As long as the humanity has an ability to speak and form sentences this process will never end. Modern *chengyu* idioms are thus the new type of *chengyu*. Modern *chengyu* mostly originated in the internet, newspapers and magazines, even the speech of politicians.

2.2.1. *Chengyu* that originated in the internet

One of the most popular modern *chengyu* is 人艰不拆 that is an equivalent to the slang saying in English “cut me some slack”. This *chengyu* is full of pessimistic thought and displays the fact that many young Chinese are disappointed with their life. The *chengyu* is actually shortened from 17-characters long phrase from a song sung by Taiwanese Yoga Lin. This *chengyu* falls under two categories: *chengyu* from modern art and *chengyu* that originated in the internet. (Qin 2013)

2.2.2. *Chengyu* that are combinations of old idiomatic expressions

One of the most peculiar *chengyu* types is definitely the ones that represent a combination of other idiomatic expressions. For example, 喜大普奔 is a combination of the first characters borrowed from four different *chengyu*: 喜闻乐见, 大快人心, 普天同庆 and 奔走相告. All four of them were the sayings that Chairman Mao used in his propaganda in order to describe public satisfaction with the party’s policies. The best translation to the new *chengyu* would be “news so great that everyone are celebrating and spreading them all over the world”. The phrase conveys exaggerated enthusiasm and excitement with a hint of political irony. (Qin 2013)

3. CHENGYU'S STRUCTURE

This chapter discusses the internal structure of *chengyu* and its grammatical functions in the sentence. Understanding the structure and functions of *chengyu* is very important since it is a good representation of classical Chinese language with its complicated lexemes and syntax.

3.1. Peculiarities of *chengyu*'s internal structure

Even though *chengyu* is a very short idiomatic expression, it still is a very difficult grammatical unit. It is surprising how difficult at times it is to translate *chengyu* even literally.

Chengyu are full of words and lexemes that are no longer in use in the modern Chinese language. Take, for example, *chengyu* 化险为夷. The last character 夷 is a word which means “safety”, however, in modern Chinese language it is expressed by the word 平安. Or, for example, *chengyu* 放荡不羁 also has a word that is no longer in use. In modern Chinese the last character 羁 which means “to restrain” is expressed by the word 拘束. Another example can be 义愤填膺, where the fourth character 膺 is substituted by the more common 胸 to denote “chest”. (Wu 1995: 69)

There is another interesting fact that should be mentioned about *chengyu*. Classical Chinese language is mainly mono-morphemic, which means that every character used is an independent lexeme. *Chengyu* is one of the best examples of how four independent lexemes combine into a sentence with a profound meaning. For example, *chengyu* 一石二鸟 consists of four independent lexemes that mean “one”, “stone”, “two” and “bird”. Modern Chinese language on the other hand uses a lot of words that are combinations of these lexemes.

Chengyu as an example of classical Chinese language uses a lot of particles that are somewhat of a classical language trademark. One of the most widely used particles is 之, which cannot usually be translated since it acts as a modifier of other characters in the sentence. However, this solely depends on the language of translation. For example, in *chengyu* 权宜之计 this particle performs the function of particle 的 in modern Chinese language.

Chengyu, as an example of classical Chinese language, also displays a very unusual syntax which is completely different from the modern Chinese language. For example, some words that we would consider as nouns, function as verbs. The first character in 声东击西 means “sound” in the modern Chinese whereas in the *chengyu* it acts as a verb “to hear”. (Wu 1995: 69-70)

These are, of course, not all peculiarities of *chengyu*'s internal structure, but are the most common and known.

3.2. *Chengyu* at the structural level

There are quite a few structural patterns of *chengyu*'s construction. The average *chengyu* can be schematically written as ABCD, where four different letters stand for four different characters in *chengyu*. In fact, most of the *chengyu* have this structural pattern.

1) Repetition patterns:

There are several structures that stand out of this average structural pattern. One of them is ABAC structural pattern, where the first and the third characters are the same. A good example would be 能上能下. This particular *chengyu* can also be written as ABAb (see next pattern).

Another standing out pattern is AABB, where *chengyu* is essentially a combination of two pairs of identical characters. An example of such pattern is 形形色色.

There is a third pattern that is in a sense a fuse of the two previous patterns: AABC. One of the *chengyu* that follow this structure is 奄奄一息.

2) Antonym patterns:

Quite a number of *chengyu* have in their structure a pair of antonyms, the most common of them are 南 south and 北 north, 西 west and 东 east, 左 left and 右 right, 上 above and 下 below, 前 before and 后 after. The structures with antonyms are usually ABaC and BACa, where “A” and “a” stand for the pair of antonyms in *chengyu*. For example, such patterns are visible in 左思右想 and 七上八下. (Stellard 2011: 14)

3) Synonym patterns:

Chengyu with this pattern are constructed from two pairs of idioms. Usually, a pair of first and third characters or second and fourth characters are synonyms.

Schematically it can also be written as BACa, where “A” and “a” stand for the pair of synonyms in *chengyu*. An example of such *chengyu* can be 深思熟虑, where the second and the fourth characters are synonyms and mean “to think”.

Another way of dividing *chengyu* into pattern groups is by looking at the grammatical links between the characters. The most common ones are the following three types:

1) Modification structure:

This is a group of *chengyu* that have a modifier before the noun. The structure can be written down as aaaC where “aaa” is the premodifier. For example, in *chengyu* 一丘之貉 the first two characters 一丘之 are the premodifier of the last character 貉.

2) Verb-object structure:

This is a group of *chengyu* that are composed of a verb and an object. The easiest example is 不拘小节, where 拘 is the verb and 小节 is the object.

3) Subject-predicate structure:

This is a group of *chengyu* that are composed of a subject and a predicate. For example, 老马识途, where 老马 is the subject and 识途 is the predicate with an object. (Wang 2010: 20-22)

These, of course, are not all the structures and patterns. In fact, they provide quite broad definitions and characteristics. Most of them can be divided into substructures and subpatterns.

3.3. Grammatical functions of *chengyu* in a sentence

As it was established in the previous subchapter, an average four-character *chengyu* can schematically be written as ABCD. Grammatically, *chengyu* can be anything, however, most of the time it functions as object, predicate and adverbial. The following table provides a small insight of the *chengyu* use in sentences.

Function	Construction of the sentence	Translation
Object	你是 + ABCD. => 你是井底之蛙.	You are of such narrow views.
Adjective	这么 + ABCD! => 这么粗心大意!	So careless!
Adverbial	你应该 + ABCD! => 你应该再接再厉!	You have to persist!

Table 3. The main grammatical functions of *chengyu*

When studying the *chengyu* one should definitely make sure how to use it correctly in a sentence. That does not only concern the grammatical function of *chengyu* but also its context. Most of the *chengyu* have a very narrow meaning and cannot be used in every possible sentence.

Many of *chengyu* function as a separate sentence, incorporating them into another sentence would not be exactly correct. For example, *chengyu* 众说纷纭 perfectly functions as an independent phrase.

4. THE RESEARCH OF *CHENGYU* IN THE ANALECTS

The Analects, or *Lunyu*, or also known to the public as the Analects of Confucius, is a collection of philosophic sayings and ideas that is attributed to Confucius and his followers. It is considered to be written during the Warring States period. With time, the Analects became one of the central texts in Confucianism and is until now one of the most read and studied Chinese classics.

The main goal of this chapter is to show how well the idiomatic expressions from the Analects fit into the new definition in the first chapter, discuss their grammatical and structural features. A special attention will be paid to the process of formation of these *chengyu*.

This chapter presents a detailed research of *chengyu* idioms in Chinese language on the example of those found in the Analects. The research is based on a collection of *chengyu* from the first book of the Analects. The information regarding these *chengyu* is analysed with the help of the table (see Appendix II) where all the gathered data is systemized by categories.

An overall explanation of the table should be made. The table consists of information divided by the following criteria. The first column shows the location of *chengyu* in the text and is presented by three numbers, for example, 1.1.1. The first number stands for the number of the book (altogether 20 chapters in the Analects); the second number stands for the number of the chapter in the book (for example, there are 16 chapters in the first book); the third number stands for the serial number of *chengyu* (altogether, 20 *chengyu* in the first chapter).

The second column is the *chengyu* as it is in Chinese language; the third column provides the reading of *chengyu*; the fourth column provides the interpretation of the characters in *chengyu* using modern Chinese language. The fifth and the sixth columns provide literal and figural translations in order to demonstrate the possible differences; the seventh column concludes if the translations are different. The eighth column talks about the grammatical usage of these *chengyu* in modern Chinese. The ninth and tenth columns show if the *chengyu* as it is now have the same composition in the Analects and if not, provide the possible explanation.

The eleventh column provides the text of the chapter in order to see the *chengyu* in their original source.

The twelfth column displays additional commentaries to *chengyu* (if there are any), for example, explanations of the original source of *chengyu*. The thirteenth column calculates the amount of characters in *chengyu*. The last column displays the number of hits per each *chengyu* in Google search engine in order to show their popularity.

4.1. The number of *chengyu* in the Analects

Quite a number of researches provide a total number of *chengyu* in the Analects in their papers. For example, Cao (1996: 66) states that there are 15,957 Chinese characters and a total number of 384 *chengyu* in twenty books of the Analects, which is a big number taking into account that the text itself is composed out of 1536 characters. These *chengyu* can be divided into several categories:

- 1) *Chengyu* that originated from the Analects and retained the same form until now:
Totally, there are 158 *chengyu* that belong to this category and they make up for 41% of all *chengyu* attributed to the Analects. For example, *chengyu* 不亦乐乎 (1.1.2) is one of them. It means “isn’t it pleasant” or “extremely”. It kept its original grammatical structure and form. Cao (1996: 67) names them *yuanxing chengyu* which stands for prototype *chengyu*.
For example, the table with the *chengyu* from the first book of the Analects shows that 10 out of 21 *chengyu* belong to this category.
- 2) *Chengyu* that originated from the Analects and underwent a change of form:
Totally, there are 197 *chengyu* that belong to this category and they make up for 51% of all *chengyu* attributed to the Analects. For example, *chengyu* 告往知来 (1.15.20) is one of them and means “to improve constantly” or “to perfect constantly”. It is a compressed last sentence of the fifteenth chapter which originally looks like this: “告诸往而知来者”.
For example, the table that analyses *chengyu* from the first book shows that 6 out of 21 *chengyu* belong to this category.
- 3) *Chengyu* that originated from various commentaries of the Analects:
Totally, there are 14 *chengyu* in this group and it is a 3.6% of the total *chengyu* count. For example, a non-standard *chengyu* 有则改之, 无则加勉 (1.4.7) is not

originally from the Analects but is taken from Zhu Xi commentary to the fourth chapter in the first book. This *chengyu* means “to correct mistakes if you have made any and guard against them if you have not”.

According to the information in the table there are 4 such *chengyu* out of 21.

4) *Chengyu* that came to the Analects from other classics:

For example the *chengyu* 富而无骄 (1.15.18) originated from the first sentence in the fifteenth chapter of the first the Analects book. It means “rich yet not arrogant”. This sentence is, however, an interpretation of a phrase by Zuo Qiuming. Totally, there are 10 such *chengyu* which make up for 2.6% of the total number.

According to the table analysis there is exactly one *chengyu* in the first chapter that belongs to this group, it is mentioned above in the example.

5) Miscellaneous *chengyu*:

The remaining 5 *chengyu* that make up for 1.3% of the total are categorised as miscellaneous. They originate from some summaries of the Analects or books that talk about the Analects.

The first chapter does not have any of these *chengyu*.

4.2. The composition of *chengyu* from the Analects

The new definition states: “*Chengyu* is a certain type of compact Chinese idiomatic expressions (usually four characters) that are mostly derived from classical Chinese literature and follow the structure and grammar rules of classical Chinese language.”

Some researches define *chengyu* as four-character long idiomatic expressions but in this thesis it was agreed with the most researches that *chengyu* are mostly four-character long, however, not always. The following diagram on the next page is the summary of the *chengyu* length in *Lunyu*'s first book.

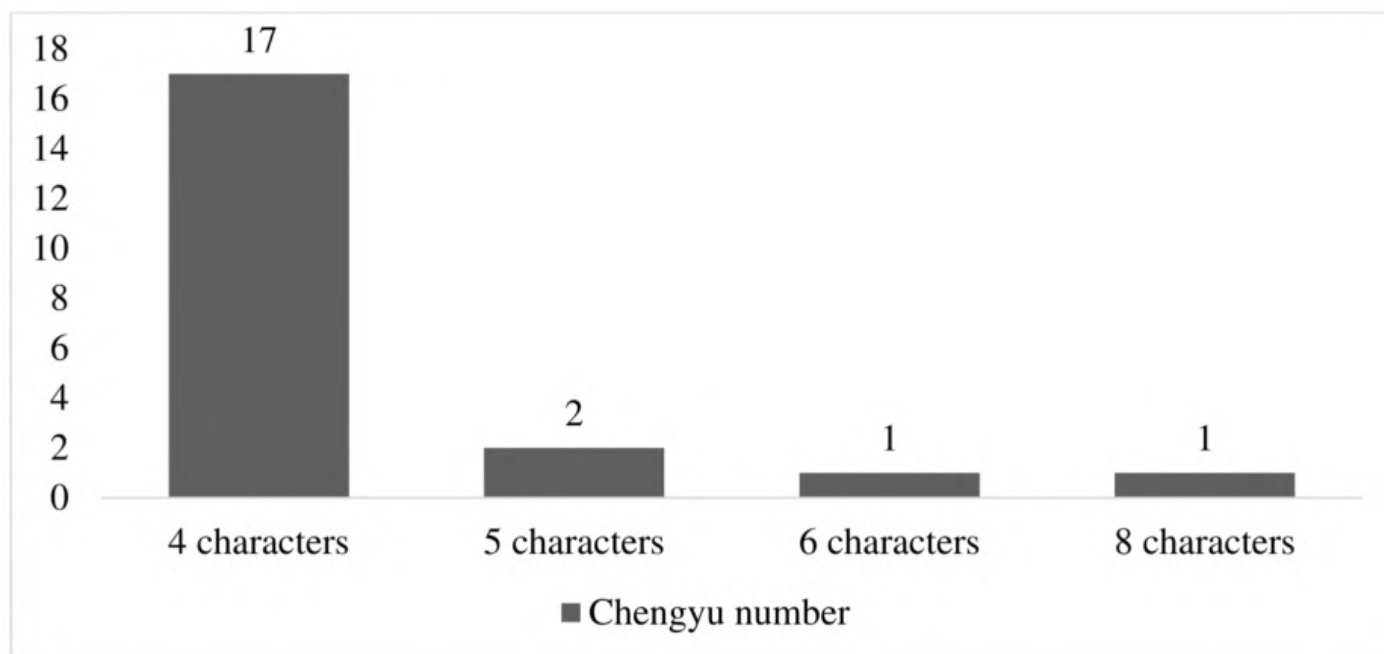


Diagram 3. *Chengyu* length in the *Analects*

It is clear that most of the *chengyu* are composed out of four characters. In addition to that, *chengyu* can constitute from five, six or eight characters. These can be called non-standard *chengyu*. The six-character and eight-character long *chengyu* are combinations of two phrases (each three-character or four-character long) divided by comma. For example, 有则改之, 无则加勉 (1.4.7) which, as was mentioned before, stands for “to correct mistakes if you have any and guard against them if you have not”.

Some *chengyu* in the table are in fact variations of each other, for example, 一日三省 (1.4.5) and 三省吾身 (1.4.6). The first one means “to reflect daily on oneself three times” and the second one can be translated the same way. *Chengyu* 入孝出悌 (1.6.8) sometimes is written as 入孝出弟 where the last character is modified. They are both translated as “filial piety at home and brotherly love outside of the home”.

4.3. The origins of *chengyu* from the *Analects*

As it was mentioned before, not all of the *chengyu* originate directly from the *Analects* text. This subchapter analyses in more detail the origins of *chengyu* in the first book.

Five out of 21 *chengyu* found in the table cannot be directly attributed to the *Analects*. Even if the dictionary usually will first quote it as the text of origin, it will still have additional information.

- 1) 有则改之, 无则加勉 (1.4.7) and 温良谦恭让 (1.10.14) (second *chengyu* means “benign, upright, courteous, temperate and complaisant”) are *chengyu* that came into the modern Chinese language from Zhu Xi’s annotations to the Analects. He is considered to be a great Confucian thinker and an important commentator on the classics. Zhu Xi (1130-1200) is the great master of textual criticism. (Martinich and Xiao 2010: 88)
- 2) 知过必改 (1.8.12) is attributed to Zhou Xingsi and his “Thousand Character Classics”. It means “to always correct an error when one becomes aware of it”. This text is considered to be the Chinese nation’s earliest and most widespread basic literacy text that exists nowadays. Mostly, it used for calligraphy, personal improvement and preparation for study of classical Chinese. The *chengyu* came out of an 8-character long phrase “知过必改, 得能莫忘”, where Zhou Xingsi reflected on his daily failures. (Sturman 2014)
- 3) 入孝出悌 (1.6.8.) is attributed to Huan Kuan and his “Discourses on salt and iron”. As it was mentioned before, it means “filial piety at home and brotherly love outside of the home”. This is a reconstruction of debates between the ministers of Emperor Zhao of the Han dynasty and Confucian scholars over state monopolies on the production of liquor, salt and iron. (*ChinaCulture* 2014)

4.4. The popularity of the Analects’ *chengyu*

It is obvious that some *chengyu* are used a lot and some of them are barely used in modern Chinese language. The absolute leader among *chengyu* in the first book is an 8-character long *chengyu* 有则改之, 无则加勉 (1.4.7.) with a total hit of 9,150,000 times. Very popular are also 精益求精 (1.15.20.), 不亦乐乎 (1.1.2.), 行有余力 (1.6.9.) and 小大由之 (1.12.15.). These *chengyu* are widely used and usually included into the most common *chengyu* list all over internet.

The other *chengyu* in the first book of the Analects, on the other hand, are very unpopular. The least familiar and popular seems to be 一日三省 (1.4.5.) scoring only 129,000. The variation 三省吾身 (1.4.6.) of this *chengyu* seems to be more known to the public.

4.5. Common grammatical functions of the Analects' *chengyu*

Chengyu in the Analects are not any different from the others when talking about their grammatical functions. As a figure of speech they mostly all function either as adjectives, verbs or nouns. However, some of them can only be used as an independent phrase, for example, 切磋琢磨 (1.15.19.) or 有则改之, 无则加勉 (1.4.7.). An interesting function has *chengyu* 不亦乐乎 (1.1.2.) which is either an adverb of degree or can even be a tag question. Grammatically, thus, most of them perform the role of the adverbial, predicate and object.

It should be pointed out that trying to define the grammatical functions of these *chengyu* is quite a challenge, since some of them are not used in any other context than the Analects.

5. CHENGYU TRANSLATION STRATEGIES

Translation of *chengyu* is quite a challenge and anyone familiar with the grammar and vocabulary of classical Chinese language knows that. Most of the *chengyu* are very difficult and the knowledge of the stories behind them is necessary in order to understand their meaning. Even if the literal translation is the same as the figural one, the ability of working with classical Chinese language is still a necessity.

Theoretically, there are many ways for translating from one language to another. However, all of the ways are neatly categorized according to the schools of thought. This thesis presents the main two translation strategies. The first one is the translation strategy of the functionalist school which distinguishes between *overt* and *covert* translation. The second one is the translation strategy that is based on the dichotomy between domestication and foreignization. This research will pay attention mostly to the second group of translation strategies since later on it will be used to translate *chengyu*.

5.1. *Overt & covert translation*

The pioneer of the functionalist translation strategy, Juliane House, distinguishes between *overt* and *covert* translation. (House 2002: 97) She argues that *overt* translation is exactly what it is – a translation and not a second original text. When we talk about the original text we also talk about the culture that it is linked to. In other words, every text is to some extent mirroring the culture of specific group of people, usually a nation. Original text has its own position in this culture and is not only interesting for the culture specific group but also for other people outside of it. The purpose of such translation thus is to provide the readers with an insight into the original language and culture without changing any culture specific elements. *Overt* translation is usually used for the literary texts that are perfect mirrors of the culture.

Covert translation, on the other hand, is not considered as a translation but as a second original text. This means that it functions as an independent text in the target culture since in the translation process it is adapted to the cultural knowledge of the target culture. In other words, the readers are usually not aware that they are reading a translation. An example of such translations can be advertisements for products. For example, reading a catalogue for IKEA in English one might never think that its origin is Swedish since the products advertised are presented by British celebrities. (House 2002: 97-100)

5.2. Domestication & foreignization

Feng (2012: 84) argues that the best strategy for translating idiomatic expressions is either using either domestication or foreignization methods. Domestication focuses on the target language. In other words, it tries to find such expressions in the target language that are as close in meaning as the expressions in the original language. For example, idiomatic expressions are very tricky, since they reflect very specific cultural thoughts. Usually the thoughts that idiomatic expressions try to convey are presented with completely different words in different languages. Domestication strategy thus allows for very good translations of idiomatic expressions into another language since it makes it as easy as possible for the target culture to understand them.

There is, of course, a set of drawbacks for the domestication method. Since the domestication strategy allows for translation using the special structure and expressions of the target language, the translated version might completely lose the beauty of the expression of the original language. However, it will benefit from the beautiful expressions in the target language. Such translation ignores the sentence structure of the original language, so the reader cannot truly evaluate its beauty.

Domestication is similar to the *covert* translation proposed by House, since it provides similar ideas. The main focus of both methods is on figural translation of the text.

Foreignization, on the other hand, is similar to *overt* translation, since its main focus is on literal translation. This translation is literally word-by-word translation that tries to preserve the culture specific elements and structure of the original language. Such a translation provides the reader with completely different emotions. Too much foreignization can result into a text that is really hard to understand and which loses its primary functions: to be communicative and to be adequately informative. (Kaldjarv 2007: 68)

In his article Feng states that foreignization allows us to show the reader the original expression and provide them with an insight into the unique stylistic specialities of Chinese language. Foreignization, however, is a very difficult method for translating Chinese *chengyu* since they are deeply embedded in Chinese culture. But, as a matter of fact, quite a few idioms in Chinese language are similar to English ones, so the translation according to the domestication strategy is not necessarily difficult and provides credible translations.

One cannot say for sure which strategy is the best, but the scholars and translators usually prefer domestication, however, this depends on the type of the text. Providing a beautiful translation without losing the cultural elements of the original language can be considered as a special skill. When it comes to translating Chinese idiomatic expressions, most dictionaries provide both translations – literal (foreignized) and figural (domesticated).

The following table attempts to translate a number of *chengyu* according to foreignization and domestication strategies in order to illustrate the differences. The *chengyu* in the table were chosen randomly from the online Chinese dictionary.

<i>Chengyu</i>	Foreignization (literal translation)	Domestication (figurative translation)
一石二鸟	One stone two birds	Kill two birds with one stone
如鱼得水	Like fish in water	Like fish in water
两头落空	Two heads is a failure	If you run after two hares, you will catch neither
开门见山	To open the door and see the mountain	To come straight to the point
入乡随俗	Coming to a country follow the customs	Do in Rome as Romans do
守株待兔	Waiting by a stump for hares	Trust to chance and strokes of luck
自相矛盾	Self like spear and shield	To contradict oneself

Table 4. The differences of translation

The first two *chengyu* are quite easy since their literal and figural translations are very similar. Their understanding should not be a problem for the English speaker with sufficient command of Chinese language.

However, there are also such *chengyu* whose literal translation does not make any sense. For example, the last five *chengyu* in the table should be translated figuratively in order for English speaker to understand them. One should refer to the texts where these *chengyu* originated from in order to understand their true meaning. Consulting the dictionary for the

proper grammatical use of these *chengyu* is also necessary; otherwise, even knowing the correct figurative translation one can use them wrong in a sentence.

5.3. Translation of the *chengyu* stories in classical Chinese language

The stories behind *chengyu* are known to every Chinese and they start learning them already in the childhood. As it was mentioned before many times, understanding these stories is important as it provides the key understanding of Chinese culture, people and especially the philosophy. In the childhood they, of course, do not learn the *chengyu* according to the classical texts but according to the adaptations in the modern Chinese language. This subchapter will attempt to demonstrate the interpretation of the 自相矛盾 *chengyu* story in classical Chinese into the modern Chinese and provide a possible translation into English language. This is needed in order to demonstrate that the knowledge of the *chengyu* story is necessary for its semantic understanding. The authorship of this *chengyu* is known, it belongs to Han Feizi, one of the philosophers of the school of legism.

The story in the classical Chinese language (Li 2006: 10):

楚人有鬻盾与矛者，誉之曰：“吾盾之坚，物莫能陷也。”又誉其矛曰：“吾矛之利，与物无不陷也。”或曰：“以子之矛，陷子之盾，何如？”其人弗能应也。夫不可陷之盾与无不陷之矛，不可同世而立。

The same story interpreted in modern Chinese language:

在楚国有卖矛和盾的人。他称赞自己的盾，说：“我的盾很坚固，没有什么可以刺穿它”。又称赞自己的矛，说：“我的矛很锋利，对于没有什么东西都不能不被它刺穿”。有的人说：“用您的矛怎么刺穿您的盾呢？”那个人不能回答。什么矛都无法穿破的盾与什么盾都能穿破的矛，不能在同世界存在在一起。

The translation of the story into English:

Once, in the land of Chu lived a person who sold spears and shields. He praised his shield saying: “My shield is most strong; there is nothing that can pierce through it”. At the same time he praised his spear saying: “My

spear is most sharp; there is nothing it cannot pierce”. Someone said: “How can one pierce your shield with your spear”? That person could not answer. A shield that nothing can pierce through and spear that can pierce anything cannot exist in the world at the same time.

It is very important to point out that the story in Chinese language does not have *chengyu* 自相矛盾 in its final form. It has formed through retelling the story. The *chengyu* is the moral of the story and it means “to self-contradict oneself”. It can also be assumed that the word “contradiction” 矛盾 came into the modern Chinese language precisely from this *chengyu*. Separately these two characters stand for “spear” and “shield”, however, together they provide a meaning based on *chengyu*’s story.

5.4. Translations of *chengyu* in the Analects

This subchapter will demonstrate the critical translation of *chengyu* on the example of idiomatic expressions found in the Analects. It is done on the example of the first chapter of the Analects’ first book.

The first chapter says:

子曰：“学而时习之，不亦说乎？有朋自远方来，不亦乐乎？人不知而不愠，不亦君子乎？”

The following table shows the correct interpretation of the individual words used in this chapter in order to illustrate their difficulty. One cannot provide a correct interpretation of this chapter using modern Chinese language unless one is familiar with interpretation of classic Chinese vocabulary.

子	孔子	亦	也	自...来	从...来
曰	说	说	快乐	乐	高兴
学	学习	乎	吗	人	人家
时	按时	有	有	知	了解
习	复习	朋	志同道合的人	愠	生气
不	不	远方	远方	君子	道德高尚的人
而	而且	之	之		

Table 5. Interpretation of the vocabulary

It is perfectly clear that most of the characters in classic Chinese language are interpreted by completely a different set of modern Chinese characters. Many Chinese are not even able to interpret this kind of text themselves, that is why the internet is full of forums and websites with detailed explanations.

The same chapter written in modern Chinese is as follows:

孔子说： " 学习而且按时复习，不也很快乐吗？有从远方来的志同道合的人，不也很高兴吗？人家不了解自己也不生气，不也是一个道德高尚的人吗？ "

Most of the translations of the Analects into English are done with regard to the translations done by James Legge, a Scottish sinologist. For example, his translation of this chapter looks like this (Legge 1893):

The Master said, "Is it not pleasant to learn with a constant perseverance and application? Is it not delightful to have friends coming from distant quarters? Is he not a man of complete virtue, who feels no discomposure though men may take no note of him?"

This translation should get its fair share of critique. If you compare the text in classic Chinese language with the translation and remember the main translation strategies mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, then it can be concluded that Legge's main strategy is similar to domestication (or, *covert* translation). Legge's translation does not mirror the structure of the classic Chinese language, it looks rather different. This can be opposed to the translation of Linnart Mäll, who in turn tried to mirror the original syntax of the Analects in his translation. The Legge's translation itself is rather general, probably written in this way for an easier understanding. The translation is more figural than literal.

This thesis proposes another English interpretation of this chapter:

The Master said, "To study and timely review the studied, is that not a joy? To have people with same ideas and following the same path come from afar, is that not happiness? People do not understand him and he does not anger, is he not a man of virtue and noble mind?"

This translation is an example of foreignization translation strategy, since it is as close to the original text as it is possible. The translated chapter has practically the same structure like the original one and the vocabulary is as literally translated as possible.

This first chapter of the first the Analects book gave birth to two *chengyu*: 学而时习之 and 不亦乐乎. As it was mentioned before, there is, probably, a number of other *chengyu* that originated from this chapter or from the commentaries to this chapter; however, the author of this thesis did not find any additional information about them. It can also be said that some new *chengyu* will appear from this chapter in the future in the process of other commenting and revising of *Lunyu*.

The first 学而时习之 is a rare five-character long *chengyu*, whereas the second 不亦乐乎 is a classic four-character long one. Both of them have practically the same literal and figural translations (see Appendix II), which means that if a person has sufficient knowledge of classic Chinese language then he will not have much trouble understanding these *chengyu*.

学而时习之 stands for “to learn something and timely practice” and is a *chengyu* with a very limited usage. According to the frequency statistics, it is not used commonly. 不亦乐乎 means “isn’t it pleasant” or “extremely” and is used quite often in modern Chinese. The frequency statistics is many times higher compared to the first *chengyu*.

SUMMARY

The research provided the answers to all of the questions that it stated in introduction. The research made a solid research of *chengyu* definitions across literature in order to answer to the question what *chengyu* actually is.

One of the main goals of this research was to establish a new definition for the term *chengyu*. It has been noted that the definition was created according to the rules of Standard Theory of Definition. It has thus been established that the best new definition would look the following way:

“*Chengyu* is a certain type of compact Chinese idiomatic expressions (usually four characters) that are mostly derived from classical Chinese literature and follow the structure and grammar rules of classical Chinese language.”

The research also provided a detailed answer to the question concerning the origins of *chengyu*. Turns out that most of *chengyu* originated in classical Chinese literature as the *chengyu* definition states, however, it should not be forgotten that the creation of *chengyu* is a never-ending process, since they appear even now in the modern Chinese language. The research of origins proved that the bare numbers about the amount of *chengyu* originated in each era are not proportional to the fact that a certain period in Chinese history is richer linguistically. On the contrary, many facts should be taken into account when speaking about this: the length of the period in history, the amount of works written and so on.

The research also answered to the question what the internal structure of *chengyu* is. It has been pointed out that *chengyu* as a perfect example of classical Chinese language has a very difficult mono-morphemic structure, full of complicated particles, words that are out of use. The main structural patterns were discussed in order to show that *chengyu* can be grouped according to specific internal patterns. All in all six different patterns were introduced that differed at the structural or grammatical level. Additional information was provided concerning the role of *chengyu* in a sentence. According to the research, *chengyu* mostly are functioning as verbs, nouns or adjectives.

Moreover, the thesis looked into the translation strategies and tried to answer the question of *chengyu* translation into other languages. Two main theories were discussed and the

second one, the dichotomy between domestication and foreignization, was chosen in order to demonstrate the differences of translation. The thesis also presented a translation of the story behind *chengyu* since it has been proven that without the knowledge of these stories some *chengyu* do not make any sense. The classic text of the story was retold using modern Chinese language and then the English translation was presented.

The major part of the thesis was attributed to the demonstration how the main part of the research can be applied to the analysis of *chengyu* in the Confucian classic *Lunyu*. The research talked about the overall number of *chengyu* that originated from *Lunyu*. The thesis also categorised these *chengyu* into five groups and provided examples from *Lunyu*'s first book. It was established that not all *chengyu* that are attributed to *Lunyu* actually originated from it. The research pointed out several sources that were the original ones for these *chengyu*. Some attention was paid to the popularity of these *chengyu* on the Internet in order to argue that some of them are well known and some are relatively unfamiliar. An overview of the grammatical functions of these *chengyu* was also given to support the theory part where it was stated that *chengyu* usually act as verbs, nouns and adjectives. The translation of *Lunyu*'s *chengyu* was also discussed and an alternative translation of the text was provided.

This thesis has shown that *chengyu* as an independent research topic is very new and there is not much research done. Even idiomatic expressions as a broader topic are a relatively new research subject.

RESÜMEE

Hiina vanasõnad on hiina ajaloo, kultuuri ja filosoofia peegeldus. Vanasõnu on hiina keeles mitut tüüpi: *yanyu* 谚语, *chengyu* 成语, *suyu* 俗语, *guanyongyu* 惯用语, *xiehouyu* 歇后语 ja *geyan* 格言. Antud uurimistöös analüüsitakse *chengyu* tüüpi vanasõnad, kuna nemad on kindlasti kõige tuntumad.

Antud teema valik on tingitud huvist Hiina vanasõnade vastu ning soovist paremini mõista *chengyu* ajalugu ja struktuuri.

Töö eesmärgiks on uurida erinevaid *chengyu* mõisteid ning luua uus definitsioon, mida saaks kasutada edasistes uurimustes. Lisaks, selles uurimistöös seletatakse, et *chengyu* vanasõnade tõlkimine ja mõistmine ei ole lihtne ning nõuab klassikalise hiina keele ja kultuuri tundmist.

Antud uurimistöö on jaotatud viieks peatükiks ning neist mahukaim on esimene osa, mis käsitleb *chengyu* mõistet. Esimeses peatükis analüüsitakse erinevaid *chengyu* mõisteid erinevates keeltes ja lõpus luuakse definitsioon. Esimeses alapeatükis räägitakse uuringutest eesti keeles, teises – vene keeles tehtud uuringutest, kolmandas – uuringutest inglise keeles ning viimases alapeatükis – uuringutest hiina keelest.

Uurimuse jooksul selgus, et *chengyu* vanasõnu on raske määratleda, kuid lõpus loodi järgmine uus mõiste: „*Chengyu* on üks väljakujunenud hiina vanasõnade tüüpidest, kompaktne (tavaliselt neljämargiline), järgib klassikalise hiina keele struktuuri ja grammatikareegleid ning on sageli võetud klassikalise hiina kirjandusest“.

Teises peatükis kirjeldatakse *chengyu* päritolu. Antud peatükk on jaotatud kaheks alapeatükiks. Esimeses alapeatükis räägitakse klassikalise hiina keele tekstides ilmunud vanasõnadest ning teine alapeatükk on pühendatud kaasaegsetele vanasõnadele.

Kolmandas peatükis räägitakse *chengyu* grammatilisest struktuurist, seletatakse *chengyu* struktuuri eripärasid ning näidatakse, millises rollis on *chengyu* tavaliselt lauses. Peatükk on jaotatud kolmeks alapeatükiks.

Neljandas peatükis analüüsitakse *chengyu Lunyu* esimesest raamatust. Selle peatüki eesmärk on uurida nende sisestruktuuri, loomise protsessi ja grammatilist struktuuri.

Viiendas peatükis analüüsitakse erinevaid tõlketüüpe ning lõpus valitakse sobivaim, mille järgi koostatakse tabel erinevate vanasõnadega. Samas peatükis kirjeldatakse ka, kuidas tõlkida teksti klassikalisest hiina keelest, kuna selle mõistmine on oluline chengyu vanasõnadest arusaamiseks. Peatüki lõpus püütakse tõlkida chengyu *Lunyu*'st.

Uurimuse käigus selgus, et sõnasõnalised tõlked ei ole üldjuhul head, kuna mõnedest chengyu vanasõnadest ei ole võimalik sõnasõnaliselt aru saada. Niisugused tõlged on mõttetu ja on vaja pöörduda sõnastiku poole või lugeda chengyu lugu, et kontekstist aru saada.

Lisaks selgus, et chengyu ei ole ainult pärit klassikalistest hiina keele tekstidest, vaid uue chengyu loomise protsess jätkub ka tänapäeval. Selgus, et saab eristada uut chengyu tüüpi kaasaegse chengyu vanasõnade hulgas. Sellest „kohver-chengyu“ vanasõnadest võib omaette ka kirjutada eraldi, kuna on veel selliseid chengyu vanasõnu, kuid antud uurimistöös tutvustati ainult üks neist.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I⁴

<i>Chengyu</i>	<i>Pinyin</i>	Translation to English	Page
精卫填海	Jīng Wèi tián hǎi	Determination in the face of impossible odds	17
不耻下问	bù chǐ xià wèn	Not to feel ashamed to ask and learn from one's subordinates	18
胸有成竹	xiōng yǒu chéng zhú	To plan in advance	18
蟒袍玉带	mǎng páo yù dài	A person of dragon clothes and a belt with jades (a high-ranking official)	18
人艰不拆	rén jiān bù chāi	To cut some slack	19
喜大普奔	xǐ dà pǔ bēn	(Of news etc) so thrilling that everyone is rejoicing and spreading the word	19
喜闻乐见	xǐ wén lè jiàn	A delight to see / an attractive spectacle	19
大快人心	dà kuài rén xīn	To the satisfaction of everyone	19
普天同庆	pǔ tiān tóng qìng	Everybody celebrating together / a universal celebration	19
奔走相告	bēn zǒu xiāng gào	To spread the news	19
化险为夷	huà xiǎn wéi yí	To turn peril into safety / to avert disaster	20
放荡不羁	fàng dàng bù jī	Wanton and unrestrained / dissolute	20
义愤填膺	yì fèn tián yīng	To feel indignant at injustice	20
一石二鸟	yī shí 'èr niǎo	To kill two birds with one stone	20
权宜之计	quán yí zhī jì	A stop-gap measure / interim step	20, 31
声东击西	shēng dōng jī xī	To misdirect	21
能上能下	néng shàng néng xià	To be ready to take any job, high or low	21
形形色色	xíng xíng sè sè	All kinds of / all sorts of / every kind of	21
奄奄一息	yǎn yǎn yī xī	Dying / at one's last gasp	21
左思右想	zuǒ sī yòu xiǎng	To think through from different angles	21

⁴ The translations and *pinyin* are taken from online Chinese-English dictionary <http://www.mdbg.net/>

七上八下	qī shàng bā xià	In a mess / to have a perturbed state of mind	21
深思熟虑	shēn sī shú lǜ	After careful deliberations	22
一丘之貉	yī qiū zhī hé	To be just as bad as each other	22
不拘小节	bù jū xiǎo jié	To not bother about trifles	22
老马识途	lǎo mǎ shí tú	An old horse knows the way	22
井底之蛙	jǐng dǐ zhī wā	A person of limited outlook and experience	22
粗心大意	cū xīn dà yì	To be careless	22
再接再厉	zài jiē zài lì	To persist / to continue the struggle	22
众说纷纭	zhòng shuō fēn yún	Opinions differ	23
如鱼得水	rú yú dé shuǐ	Like fish in water	31
两头落空	liǎng tóu luò kōng	If you run after two hares, you will catch neither	31
开门见山	kāi mén jiàn shān	To come straight to the point	31
入乡随俗	rù xiāng suí sú	Do in Rome as Romans do	31
守株待兔	shǒu zhū dài tù	Trust to chance and strokes of luck	31
自相矛盾	zì xiāng máo dùn	To contradict oneself / self-contradiction	31

APPENDIX II

Location	Chengyu	Pinyin	Chengyu explained in Chinese
1.1.1.	学而时习之	xué ér shí xí zhī	学: 学习, 而: 而且, 时: 按时, 习: 复习
1.1.2.	不亦乐乎	bù yì lè hū	不亦.....乎: 不是.....吗, 乐: 快乐
1.2.3.	犯上作乱	fàn shàng zuò luàn	犯: 干犯, 上: 封建统治者, 作乱: 反抗
1.3.4.	巧言令色	qiǎo yán lìng sè	巧言: 花言巧语; 令色: 讨好的表情
1.4.5.	一日三省	yī rì sān xǐng	一日: 一天, 三省: 三反省
1.4.6.	三省吾身	sān xǐng wú shēn	省: 检查、反省; 身: 自身, 吾: 我
1.4.7.	有则改之, 无则加勉	yǒu zé gǎi zhī, wú zé jiā miǎn	改: 改正, 则: 就, 加: 加以, 无: 没有, 勉: 勉励
1.6.8.	入孝出悌 (入孝出弟)	rù xiào chū tì	入: 家里, 孝: 孝顺父母, 出: 出外, 悌: 敬爱兄长
1.6.9.	行有余力	xíng yǒu yú lì	行: 去做, 有余力: 有富余的精力
1.7.10.	贤贤易色	xián xián yì sè	第一贤: 尊敬, 第二个贤: 有才德的人, 易: 改变
1.7.11.	言而有信	yán ér yǒu xìn	言: 说, 有信: 有信用
1.8.12.	知过必改	zhī guò bì gǎi	听到别人说自己的错误就很高兴, 认识到自己的错误就加以改正
1.9.13.	慎终追远	shèn zhōng zhuī yuǎn	终: 人死; 远: 指祖先
1.10.14.	温良谦恭 让	wēn liáng qiān gōng ràng	温: 温和; 良: 善良; 俭: 节制; 让: 忍让
1.12.15.	小大由之	xiǎo dà yóu zhī	指用途可大可小
1.14.16.	敏于事, 慎于言	mǐn yú shì, shèn yú yán	敏: 奋勉, 慎: 小心
1.15.17.	贫而乐道	pín ér lè dào	家境贫穷, 却以获得知识、懂得道理为乐事。
1.15.18.	富而无骄	fù ér wú jiāo	骄: 骄傲; 无: 不; 富: 富裕; 而: 但

1.15.19.	切磋琢磨	qiē cuō zhuó mó	将骨、角、玉、石加工制成器物。比喻学习或研究问题时彼此商讨，互相吸取长处，改正缺点。
1.15.20.	精益求精	jīng yì qiú jīng	精: 完美, 好; 益: 更加
1.15.21.	告往知来	gào wǎng zhī lái	告诉了这一点，就可以知道另一点。比喻能明了事物的因果同异的关系，据此知彼。

Location	Literal Translation	Figurative Translation	Translations different?
1.1.1.	to learn and timely review the learned	to learn something and timely practice it	NO
1.1.2.	Isn't that a joy...? / isn't it pleasant...?	Extremely / awfully / isn't it pleasant...?	NO
1.2.3.	to do rebellion against the authority	to rebel against authority; go against one's superiors	NO
1.3.4.	fine (artful) words, insinuating appearance	sweet words and an insinuating manner	NO
1.4.5.	one day, three reflections	to reflect daily on oneself three times	NO
1.4.6.	three reflections, oneself	to reflect daily three times on oneself	NO
1.4.7.	if you have mistakes, then correct them, if you have no mistakes, then protect yourself	to correct mistakes if you have made any and guard against them if you have not	NO
1.6.8.	filial at home, while out having brotherly feeling	filial piety at home and brotherly love outside of the home	NO
1.6.9.	after doing something having any energy left	time for extracurricular activities	YES
1.7.10.	Worthy, virtuous man changes his heart (himself?)	being able to change one's thoughts into appreciation of worthy and virtuous men	YES
1.7.11.	to speak and keep one's promise	as good as one's word	YES
1.8.12.	knowing own mistakes - need to correct	always correct an error when one becomes aware of it	NO
1.9.13.	treat someone who passed away with a most pious sacrificial service	to pay careful attention to one's parents' funerary rites	NO
1.10.14.	warm, kind, polite, modest, compassionate	benign, upright, courteous, temperate and complaisant	NO
1.12.15.	small and big follow it	to follow things small and great	NO
1.14.16.	handle affairs with diligence, speak cautiously	be earnest in one's doings and careful in his speech	NO
1.15.17.	poor but takes delight in talking about things	to be poor but yet not flatter	NO
1.15.18.	rich and not arrogant	rich yet not arrogant	NO
1.15.19.	gradual improvement by slow polishing	education as a gradual process	NO
1.15.20.	to perfect something that is already outstanding	constantly improving	NO
1.15.21.	talking about previous, understanding the future	to inform the about the past in order to understand the future	NO

Location	Grammatical Usage in Modern Chinese	Same composition in the text or not	Explanation, why not
1.1.1.	Predicate	YES	
1.1.2.	adverb of degree (extremely) / tag question	YES	
1.2.3.	Adverbial / predicate	NO	combined from 2 parts of the sentence
1.3.4.	Adverbial / object / subject	YES	
1.4.5.	Predicate	NO	first character is different, instead of 吾 is 一
1.4.6.	Predicate	YES	
1.4.7.	independent phrase	YES	Not originally from Lunyu, taken from the Zhu Xi commentary
1.6.8.	Adverbial / object / subject	YES	not originally from Lunyu, taken from Huan Kuan "Discourses on salt and iron"
1.6.9.	Adverbial / predicate	YES	
1.7.10.	Adverbial	YES	
1.7.11.	Adverbial / predicate	YES	
1.8.12.	Predicate	YES	not originally from Lunyu, taken from Zhou Xingsi "Thousand Character Classics"
1.9.13.	Predicate	YES	
1.10.14.	Adverbial	NO	not as a whole, represented as separate words divided by coma
1.12.15.	Predicate	YES	
1.14.16.	Predicate	NO	this is a modification of a phrase within the chapter
1.15.17.	Adverbial	NO	came to existence from the first question of Zi Gong
1.15.18.	Adverbial	YES	
1.15.19.	independent phrase	NO	compressed from an 8-character phrase by removing every second character
1.15.20.	Predicate	YES	but it is a commentary to the phrase in Lunyu by Zhu Xi
1.15.21.	Adverbial	NO	this a shortened last sentence

Location	In Lunyu as part of the text
1.1.1.	子曰：“学而时习之，不亦说乎？有朋自远方来，不亦乐乎？”
1.1.2.	
1.2.3.	有子曰：“其为人也孝弟，而好犯上者，鲜矣。不好犯上，而好作乱者，未之有也。”
1.3.4.	子曰：“巧言令色，鲜矣仁。”
1.4.5.	曾子曰：“吾日三省吾身。为人谋，而不忠乎？与朋友交，而不信乎？传，不习乎？”
1.4.6.	
1.4.7.	
1.6.8.	子曰：“弟子入则孝，出则弟，谨而信，泛爱众，而亲仁。行有余力，则以学文。”
1.6.9.	
1.7.10.	子夏曰：“贤贤易色，事父母能竭其力，事君能致其身，与朋友交，言而有信，虽曰未学，吾必谓之学矣。”
1.7.11.	
1.8.12.	子曰：“君子不重则不威。学则不固。主忠信。无友不如己者。过则勿惮改。”
1.9.13.	曾子曰：“慎终追远，民德归厚矣。”
1.10.14.	子禽问于子贡曰：“夫子至于是邦也，必闻其政。求之与？抑与之与？”子贡曰：“夫子温、良、恭、俭、让以得之。夫子之求也，其诸异乎人之求之与？”
1.12.15.	有子曰：“礼之用，和为贵。先王之道，斯为美，小大由之。有所不行。知和而和，不以礼节之，亦不可行也。”
1.14.16.	子曰：“君子食无求饱，居无求安，敏於事而慎於言，就有道而正焉，可谓好学也已。”
1.15.17.	子贡曰：“贫而无谄，富而无骄，何如？”子曰：“可也。未若贫而乐，富而好礼者也。”子贡曰：“诗云：‘如切如磋，如琢如磨’，其斯之谓与？”子曰：“赐也！始可与言诗已矣。告诸往而知来者。”
1.15.18.	
1.15.19.	
1.15.20.	
1.15.21.	

Location	Commentary	Number of characters	Popularity in search engines
1.1.1.		5	875 000
1.1.2.		4	2 670 000
1.2.3.		4	585 000
1.3.4.		4	777 000
1.4.5.	Variation of 1.4.6.	4	129 000
1.4.6.	Variation of 1.4.5.	4	908 000
1.4.7.	Zhu Xi's <i>Lunyu</i> annotations 宋·朱熹《集注》：“曾子以此三者日省其身，有则改之，无责加勉，其自治诚切如此，可谓得为学之本矣。”	8	9 150 000
1.6.8.	Huan Kuan 汉·桓宽《盐铁论·授时》”汉·桓宽《盐铁论·授时》：“教之以德，齐之以礼，则民徙义而从善，莫不入孝出悌，夫何奢侈暴慢之有？”	4	274 000
1.6.9.		4	2 090 000
1.7.10.		4	107 000
1.7.11.		4	339 000
1.8.12.	Zhou Xingsi "Thousand Character Classic" 南朝梁·周兴嗣《千字文》：“知过必改，得能莫忘。”	4	934 000
1.9.13.		4	446 000
1.10.14.		5	278 000
1.12.15.		4	1 780 000
1.14.16.		6	303 000
1.15.17.		4	273 000
1.15.18.		4	942 000
1.15.19.		4	891 000
1.15.20.	Zhu Xi's <i>Lunyu</i> annotations 宋·朱熹注：“言治骨角者，既切之而复磋之；治玉石者，既琢之而复磨之，治之已精，而益求其精也。”	4	5 900 000
1.15.21.		4	205 000