

Establishment of a Chinese Paremiological Minimum Based on International English Media

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Abstract—Paremiological Minimum (PM) is defined as a set of proverbs that all members of a particular speech community know or an average adult is expected to know (Đurčo, 2015b). Acquiring such frequently used proverbs will lead to meaningful and effective communication by native speakers or foreign speakers (Mieder, 1993). The study of creating PM has been conducted in many countries globally for at least 50 years, but no researcher has engaged in PM for Chinese language. Classic Chinese proverbs are discourse symbols that embody Chinese values and represent traditional Chinese culture, and are frequently quoted by dignitaries from various countries and overseas media. This study proposes to build a Chinese Paremiological Minimum (CPM) by investigating Chinese proverbs in FACTIVA (2012-2021), from the media of English-language speaking communities with a view to identify the frequently quoted Chinese proverbs. Meantime, four selection criteria are placed emphases on the process of creating CPM: Currency, Internationality, Frequency and Authenticity, namely CIFA frame, different from the previous research approaches which merely focused on the frequency or familiarity for the PM creation. The establishment of CPM is bond to promote a further insight into the Chinese mind, language and culture, resulting in long-term benefits to speakers of other languages and English language learning and teaching in China, for the mastery of PM is an effective way to enhance language proficiency and understanding in intercultural communication.

Index Terms—paremiological minimum, Chinese proverbs, international media

I. INTRODUCTION

Paremiological Minimum (PM) is regarded as a set of proverbs that all members of a particular speech community know or an average adult is expected to know (Đurčo, 2015b). Acquiring such frequently used proverbs will lead to meaningful and effective communication by native speakers or foreign speakers (Mieder, 1993). Permjakov (1989) established the first so-called paremiological minimum by utilizing his paremiological experiment in Moscow in the 1970s. Since then, it has been argued that true language understanding cannot occur without not only certain words and grammatical rules but also “certain minimum knowledge of widely used paremiological clichés” (Haas, 2008, p. 319; Permjakov, 1989, p. 92). Proverbs have always been effective verbal devices, and culturally literate persons, both native and foreign speakers, must have a certain paremiological minimum at their disposal to engage in written or oral communication. It will assure meaningful communication for both native and foreign speakers to frequently use those proverbs (Leece, 2009; Mieder, 2005).

To gain more meaningful access to language, Mieder (1993) encouraged scholars to establish paremiological minima for their own countries or languages. Paremiological minima similar to that created of the English language by Mieder or of other languages have been created by paremiologists, such as English, Czech, German, and Hungarian and so on.

However, to date, there has yet to be anybody of work that establishes a paremiological minimum for the Chinese language, though many collections of Chinese proverbs exist, no scientific methods can validate them. This gap is further broadened when taking into consideration the permeation of Chinese culture and language throughout the world, brought about by the migration of the Chinese diaspora, and increasingly brought on by the introduction of China’s Reform and Opening Up Policy in 1978 (Welch, 2018). As such, the Chinese voice has been increasingly heard with the arrival of the information age and globalization. Within this space of cultural exchange, Chinese proverbs are frequently used and extensively accepted in the media of many languages around the world, especially in the language of academia and technology, English source.

One of the main reasons for this is that it has been acknowledged that there exists a certain amount of respect bestowed upon Chinese proverbs as they are seen as a representation of wisdom accumulated in China’s traditional culture and folk knowledge spanning five thousand years (Rohsenow, 2003). As a result, the understanding of these proverbs may boost to gain a deeper insight into the Chinese mind, language and culture.

To better facilitate this undertaking, this study aims at establishing a bilingual paremiological minimum for Chinese proverbs, with a set of specific criteria for determining its scope of inclusion. First, the minimum is based on the use of Chinese proverbs in international media, specifically in the English language. Secondly, the minimum is based on the frequency of the usage of the Chinese proverbs in the international media to ensure that the proverbs are currently and

universally accepted within the English language community, since Mieder (1993) asserts that the frequency of appearance in a corpus is the most significant aspect when determining the currency of a proverb and its significance in society. In this study, all the candidates of Chinese proverbs come from a worldwide database, the Dow Jones Factiva, which is the world's most comprehensive collection of news and media. This study investigated 15886 passages marked with the terms "Chinese proverb" or "Chinese saying" or "Chinese idiom" or "Chinese adage" between the years 2012 to 2021 via FACTIVA to identify the frequently used Chinese proverbs in international English language media.

The primary significance of the study is to provide a bilingual minimum for EFL (English as a foreign language) teachers in China and CFL (Chinese as a foreign language) teachers as supplementary teaching materials, and EFL or CFL curriculum policy designers for references. Also, it is hoped that the research methods, strategies, and findings will be constructive to the researchers in the field of paremiology, especially expanding the research horizon of Chinese proverbs. Moreover, it is also important for native Chinese students who are learning English to learn the commonly used Chinese proverbs at their disposal to share the Chinese wisdom with people from other countries, because proverbs learning and teaching helps enhance the development in intercultural competence (Mieder, 2015; G özpinar, 2014).

Therefore, this study may serve as one of the solutions to the phenomenon of the Chinese culture aphasia which has been a major problem in teaching EFL in China. Chinese culture aphasia refers to the fact that the multicultural teaching and learning in EFL have become the only English language culture teaching, ignoring other countries' cultural expression teaching, especially Chinese native culture teaching has also got no enough attention. Because of the long-time existence of Chinese culture aphasia, the students' ability to express Chinese culture in English is generally weak, so two-way intercultural communication often leads to a unilateral communication (Zhang et al., 2019).

It ought to be referenced here that for coherence, the term Chinese proverb is by and large alluded to as different sorts of Chinese colloquial and set articulations, including folk adage (*súyǔ*), Chinese idiom and Chinese saying. *Súyǔ* is known as expressions or sentences broadly utilized by the overall population in the casual talk, whose structures are moderately fixed and are basically utilized to communicate scorn or criticism (Jiao & Stone, 2014; Nikolaeva et al., 2017). For example "One hand alone can't applaud" (一个巴掌拍不响). Chinese idiom includes as four-character phrases. For example "国泰民安" (Bring flourishing to the country and carry security to the individuals). Chinese sayings refer to literary quotation or an aphorism. Generally speaking, the three terms indicate the same object in this study, for their original structures, may have changed when adapted in the English language.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW: DEVELOPMENT OF PAREMIOLOGICAL MINIMA

The earlier definition of Paremiological Minimum was widely accepted, referring as lists of those proverbs that are known and continue to be in current use (Mieder, 1993), which focuses on the familiarity with the proverbs included in PM. But Ďurčo's (2015) defining tends to be sort of expectation that such a PM should be known by the average adults in a speech community. In this study, the research was based on the latter concept that a PM is not necessarily familiar to all, but its practical value helps to get its popularity. In accordance with Mieder, acquiring such frequently used proverbs will lead to meaningful and effective communication by native speakers or foreign speakers. The paremiological minimum goes along with cultural literacy. In the last four decades, scholars especially in Russia, Germany, U.S. and Czech Republic, have tried to establish the paremiological minimum for their respective language. All the previous works can be classified into two groups according to the research methodology: demography-based minima, and corpus-based minima. However, most paremiological minima have more or less questionable defects.

Mieder (1993) summarized the common problems with the previous contribution concerning proverbs: One is the quality as a proverb. He asserted that a proverb must have some currency for a time. However, he failed to mention how long the period should be. In reality, it is hard to determine the span. The other problem is frequency of a given text in a certain time. Frequency is not completely equal to familiarity put forward by Primakov 1970s, though they are relatively in conjunction with each other. To put it briefly, as for the previous paremiological work, most of them fail to meet all the three qualities: currency, frequency, and familiarity.

In 1930, the American sociologist William Albig (1931) used demographic methods to make the so-called first paremiological list with 13 most well-known sayings, dependent on the appropriate responses of 68 college understudies who were approached to write down all the precepts they could make sense of in thirty minutes. After eight years, another American humanist Read Bain accomplished comparative work yet utilizing 133 understudies to record the proverbs they could. Nevertheless, the sample they used was relatively not big, therefore the result's validity could be called into question decades later.

Primakov, the first advocator of paremiological minimum, conducted the paremiological experiment in the 1970s for establishing the minimum of Russian proverbs. From his perspective, in that situation, instead of giving an accurate definition of minimum, the proverbs in the minimum should be known by all the people, meaning proverbs with high familiarity. The first step of the experiment was to ask a group of informants who live near Moscow or nearby to give marks to all the unknown proverbs from 1491 items. The second step was to ask another group of informants to mark the modified list of the proverbs. Finally, 500 proverbs were left for the minimum with the average knowledge of more than 90%. Later the minimum was reduced to 300 items for smaller dictionaries in bilingual languages, e.g. Russian-German, Russian-Bulgarian (Ďurčo, 2015; Permjakov, 1989). The demographic methods still bear the limitation of

small samples of items and the small number of informants, but the concept of high familiarity and bilingual model provides a worthy reference for the establishment of an acceptable minimum.

In 1993, the Czech paremiological minimum was created by Schindler (Mieder, 1993) based on a list of proverbs to which was added the missing part by informants, contrary to the direction of Permjakov's experiment. Both Schindler's and Permjakov's proverb beginnings were questioned by Čermák for where the list of proverbs came from and on what basis it was based and elected.

Hirsch established his minimum with a list of 265 proverbs published in *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* (Hirsch et al., 1988) in light of past Hirsch's investigation of national periodicals (Hirsch, 1987), but Mieder (1993) noted that Hirsch did not give sufficient evidence about how he came up with the list, nor did he verify the proof of the frequency. That is to say, he failed to state that his minimum was able to meet the most important quality: frequency. At last, Hirsch had no choice but to admit that his list was 'unscientific'.

Mieder's phrenological minimum with high frequency is based on his previous archived sample of 1200 items, and large proverb collections which contain 5500 items from more than 6000 books and newspapers. His small list consists of 33 frequent proverbs with more than 13 references in observed texts (Ďurčo, 2015; Mieder, 1993). Though Mieder's minimum work was not based on modern corpus research, the large number of data resource guaranteed the validation of the currency and frequency in that situation.

Kimberly J. Lau created a list of 188 proverbs by investigating more than 2300 full-text information sources derived from newspapers, magazines, journals, and newsletters of U.S. and overseas countries. He took the proverbs according to how many "hits" would be registered on the large electronic database, covering 25 years. Nevertheless, these texts were all selected from the print media and did not necessarily justify their currency in oral speech. However, in contrast with Mieder's minimum list, Lau's PM is more advanced both in size, sources and technology, though the currency is questionable due to the long range of 25 years.

Another modern approach to establish a paremiological minimum was started by Čermák from the Czech Republic, who based his investigation on a very large corpus in searching the proverbs in actual contexts, which had not been possible before (Čermák, 2001; Ďurčo, 2015). He collected 243 frequent proverbs tested against 10 million words of the Czech National Corpus with a span of 15 years. Ultimately, the first 100 most frequent proverbs are included in the new paremiological minimum. With the modern approach, more paremiological minima were continuously built up: Steyer built a list of 300 frequent proverbs in 2012; Ďurčo tried to find the top intersection of familiarity level given by speakers and the frequency of occurrence in the Corpus and created a Paremiological Optimum of Slovak Language with 100 proverbs in 2015. Ďurčo spontaneously concerned the two essential parameters of familiarity and frequency in spoken and written context.

This study is based on the predecessors' achievements, absorbing their merits, but expanding the samples with the aid of modern technology and adding new parameters: internationality and authenticity, for the creation of CPM occurs in the background of international media, authenticity examination has become indispensable. Meanwhile this study proposes that determination of the classification be the first phase of creating a PM.

III. RESEARCH PROCEDURE

A. Classification of the Paremiological Minimum

In terms of the purpose of establishing the paremiological minimum, PM can be classified into various types, leading to diverse functions according to the usage scopes: Nationality, Industry, Region, Gender, Discipline. However, not much literature about the categories of PM has been recorded till now. Most of the previous paremiologists did not declare the classification of their PM works. But Ďurčo (2015) proposes making specific minima on the basis of various criteria and in line with different purposes.

Determination of the genre of the paremiological minimum may be the foundation for the establishment of the CPM. In this study, the CPM is set up to be a national level of PM for international communication. The target population should be in a large scale, not only English learners or teachers in China, but especially those who are interested in Chinese thoughts, values and culture and desire to have deep insights into China.

The genre of the minimum lies in the final purpose of the paremiological study. The present study aims to establish one CPM for the students of EFL or CFL to master the most popular Chinese proverbs widely and currently used in the international English media, so that the database of Factiva becomes the selection scope or candidate-selected pool.

B. Identification of the Chinese Proverbs

To ensure the currency of the CPM, the daily-updated database Dow Jones Factiva was finally located as the candidate-selected corpus.

To identify which proverbs are recognized for the inclusion of the minimum, keywords "Chinese proverb or Chinese saying or Chinese idiom or Chinese adage or Chinese maxim" were inserted into the searching box, with the following conditions:①The duration is restricted to the past ten years (2012-2021).②The button of republished articles is turned on, because the same article is often republished by other news organization, maybe in another time, just increase the

frequency of the proverbs.③With all the themes, all the industries, all the authors, all the sources on.④ The language is confined to English. In the given conditions, different numbers of proverbs are found out along with diverse key words.

The total number of the searching results is 15886 entries, respectively including 6487 with the label of Chinese proverb, 7618 with Chinese saying, 1301 with Chinese idiom, 404 with Chinese adage and only 76 with Chinese maxim. Totally 1020 Chinese proverbs have been collected, with all the variations of one proverb being placed in one entry. All the identification work has been done by manual labour in order to identify the variants for each expected proverb. The following Table1 illustrates one typical case with nine variants.

TABLE 1
CASE OF PROVERBIAL VARIATION

Prototype	千里之行始于足下
Variant 1	A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step
Variant 2	The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step
Variant 3	A journey of thousand steps begins with a single step
Variant 4	The journey of a thousand miles begins beneath one's feet
Variant 5	The longest journey begins with a single step
Variant 6	Every journey starts with a single step
Variant 7	To take a 1000 mile journey you have to take the first step
Variant 8	Reach our destination, we must begin our journey
Variant 9	A long journey can be covered only by taking one step at a time

Now a big problem comes up. That is how to select the core variant among all the variants for the entry into the CPM which will be discussed in IV-B Determination of SIP among variants.

C. Examination of Frequency

How to test the frequency of the selected proverbs is a vital procedure in this study in that the sequence of the proverbs in the minimum would be decided in terms of recorded frequency. All the candidate proverbs were put into the searching box one by one to test the frequency in the corpus. The frequencies of one proverb's variants were added up for one proverb's frequency.

Some searching skills are used in the process of frequency investigation in Factiva:① Any proverb which contains one or more of the following terms (and, or, not, same, near, date) should be enclosed in double-quotes. E.g. "Wealth does **not** last three generations". ② The use of common search operators. **Quotes**: Use quotes to search for an exact phrase. Example: "network administrator"; **Parenthesis**: Combine modifiers to create a more complex search. Example: network AND (administrator OR architect); **AND**: Include two search terms. Example network AND administrator; **OR**: Broaden your search with multiple terms. Example: "network administrator" OR "network manager"; **NOT**: Used to exclude a specific term. Example: administrator NOT manager. Through examination of frequency, 170 Chinese proverbs were filtered with no less than 10 hits of frequency from the 1020 items.

D. Verification of Authenticity

Text authenticity (Lee, 1995) is defined in terms of the origin of the materials. A text is usually regarded as textually authentic if it is written just for a real-life communicative purpose. In this study, textually authentic materials refer to the fact that all the inclusions of the minimum are precisely originated from Chinese origins.

The verification of the textual authenticity went through two processes. In the first place, it is a corpus-based test. While selecting as one candidate in the minimum in terms of the frequency, another test, authenticity identification went along with it. It is commonly perceived that the widely used proverbs in international media should appear more constantly in the authentically original context---Chinese media. This assumption was sufficiently verified by the practical work result in this study as the following table shows.

TABLE 2
COMPARISON OF FREQUENCY IN DIFFERENT TEXT BACKGROUNDS

No.	English version of Chinese proverbs	Frequency of English context	Chinese version	Frequency of Chinese context
1	A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step	1086	千里之行，始于足下	1932
2	Women hold up half the sky	1060	妇女能顶半边	384
3	Crossing the river by feeling the stones	518	摸着石头过河	8761
4	Good things come in pairs	216	好事成双	1807
5	If you want to get rich, build a road	98	要想富先修路	3385
6	Close neighbors are better than distant relatives	64	远亲不如近邻	1195
7	The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now	282	种一棵树最好的时间是十年前，其次是现在	18
8	when the winds of change blow, some people build walls, others build windmills	40	风向转变时，有人筑墙，有人造风车	2
9	If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go with others	1339	走得快，一个人走；走得远，结伴行	25

It can be seen from the above table that the former six proverbs both in English and in Chinese appear normal: they both have high frequency in English media or Chinese media of Factiva and most of them have higher frequency in Chinese media than they are in English media. However, the seventh, the eighth and ninth have much higher frequency in English media than they are in Chinese media, which gave rise to the author's doubt about its Chinese origin. After much tracking down, the truth came on the surface: "The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago. The second best time is now." was originated from the book *Dead Aid* whose author is an African economist. This proverb is the closing words of the book, concise but thought-provoking. The origin of "when the winds of change blow, some people build walls, others build windmills" is not sure. But "If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go with others" is a proverb popular in Africa.

The second verification process went on within dictionaries: *A Dictionary of Chinese Proverbs* and *A Dictionary of Chinese Proverbs and Maxims with English Translation* to test whether the Chinese proverbs are really involved in the authoritative dictionary in China. Firstly, every proverb roughly selected for the CPM was checked whether they were included in the Chinese proverb dictionaries. Secondly, those proverbs which could not be verified their Chinese origins were moved off the CPM. The unauthentic proverbs are almost coincident with those which are unauthentic from the first step of authenticity examination, a few proverbs with higher frequency in English media of Factiva, but discovered lower frequency in Chinese media of Factiva were found unauthentic. E.g. *Love your neighbours, but don't pull down the fence*. It wasn't found in the Chinese proverb Dictionary. But it was initially used by Benjamin Franklin, the Founding Father of America.

Through the two procedures, 18 fake Chinese proverbs were detected. However, why do so many people like to say "As a Chinese proverb says"? Further research offers evidence for the wrong citation in IV-D.

IV. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

A. Analysis of Ineffective Searching Results

While collecting the candidate proverbs, one questions came out: Whether the 15886 entries are equal to the same number of expected candidates for the CPM?

Definitely no. Not all the key words for searching are effective. Some special situations are recognised:

(a). Factiva can't automatically identify the difference between "Chinese saying" and "Chinese, saying". "Chinese saying" with a comma or without a comma are identified as the same. The same case scarcely happens to "Chinese proverb", "Chinese idiom", "Chinese adage" and "Chinese maxim".

E.g1: They screamed at us in **Chinese saying**, 'Give me your phone! Show me your phone! We saw you taking photos and posting them on Weibo!' They were screaming and pointing their fingers an inch away from our faces. I panicked and began sweating. I felt nauseated.

(b). Each label of key words will not necessarily be followed by a proverb or saying.

E.g2: There may be no **Chinese proverb** or other mystical connection to the sequential date, but wedding industry officials know it has a special allure.

(c). The word of "saying" sometimes does not mean "a well-known phrase or statement that expresses something about life that most people believe is wise and true", but refers to what someone has said. It is believed that what has been said by a common person is not a proverb or a famous saying.

E.g3: New Zealand may have been better to follow another **Chinese saying**, "do, and don't say", *zuo er bu shuo*. Sometimes, when it comes to diplomacy, the less said the better.

The above exceptions prove again that machines can never replace the work of human beings. In terms of the nature of Factiva, manual work plays a critical role in reducing the wrongdoings by the machine itself to a great extent. Also, the process of identification needs to sift and analyse attentively.

B. Determination of SIP Among Variants

In contrast with English translation versions, the prototypes of Chinese proverbs are more fixed and unchangeable. Nearly all the English versions of the Chinese proverbs have a lot of variants. Only a few exist just in one or two forms. Among all the variants, generally, there is one core proverb which has the highest frequency. E.g. *Women hold up half the sky* was counted by 622 hits in the corpus. However, the other two "*Women hold up half the world*" & "*Women can lift half the shy*" both have one hit respectively. In this study, the core proverb was represented as the most widely used proverb to the minimum.

The cause of variants is related with English translation of the Chinese proverbs. It is quite common that in English media, the Chinese proverbs are translated or used more freely and flexibly than they are in Chinese. The various forms for one Chinese proverb come out in English. The question is how to determine which proverb in English should be selected into the CPM among numerous variants?

Neal R. Norrick (1985) believes that every proverb has the Standard Proverbial Interpretation, the **SPI**. Based on the research of proverbial variants, one variant is relatively fixed and closer to the SIP. In this study, the Chinese proverb can merely regarded as the prototype of all the proverbial variants, but all the proverbial variants must be around one relatively stereotyped proverb on which other variants' connotations reflect. That is the SIP, which is definitely selected

to be the candidate proverb going into the CPM. But how can we determine the proverb with SIP for all the proverbial variants of one Chinese proverb. In this study, three factors were taken into consideration for determining the SIP. First, it can be as a centred proverb, from which the other variants are originated by making some changes, such as simplification, substitution, extension or reverse usage (Li, 2013).

The other principle is the frequency of the proverbial variants. As the time going and changing, language always follows. In this study, the most frequently used variants tend to bear the priority to be selected as the proverb with SIP firstly.

The third principle comes from the mean length of the Czech proverb suggestion: In view of the frequently oral, spoken use of proverbs and pressure on their communicative economy, it seems that the mean proverb length count could be equally important. Therefore, if two proverbs have the same frequency, the proverb with fewer words would be taken into consideration. Coincidentally, it was found in this research, most core proverbs possess the most frequent occurrences in the Dow Jones Factiva but shorter length.

The following table shows how the Chinese proverb “If you want to get rich, build a road” stands out of the other 20 variants for its high frequency and centred position.

TABLE 3
VARIANTS FROM ONE PROTOTYPE IN CHINESE (要想富先修路)

	Variants	Type of changes	Frequency
1	If you want to get rich, build a road	With SIP	23
2	If you want to be rich, build a road.	Substitution	5
3	If you want to become rich, build the road first	Substitution & Extension	1
4	If you want to get rich, build a road first	Extension	6
5	If you want to develop, you have to build the road first	Substitution & Extension	2
6	If you want to grow rich, build a good road first	Substitution & Extension	5
7	If you want to prosper, consider building roads	Substitution	3
8	If you want to become rich, you must first build a road	Substitution & Extension	8
9	If you want to become affluent, build a road first	Substitution & Extension	3
10	To get rich, first build a road	Simplification	14
11	To be rich, build roads first	Simplification	7
12	To get rich, build roads and bridges	Simplification & Extension	3
13	To end poverty, first build a road	Simplification & Substitution	1
14	To get well and rich, first build road and bridge.	Simplification & Extension	1
15	Building roads and railways leads to prosperity in all sectors	Substitution & Extension	4
16	Build road firstly if you want to be wealthy	Substitution	1
17	When you want to make the lives of the community better, build a road	Extension	1
18	When the road is through, the money will flow	Substitution	2
19	When the road is connected, the money will flow	Substitution	1
20	Roads lead to riches	Simplification	1
21	Wealth is not far away if roads are built	Reverse usage	5

C. Discoveries in Frequency Examination

While searching for the frequency of the proverb, there is a big difference with double quotes or without: Wealth does not last three generations, without the use of double quotes, 2276 items are found, but most of them merely contain the two words “wealth does”, excluding the part of the words after “not”. After adding the double quotes: “Wealth does not last three generations”, 17 results were found in Factiva. Therefore, searching skills should not be ignored in the study for they exert great influence on the result of the research.

Besides the searching skills obtained in the study, some extra unexpected findings have been also achieved: The frequency of one candidate proverb the author recorded in the process of Chinese proverb identification is much lower than it is in reality in most cases. While counting the frequency of one variant, usually the whole sentence would be inserted into the searching box, such as No.1-8 in the following table (Table 4). However, when the sentence segment “curse the darkness” which was included in No.1-4 (Table 4) was inserted into the searching box, a surprising frequency of 1069 came out. That is to say, “curse the darkness” can be a look-like variant with high frequency. The sentence fragments are more on behalf of the frequency of SIP. So trying to find out the most representative segment would make the frequency examination more scientific and valid.

TABLE 4
OCCURRENCES OF “IT’S BETTER TO LIGHT ONE CANDLE THAN TO CURSE THE DARKNESS” IN FACTIVA

No.	Variants	Frequency
1	It's better to light one candle than to curse the darkness	+70
2	Better light a candle than curse the darkness	+4
3	Don't curse the darkness; light a candle.	+36
4	We are not here to curse the darkness.	+34
5	It is better to light a candle, then to rage at the darkness.	+4
6	Rather light a candle than complain about the darkness.	+1
7	Rather light a candle than complain about the darkness.	+4
8	How do we "light the candle" in a South Africa that is burdened with as many challenges as we have?	+4
	Total	157
No.	Sentence segments	Frequency
1	light the candle	955
2	curse the darkness	1069

However, when the sentence segment “light the candle” was searched in Factiva, it occurred 955 times. But this time, many “light the candle” have no close connection with the connotation of “It's better to light one candle than to curse the darkness”. They have only the literal meaning and cannot stand on behalf of the proverb with SIP, which exactly justified this point that SPI is mostly the implicit connotation rather than the literal meaning. For instance, the literal meaning of the proverb, "Too many chiefs, not enough Indians," does not capture the SPI it expresses (Norrick, 1985).

From the above attempts, the author put forward a conclusion that the frequency of the sentence segment is much closer to the actual statistic data. This finding is coincident with Hui's discovery: In most cases, the frequency of sentence segment is much higher than the sentence variant (Hui, 2012). But whether the sort of sentence segment can be perceived as variant is to be discussed.

But why does the frequency of the representative sentence segment is much closer to the actual hits than the total frequency of the sentence variants?

On one hand, many Chinese proverbs were quoted without the label mark “Chinese saying or proverb” in real context, so that these Chinese proverbs would be left out in the process of identification of Chinese proverbs. Also, the real amount of the frequency of the selected Chinese proverbs is much higher than what can be counted by adding the frequency of all the variants.

On the other hand, Table 5 shows 7 examples, including the representative sentence segment “Know yourself and know your enemy”. We can see no example is completely equal to one of the sentence variants in Table 6 (1-5), but every sentence segment represents the SIP of the proverb. Therefore, a conclusion may be drawn that most sentence segments are more flexibly used in real language than sentence variants, which attributes to the flexibility of language use and also may take the place of the sentence variant with SIP while examining the frequency of proverbs in the corpus.

TABLE 5
OCCURRENCES OF “KNOW YOURSELF AND KNOW YOUR ENEMY” EXAMPLES IN FACTIVA

Year	Source	Examples
1	2012 Washington Post.com	The ancient Chinese military strategist Sun Tzu once said, “ Know your enemy and know yourself .” In our current struggle against violent extremism, we would humbly add, “Know your allies.”
2	2016 Independent Online	The book was originally written by military strategist Sun Tzu to help explain how to win in warfare. However, over the years, people have found that the tactics described in the book, such as “ know yourself ” and “ know your enemy ” can help people succeed in the day to day struggles of life.
3	2016 Congressional Documents and Publications	The core of military strategy, Sun Tzu tells us, is know your enemy and to know yourself . It is impossible to defeat what you do not, first, understand.
4	2017 CNN Newsroom	There could be some things that occur because of this, but, you know, using an old Chinese philosopher, Sun Tzu, you've got to know your enemy and know yourself and know the terrain, and at the strategic level in this case all three of those things have a whole lot of implications.
5	2018 The Telegraph Online	What was needed was good intelligence and self-knowledge – “ Know your enemy and know yourself ” – but even that, says Andrew, is no guarantee of victory.
6	2019 The Sociable	As cliché as it may be, it appears that China is adhering to philosophical elements of one its most brilliant minds — Sun Tzu — to know your enemy as you know yourself and to wait patiently until your opponents' vulnerabilities are exposed.
7	2020 The Daily Telegraph	Testing for Covid-19 infection is vital if we want to beat this disease without delay. When you are fighting an enemy you need to know your enemy , their strengths and their weaknesses. You must also know yourself . "That way you need not fear the result of a hundred battles," ironically so says The Art of War by Sun Tzu.

TABLE 6
OCCURRENCES OF “IF YOU KNOW YOUR ENEMY AND KNOW YOURSELF, YOU WILL NEVER BE DEFEATED IN 100 BATTLES” IN FACTIVA

No.	Variants	Frequency
1	If you know your enemy and know yourself, you will never be defeated in 100 battles	+4
2	Know yourself and your enemy; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril	+1
3	If you know yourself and your enemy, you need not dread the result of a thousand battles	+2
4	Know yourself and know your enemy and you will win every battle	+1
5	Know yourself and know your enemy and you will win every battle	+3
6	If you know yourself and the others, then you will not fall into danger even if you fight for a hundred times	+1
7	Knowing yourself and your opponents is a guarantee of victory	+1
No.	Sentence segments	Frequency
8	Know your yourself and know enemies	54
9	Know yourself and know your enemy	173

D. Causes of Unauthenticity

Through this verification process of the textual authenticity, 18 selected proverbs were removed from the CPM, because they were found to be non-authentic Chinese proverbs or unsure to know the origins or extremely low frequency in the authentically original context, Chinese media.

As mentioned in Table 2, some proverbs with the mark of key words “Chinese proverb or Chinese saying” collected from Factiva may not necessarily have Chinese authentic origins. But why did this phenomenon often appear in the international media? Why do “As an old Chinese saying goes” or “As a famous Chinese proverb goes” become the popular expressions when people quote a proverb or saying? The following illustrations may cast some light on this issue.

It is a well-known tactic for politician and academics to attribute unknown sources to ancient Chinese proverbs or sayings, but it is not known within China (Green, 2004). For many westerners, China is still the “mystic nation in the East”. China has the reputation of being home to many wise old men that spoke enlightened truths, just like Confucius, Laozi and other eastern philosophers. It is common for the people in the west to claim that a quote is Chinese when they are not sure about its origin (Herzberg & Herzberg, 2012).

Chinese proverbs have got great popularity in American communication thanks to the unquestionable wisdom and persuasion capacity (Nikolaeva et al., 2017). In history, several American presidents used to be excellent Chinese proverb users. When former US President Barack Obama visited China, he quoted a Chinese proverb from “The Pipe”: “If you want one year of prosperity, then grow grain; if you want ten years of prosperity, then grow trees; but if you want one hundred years of prosperity, then you grow people”. In 1984, when President Reagan visited China, he quoted Chinese saying: “Good friends feel close to each other even when they are thousands of miles away”. When talking about Sino-US cooperation, Reagan used the proverb “When brothers are of the same mind, they have the power to cut through metal”. When US President George H.W. Bush, who has a deep relationship with China, visited China in 1989, he showed off his knowledge of China, quoting proverbs such as “One generation plant the trees in whose shade another generation rests”.

In 2016, two Russian scholars (Ekaterina A. Iakovleva and Olga V. Nikolaeva) conducted a systematic study of the popularity of Chinese proverbs in American culture. They argue in the paper that the use of Chinese proverbs is becoming more common in the U.S. media, whether it involves China or not. They also give the reason for the integration of Chinese wisdom into American culture which lies in the rising of China position along with expansion of diplomatic contacts and ties. Anyway, it is an indisputable fact that the popularity of Chinese proverbs in the international community has never diminished.

Ultimately a bilingual paremiological minimum was established with a list of 152 Chinese proverbs in English version based on their Frequency in the corpus spanning from 2012 to 2021. The corresponding Chinese version was presented along with their frequency within ten-year span. As for the size of a paremiological minimum, there is no set standard (Čermák, 2001). The proverbs in this study were put in sequence on the decreasing frequency scale. Merely those proverbs whose frequency is equal to or more than 10 are listed in this minimum.

V. CONCLUSION

This research made a new model for the paremiological field. It was bridged by English as a lingua franca. Bilingual paremiological minima or minima used internationally are likely to be an academic tendency along with the globalization era because people on the earth are increasingly keen to share the common knowledge and culture to deal with the commonly confronted issues. In the creation a CPM in this study, four major relevant elements were taken into account: currency, internationality, frequency, and authenticity, CIFA frame, which cast new light in the practice of the establishment of minima of international pattern.

The determination of the span for PM is one critical factor to ensure the currency of the proverbs to keep its popularity, but nothing is permanently current, therefore, the range of the duration is expected to vary according to the

purpose of the research. The attention of the study focused on the Chinese proverbs which are used in the background of the international media, the other type of minima in the background of various fields is advocated to be established, too.

The included proverbs in the study were collected from the international media database, Factiva. The purpose of the study is not only for academic research but for the goal to help people in the shared future of globalization to get a deep insight into China and the world, enhancing the mutual understanding and international communication and cooperation in the shared global community. In fact, from the top-hit 152 Chinese proverbs, the national spirit and character of China can be glimpsed at. Items 18, 68 and 87 reflect that Chinese people highlight more scientific facts than anything else; 16, 23 and 34 show the essential expectation of peace and harmony and great tolerance in Chinese culture; 7, 38, 86 and 138 imply the attitudes to friends and 54, 135 gratitude for assistance; 8, 33 and 96 show the diligence and perseverance of Chinese people; 6, 9, 22, 82, 88 and 132 indicate the desire for solidarity. More proverbs contain Chinese cultural elements, such as 28, 49, 74, 113, 150. The study on the analyses of Chinese culture and values of CPM may come in the author's next publication.

An intangible conclusion may be drawn at the end of the completion of the minimum: the significance of the study consists not only in the field of language teaching and learning in English and Chinese, but also CPM is an epitome of Chinese culture, just as a claim was held that investigating the vocabulary and proverbs can help a person to get insight into other people's world views (Kimenyi, 2006). Additionally, standing from the perspective of international background, the minimum reflects the common desire of all the people in the world: peace and harmony, solidarity and friendship, truth and sincerity because these Chinese proverbs are frequently quoted in the international media.

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