

A Sociolinguistic View of Animal Names in Idiomatic Expressions in Chinese and French

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Abstract: This paper attempts to explore animal names¹ in Chinese and/or French idiomatic expressions in the light of *representation* (la *représentation*), a notion interpreted by French sociolinguist Henri Boyer.² As linguistic phenomena are believed to be rooted in society and explained by the latter, animal names in different languages could be culturally loaded via their figurative/symbolic significations, due to the representations associated with animal referents in a given society. On the premise that animal referents generally exist in the physical world, the representations of animals would be formed on the basis of animals' appearances, their habits and their relations with other animals, especially in accordance with the observation and the exploitation of animals by human beings in social life, and might be eventually enhanced, modified or even created in the common imagination. Besides animal referents as objects of human cognition, the other reason accounting for animal representations could be that human beings tend to attribute their moral values and spiritual expectances to the animals around them.

Keywords: animal name; idiomatic expression; polysemy; *representation*; sociolinguistics

1. Introduction

As part of the world we live in, animals therefore have been named in human languages. A quadruped creature that prances and whinnies is called 马 [mǎ] 'horse' in Chinese and *cheval* in French; both animal names refer to the same species and hence seem to be equivalent in a sense. However, adding to the complexity has been another

1 The expression "animal names" differs from "animal nouns" in that the latter could include other nouns related to animals, e.g. species and collective terms, nouns denoting animal sounds, their shelters, etc., not related to the present work. In this paper, we use "animal names" in the sense that they refer to animals in the physical (or imaginary) world.

2 Henri Boyer, contemporary sociolinguist at University of Paul Valéry, Montpellier III, France.

fact that many animal names have figurative/symbolic significations apart from their literal meanings. On the one hand, both 狐狸 [hú li] ‘fox’ and *renard* imply slyness and cunning; on the other hand, 喜鹊 [xǐ què] ‘magpie’ is regarded in Chinese as an auspicious omen for happiness, while *pie* ‘magpie’ connotes in French noisiness and pilfering. Moreover, polysemic animal names are more likely to appear in idiomatic expressions in Chinese as well as in French, forming an active part of the language system.

Regarding these interesting linguistic phenomena, we carried out studies in an effort to answer the following questions: Among numerous animal names, why are some of them polysemic and used in idiomatic expressions? What are the similarities and differences between Chinese and French regarding figurative/symbolic significations of “equivalent” animal names? How may these phenomena be explained from a sociolinguistic point of view?

2. From the Sociolinguistic Interpretation of *Representation* to the Polysemy of Animal Names

In sociolinguistic research, linguistic phenomena are usually attributed to society and its culture. As a transversal concept in diverse disciplines of humanities and social studies, *representation* (*la représentation*) has gained theoretical importance in sociolinguistics owing to Henri Boyer. It casts much light upon the dynamic correlation between language and society: a language constantly absorbs and accumulates life experiences, ways of thinking, systems of value, etc., known as “culture”, which is shared within the given society; at the same time, members of society transmit and modify their cultural heritage by means of language.

Representation has a basic meaning of image, figure, symbol or sign that represents a phenomenon or an idea; it signifies in philosophy an image or a concept by which an object is present in mind, and in psychology a perception or a mental image whose content is related to an object, a situation, a scene of the world we live in (Legrain et al., 2001, p. 881). Owing to the French sociologist E. Durkheim, this notion was introduced to the analysis of social phenomena by the term *collective representation* (*représentation collective*) as a structural system and an autonomous object of research. The Romanian sociologist S. Moscovici, for his part, applied the notion to social psychological studies based on his psychoanalytic survey of French society in

the postwar years, and proposed *social representation* (*représentation sociale*) as an operational term. Another French sociologist, D. Jodelet, considered *representation* as a kind of knowledge established and shared by members of society and emphasized its practical significance in constructing a common “reality”.¹ As for French sociolinguist Henri Boyer, he insists on the fact that representations are above all shared within a given society, no matter whether it concerns *collective representation* of the society as a whole or *social representation*, which varies with social groups. And it is highly due to *shared representation* (*représentation partagée*) (Boyer, 2003, p. 14) that social members acquire their common social identity. Furthermore, H. Boyer confirms that representations constitute versions of reality,² which enable society members to comprehend the world around them and behave in a pertinent manner.

The notion of *representation* contains intrinsically two complementary processes: in one, human beings perceive the physical world (as the object) through the senses and represent it mentally as images, concepts, symbols, etc., which form versions of reality known as *shared representations*; in the other, shared representations assume cognitive and practical functions in human beings’ attitudes as well as their behaviors towards the physical world, and might be modified in conformity with reality. Because of the continuity of these alternate processes, human beings are able to accumulate their cultural heritage transmitted from generation to generation. With regard to language, it synchronically loads human culture and enables its continuation in diachronically, as depicted in Figure 1. In other words, language interiorizes and inherits human beings’ common perception and cognition of the world around them.

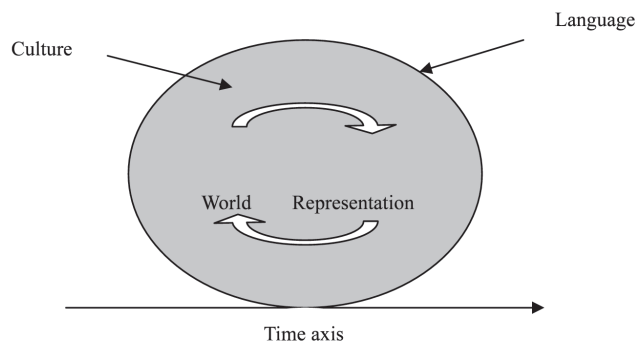


Figure 1: Synchronic and diachronic processes in shared representation

- 1 The above retrospective discussions are greatly due to Boyer (2003).
- 2 This point of view was formulated by D. Jodelet (1989).

Animals constitute a part of the world we live in, and animal names are in the first place used to refer to them in human activities, but also imply that human beings have already accumulated to some extent “enough” cognition of certain species. For instance, a bird is referred to as a creature with feathers and wings that can fly and the female of which lays eggs. These characteristics are sufficient to distinguish it from other animals and therefore are included in its name: 鸟 [niǎo] ‘bird’ in Chinese and *oiseau* in French. Through long usage, many animal names have acquired figurative/symbolic significations and become culturally loaded terms. For example, both 驴 [lú] ‘donkey’ in Chinese and *âne* in French signify in a figurative sense silliness and stubbornness; 龙 [lóng] ‘Chinese dragon’ and 凤 [fèng] ‘Chinese phoenix’ symbolize in Chinese auspiciousness while *dragon* ‘dragon’ and *phénix* ‘phoenix’ connote in French respectively fierceness and immortality. The reason for this could be that members of a given society tend unconsciously to mark animal representations with their own cultural impresses as they deepen the cognition of certain animal referents.

From the perspective of *representation*, animal referents are endowed with shared representations, i.e. versions of animals in the physical world, which provide the basis for the literal meanings and especially figurative/symbolic significations of animal names. As animal representations that are socially established, modified and transmitted serve to identify different societies, animal names exhibit similarities and differences in terms of figurative/symbolic signification across languages, as in the comparison of Chinese and French. To sum up, the polysemy of animal names as well as its coincidence and divergence between different languages depends highly on the shared representations associated with animal referents within a given society.

3. Analysis of Animal Names in Chinese and/or French Idiomatic Expressions from the Angle of *representation*

As the quintessence of language through long usage, idiomatic expressions are noted for richness in content, compactness in form and popularity among speakers. In our studies, two small corpora¹ of idiomatic expressions were established to confine

1 The corpus of Chinese idiomatic expressions is composed of phrasal idioms with four Chinese characters (成语[chéng yǔ]), proverbs, popular sayings and sayings with the latter part suspended (歇后语[xiē hòu yǔ]) collected from the twelve books in the collection of the Chinese Zodiac and Culture (十二生肖与中国文化丛书), Selections of Chinese Proverbs (《中国谚语选》) and Stories of Chinese Popular Sayings (

the research scope to 76 animal names from Chinese and 77 from French.¹ And based on comparative observation, we may state the following: (1) Some animal names seem to appear in either Chinese or French idiomatic expressions, while others are used “correspondingly” in both Chinese and French idiomatic expressions; (2) Regarding animal names that are “equivalent” in terms of literal meaning, their figurative/symbolic significations coincide or diverge between Chinese and French; (3) It might be the case that an animal name in Chinese and that in French have different literal meanings but are used to express similar points of view or judgments in idiomatic expressions.

In the sections below, we reveal the four hierarchical levels in the formation of animal representations in an effort to explain the coincidence and divergence of the polysemy of animal names between Chinese and French.²

3.1 Animals in Existence: The Premise of Animal Representations

On the premise that animals exist in the physical world or specifically in the scope of the perception of human beings, they could be associated with shared representations and referred to by means of human language. In other words, animals would receive their names because they are regarded as objects of human cognition, and animal representations are formed on the basis of animals' existence within the scope of human cognition.

3.1.1 Coincidence

With regard to the animal names that are used in idiomatic expressions, there are cases of coincidence between Chinese and French, such as the following:

First, among all the animal names of the diverse species living in the world,

《中国俗语故事》). The corpus of French idiomatic expressions was formed on the basis of *When We Speak of the Wolf* (Quand on parle du loup), *Name of a Dog* (Nom d'un chien), *Dictionary of Comprehension and Production of Imagery Expressions* (Dictionnaire de compréhension et de production des expressions imagées), *Popular Sayings of Animals, Plants and Seasons* (Dictons des bêtes, des plantes et des saisons) and *A Flea on the Ear* (La puce à l'oreille). We should point out that, for our research, the corpora were set up with a view to provide two representative but non-exhaustive lists of animal names in Chinese and French, and that the titles of French references mentioned above are translated literally in order to correspond to the original titles. That is why some of them, which are effectively idiomatic expressions in French, have lost their original meanings once translated into English.

1 See Appendix I.

2 That is to say, we attempt to explain the observations of (1) and (2) in the light of representation, but do not consider that of (3) to be within the research scope of this paper.

only some of them have figurative/symbolic significations, and even fewer appear in idiomatic expressions. Similar phenomena are observed both in Chinese and in French, as shown in Appendix I, which exhibits 76 and 77 animal names collected respectively from the two languages. The reason for this could be the fact that human beings are relatively familiar with animals “nearby”, i.e. those that they are in contact with in daily life. It is highly due to the relation of familiarity established in human experiences that animal representations become more complicated, leading to the polysemy of the corresponding animal names. As well, familiar animals are referred to more frequently in human communications, and their names might be integrated into idiomatic expressions.

Secondly, in the comparison of animal names in either Chinese or French idiomatic expressions, animals living on land seem to be referred to more frequently than those flying in air or swimming in water, as illustrated in Table 1. Furthermore, animal names of terrestrial species appear in more idiomatic expressions with much richer figurative/symbolic significations. For instance, 牛 [niú] ‘cattle’/ *bœuf* ‘cattle’ or ‘ox’ symbolizes force, endurance, but also clumsiness and ignorance, while *vache* ‘cow’ implies insensitivity, laziness and stupidity. On the contrary, 鹰 [yīng] ‘hawk’/ *aigle* ‘eagle’ connotes simply perspicacity; 蛤蟆 [há ma] ‘toad’/ *crapaud* signifies ugliness and vulgarity. For the “smallest” animals such as a creature with a spiral-shaped shell, referred to as 蜗牛 [wō niú] ‘snail’ in Chinese and *escargot* in French, both of the two names imply slowness. As the familiarity with animals existing in the world accounts for the complicatedness of animal representations and then the formation of the polysemy of animal names, the more familiar human beings are with animals, the more complicated animal representations would become, which results accordingly in more figurative/symbolic significations that animal names would have. To be brief, it is greatly due to different degrees of familiarity with animal referents that their names are correspondingly invested with rich figurative/symbolic significations.

Table 1: Categories of Comparison

	Chinese animal names	French animal names
Category 1: flying creatures	21	25
Category 2: a great family of terrestrial animals	26	30

Category 3: aquatic creatures	15	10
Category 4: the “smallest” animals	14	12

Finally, there are in both Chinese and French idiomatic expressions corresponding animal names that refer to the same species in the world.¹ Although they seem to be “equivalent” in a literal sense, we find in our comparative analysis that their figurative/symbolic significations may either coincide or diverge, as explicated in what follows.

3.1.2 Divergence

Regarding cases of divergence where animal names seem to appear in either Chinese or French idiomatic expressions, it might imply that the related animals do not exist in the biosphere in France or that in China.² It is for this reason that these animals would have no chance of being endowed with representations in the given society, and hence named in the corresponding language. While 鹞 [yào] ‘harrier’ is used in Chinese idiomatic expressions such as ‘There would be a harrier in remote mountains, and there would be a saint among ordinary people’ (深山出鹞鹰, 众人出圣人), it is not the same case for its counterpart *busard* ‘harrier’ in French, for the Chinese expression concerns a kind of hawk living in Asia and in Africa (Legrain et al., 2001, p. 160). Another example is 甲鱼 [jiǎ yú] ‘soft-shelled turtle’, referring to an aquatic turtle widespread in China. This species is also known as 王八 [wáng ba] in the common language and is considered especially in an ironic manner as a symbol of longevity as in ‘While a soft-shelled turtle could live one thousand years, a tortoise could live ten times longer’ (千年的王八万年的龟). On the contrary, if *dindon* ‘turkey’ appears in French idiomatic expressions such as *un franc dindon* ‘a frank turkey’,³ it would be attributed to the fact that this large bird with a fan-shaped tail has been domesticated in Europe since the sixteenth century (Legrain et al., 2001, p. 335). A similar case is *hareng* ‘herring’, as in *La caque sent toujours le hareng* ‘The barrel still smells of smoked herrings’.⁴ The expression is based on the abundance of this fish in the English Channel and North Sea; the French have been long familiar with herring and exploit its

1 See Appendix II.

2 It might be possible that the related animals do exist in a given biosphere and are referred to in the corresponding language, but their names do not appear in idiomatic expressions, partly because they are not sufficiently familiar to the speakers of that language.

3 It is used to describe a person as stupid and naive.

4 It signifies that a man of humble birth cannot conceal his family background.

name in idiomatic expressions.

In other cases, certain species that are absent from a given biosphere may be referred to in the corresponding language and associated with representations, owing to various exchanges including translation activities. For example, found throughout Asia, a tiger is regarded in Chinese culture as the King of animals and the King of forests; this representation explains why its name 虎 [hǔ] ‘tiger’ connotes an awesome majesty, cruelty and fearsomeness, as shown in the following:

1a) On one mountain there will never be two tigers. (一山容不得二虎);¹

1b) to have a narrow escape from a tiger’s gaping jaws (虎口余生).

In contrast, the French name *tigre* ‘tiger’ associates curiously the fierceness of this large feline with an unbearable feeling like jealousy in *jaloux comme un tigre* ‘as jealous as a tiger’; while it seems to be relatively reasonable to relate the concept of energy to a predator’s ferocity as in *mettre un tigre dans son moteur* ‘to put a tiger in his (gasoline) tank’. Consequently, it can be seen from the example of 虎 [hǔ]/*tigre* ‘tiger’ that representations may change as animal names vary in use from language to language. It might be equally possible that a new representation is formed in conformity with the original one if a certain animal name is translated into another language. A case in point is 蚕 [cán] ‘silkworm’, denoting the caterpillar of a Chinese moth, which spins a prodigious amount of silk to construct its cocoon. Like the Chinese name, the French expression *ver à soie* ‘silkworm’ also has the connotation ‘devotion to work’ because of similar representations of a tireless producer of silk.

3.2 Animals in Nature: Substratum of Animal Representations

Regarding animals living in nature, shared representations are based on their appearances, habits and relations with other animals, but also in accordance with human emotional tendencies and moral judgments. Thus “equivalent” animal names may receive similar or different figurative/symbolic significations across Chinese and French.

3.2.1 Coincidence

From a higher plane, animals classified according to certain biological characteristics are generally associated with similar representations, which lay the foundation for the coincidence of the polysemy of their names. Animals with a

1 In other words, a tiger does not tolerate a competitor in its territory.

conventionalized “ugly” appearance would be endowed with negative representations, accounting for the pejorative significations of their names. For example, 乌鸦 [wū yā] ‘crow’ or ‘raven’/corbeau ‘raven’ implies malevolence or evil for it concerns a large bird with black feathers; 蛤蟆 [há ma]/crapaud ‘toad’ connotes ugliness and vulgarity for this species has leathery skin. Likewise, animals of a fierce nature could receive an image of violent predators, and the consequence is that their names signify cruelty, ferociousness and voraciousness, as in the case of 狼 [láng]/loup ‘wolf’ or 鲨鱼 [shā yú]/requin ‘shark’. In regard to relations with other animals, the everlasting antagonism between a cat and a mouse, or a fox and a chicken would contribute to form the prototype of the strong and the weak, resulting in the coexistence of their names in both Chinese and French idiomatic expressions, with a view to express various significations based on this unequal rivalry.

Concerning a certain species, if attention is focused on the same aspect of the animal referent, the related representations in different cultures would present similarities and hence account for the coincidence of the figurative/symbolic significations of their names in the corresponding languages. To be specific, a parrot is a bird with a curved beak as well as the ability to mimic sounds, which constitutes a focus common to its representation in Chinese culture and that in French culture. Consequently, both 鹦鹉 [yīng wǔ] ‘parrot’ and *perroquet* ‘parrot’ symbolize an excellent but mindless imitator as in 鹦鹉学舌 ‘A parrot copies what people say’ and *répéter comme un perroquet* ‘to repeat like a parrot’.¹ Similarly, representations of wolf in both Chinese and French cultures have the same focus on the fierce, voracious and vicious nature of this carnivorous predator. Therefore, 狼 [láng] ‘wolf’ and *loup* ‘wolf’ both imply ferociousness, voraciousness and viciousness as in the following:

- 2a) A wolf could change its fur but never its nature. (狼毛会褪换, 狼性不会改);
 2b) A wolf will die in its skin. (*Le loup mourra dans sa peau*).²
 3a) If you let a wolf pad into your house—it would be to incur dangers for yourself.
 (引狼入室——自己害自己);
 3b) to fall into the jaws of a wolf (*tomber dans la gueule du loup*).³

1 It can be seen from this pair of examples that the coincidence relies not only on the figurative/symbolic significations of the related animal names but also on the constitution of idiomatic expressions in the two languages.

2 This is an old idiomatic expression, which claims that vicious people will never become kind-hearted.

3 It signifies that a person is unconsciously exposed to an imminent danger.

Another example is an insect with a yellow and black striped body capable of producing honey, referred to as 蜜蜂 [mì fēng] ‘bee’ in Chinese and *abeille* in French. With the focus on its busy work, the similar representations of a bee explain why both of the Chinese and French names connote busyness and diligence as in ‘a bee in spring—to never waste a moment’ (春天的蜜蜂——闲不住) and ‘This is a real bee’ *C’est une véritable abeille*.¹

In rare cases, even though attention is focused on distinct aspects of a certain animal referent, there would still be similar animal representations in different cultures, leading to the coincidence of the polysemy of the related animal names in the corresponding languages. For example, a louse is a blood-sucking insect living on the bodies of people or animals, and represented as a nasty parasite with a focus on its habit of biting people in order to feed off their blood in Chinese culture, and another one on its ugly appearance with a flattened body in French culture. It is due to the similarity of representations in a broader sense that both 虱子 [shī zi] ‘louse’ and *pou* imply nastiness as in ‘to put lice in hair—it would be to make troubles for oneself’ (头发里放虱子——自寻烦恼) and ‘as ugly as a louse’ (*laid comme un pou*).

3.2.2 Divergence

Conversely, although attention is focused on the same aspect of a certain animal referent, the related representations may vary from culture to culture and thereby provide an explanation for the divergence of the figurative/symbolic significations of their names in the corresponding languages. For example, a peacock has a crested head and a very large tail marked with iridescent spots that it can spread out like a fan; the same focus on the appearance of this bird brings about different representations in Chinese and French cultures. In the eyes of the Chinese, a peacock is a beautiful bird and hence its name 孔雀 [kǒng què] ‘peacock’ symbolizes beauty, which could be matched with virtue, as in ‘The beauty of a peacock relies on its crest, the virtue of a man depends on his words and deeds’ (孔雀美丽看花翎, 人的品德看言行); it also concerns a bird that likes to attract others’ attention and therefore its name connotes pretentiousness and pride as in 孔雀开屏——翘尾巴 ‘A peacock spreads its tail—it is displaying its fine tail feathers’.² For the French, the splendid fanlike tail of a peacock as well as its habit of strutting around justifies substantially that the French name *paon*

1 It is used to describe a person as industrious.

2 The image of a bird that sticks its tail up is considered in Chinese culture as an act to draw attention to itself, and judged as a symbol of vanity and arrogance.

‘peacock’ has the connotations of vanity and arrogance similar to its counterpart in Chinese, as in *fier/vaniteux/orgueilleux comme un paon* ‘as proud/conceited/arrogant as a peacock’. Consequently, it can be seen from this example that an ambivalent representation of a peacock leads to both commendatory and pejorative figurative/symbolic significations of its Chinese name, and that a negative representation of this species accounts for the pejorative connotations of its French name. To give another example, a shark is a carnivorous fish with very sharp teeth; however, the same focus on its nature as a large predator does not produce similar representations between Chinese and French cultures. This species is judged as violent and ruthless in Chinese culture but as voracious and greedy in French culture. Consequently, while the Chinese name 鲨鱼 [shā yú] ‘shark’ implies violence and cruelty as in 鲨鱼掉眼泪——假慈悲 ‘If a shark sheds tears—it is completely an illusion of kindness’; The French name *requin* ‘shark’ connotes voraciousness and especially avarice as in *un requin* ‘to be a shark’.¹

A third example concerns the social insects living in organized colonies, and referred to respectively as 蚂蚁 [mǎ yǐ] ‘ant’ and *fourmi* ‘ant’. In spite of the same focus on their work in large groups, ants are represented as excellent collaborators in Chinese culture and meticulous workers in French culture. As a result, the Chinese name signifies cooperation as in 人心坚，不怕天；蚂蚁能搬太行山 ‘If all of us join our efforts, no difficulty will not be overcome; if all ants work together, even the Taihang Mountains² will be moved’. The French name implies meticulousness as in *un travail de fourmi* ‘an ant’s work’.³

In other cases, since attention is focused on distinct aspects of a certain species, it would be possible that animal representations differ from each other across cultures, resulting in the divergence of the polysemy of the related animal names in the corresponding languages. One of the best examples is a magpie, which has black-and-white feathers and a long tail. In Chinese culture, a magpie is traditionally represented as an auspicious omen of happiness,⁴ and its appearing as well as its call is believed to predict that a propitious thing will happen soon. Consequently, the Chinese name 喜鹊

1 It is used to describe a person as greedy and arriviste.

2 The Taihang Mountains are a Chinese mountain range situated in Shanxi, Henan and Hebei provinces. With an average elevation of 1500 to 2000 meters, the Taihang Mountains are in this idiomatic expression compared to a huge difficulty, which seems to be insurmountable.

3 It signifies a work that has been accomplished in a meticulous manner and usually during a long time.

4 Thus, it is difficult to find the origins of this traditional belief.

[xǐ què] ‘magpie’ symbolizes auspiciousness and happiness as in 喜鹊飞进洞房里——喜上加喜 ‘A magpie flies towards a matrimonial home—luck never come alone’.¹ The focus has also been placed on one of the typical habits of a magpie, i.e. to perch high on a tree, and contributes to form the representation of a conceited bird. That is why its name implies vanity as in 属喜鹊的——好登高枝 ‘to be born under the zodiac sign of magpie—this person likes so much to show off in front of others’.² For the French, the representation of a magpie is rather negative with the focuses on its chattering call as well as its habit of collecting and keeping things that are usually of little value. In consequence, the French name *pie* ‘magpie’ connotes noisiness and pilfering, as illustrated respectively in *être bavarde comme une pie* ‘to be noisy like a magpie’ and *voleur comme une pie* ‘a thief just like a magpie’.³ As another example, a crab is a sea creature covered by a broad flat carapace and has five pairs of legs with large claws on the front pair. While the representation of a crab in Chinese culture is related to the focuses on its shell and its habit of moving sideways, that in French culture depends a great deal on its appearance, its aggressive nature as well as its preference for immobility and quietness. Therefore, the Chinese name 螃蟹 [páng xiè] ‘crab’ signifies subtlety and imperiousness, but its counterpart *crabe* ‘crab’ receives other pejorative connotations such as ugliness, bad temperament, silliness and laziness. As in the following:

4a) The flesh of a crab—it is covered by its shell. (螃蟹的肉——藏在肚里);⁴

4b) A crab teaches its child to walk—the young will never walk in a straight direction.

(螃蟹教子, 不走正道).⁵

1 It signifies that the appearing of a magpie presents another auspicious omen in addition to the coming ceremony of marriage, which is regarded as an important activity of auspiciousness.

2 In Chinese culture, it is widely believed that the one who was born under a certain zodiac sign would exhibit the characteristics similar to the species symbolized by the sign. For example, a person with the zodiac sign of monkey would be very intelligent, agile or even irritable. Although a magpie is not one of the twelve Chinese zodiac signs, it is also possible to generalize the pattern “a zodiac sign would justify a person’s characteristics” and deduce another one “a person’s characteristics could be explained by his zodiac sign”. Because of this, the above saying with the latter-part suspended is used to describe a person as pretentious just like a magpie, which usually perches high on a tree.

3 It refers particularly to an impenitent thief.

4 It signifies in a figurative sense that a person hides what is important to him.

5 A crab’s particular manner of moving provides an allusion to an imperious person or one who follows an abnormal path, which is often erroneous.

5a) an old crab (*un vieux crabe*),¹

5b) as lazy as a crab (*feignant comme un crabe*).

To present a third example, a fly is a common insect with two wings. In Chinese culture, the representation of a fly focuses on its habit of eating dirty things and transmitting bacteria at the same time. For this reason, its name 苍蝇 [cāng yíng] ‘fly’ implies filthiness and sordidness as in 苍蝇偏向臭处飞 ‘A fly always flies towards stinking things’ and 苍蝇跟屎壳郎交朋友——臭味相投 ‘A fly makes friends with a dung beetle—one always finds his congeners’. By contrast, a fly is represented in French culture with focuses on its agile mobility and active flight. Thereby, the French name *mouche* ‘fly’ signifies agility, craftiness and irascibility as in *une fine mouche* ‘a subtle fly’² and *prendre la mouche* ‘to take a fly’.³

3.3 Animals in Human Society: The Middle-stratum of Animal Representations

As objects of exploitation, animals living within the human society are endowed with shared representations in the process of human beings’ activities, especially in conformity with their life experiences and spiritual expectances. That is why “equivalent” animal names exhibit similarities and differences in terms of figurative/symbolic signification in the comparison of Chinese and French.

3.3.1 Coincidence

In a general sense, representations are above all based on the observation of domesticated animals, which are relatively familiar to human beings in social life. A duck has a depressed body, short legs and webbed feet; so does a goose: they are both represented as awkward walkers in Chinese and French cultures. As a result, 鸭 [yā]/ *canard* ‘duck’ signifies clumsiness and 鹅 [é]/*oie* ‘goose’ implies imbecility. It is the same case for a donkey or a mule, which seems resistant to the burdens imposed on it. Because of the similar representations of uncooperative animals, the Chinese and French names 驴 [lǘ]/*âne* ‘donkey’ and 骡子 [luó zi]/*mulet* ‘mule’ both have the connotation of stubbornness. Furthermore, animal representations rely mainly on

1 It refers to an ugly person especially one who is bowlegged because of age, or a person with a fractious temperament, or an old and silly man.

2 It is used to describe a person as very cunning and subtle.

3 It signifies that a person easily rages about something trivial or in other cases a person provokes someone else for no reason.

the exploitation of animals by human beings for various purposes. In China,¹ pigs as well as cattle are farmed for their meat and represented as a source of wealth for a peasant's family. That is why both 猪 [zhū] 'pig' and 牛 [niú] 'cattle' signify affluence and wealth. In France, cows are kept for their milk and hens for their eggs, leading to similar representations of farm animals. For this reason, both *vache* 'cow' and *poule* 'hen' imply benefits. Likewise, oxen and horses are used for pulling vehicles or carrying things in China and in France, accounting for their representations of beasts of burden. In consequence, 牛 [niú] 'cattle' and *cheval* 'horse' receive the same connotations of force and power.²

With regard to a certain species, as attention could be focused on the same aspect or distinct aspects of the animal referent, representations would show similarities or differences across cultures and bring about the coincidence or divergence in terms of figurative/symbolic significations of animal names in the corresponding languages. Consequently, there would be four cases in the comparison of "equivalent" animal names between Chinese and French: 1) similar representations with the same focus—coincidence of the polysemy of animal names; 2) similar representations with distinct focuses—coincidence of the polysemy of animal names; 3) different representations with the same focus—divergence of the polysemy of animal names; 4) different representations with distinct focuses—divergence of the polysemy of animal names. Figure 2 illustrates the point:

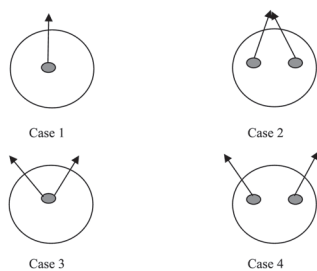


Figure 2: Patterns of coincidence / divergence in comparing “equivalent”

1 This example is not used to emphasize that pigs or cattle are farmed only in China, but to justify their representations in the eyes of the Chinese and thereby the figurative/symbolic significations of their names in Chinese. Similar comments would be valid for the following example in this paragraph.

2 In China as well as in France, both oxen and horses are regarded as beasts of burden. However, a similar relationship in terms of connotation exists between the Chinese name of cattle (including oxen) and the French name of horses. Moreover, it can be seen from this example that the polysemy of animal names depends greatly on the representations of a certain species but is effectively influenced by others factors.

Chinese and French Animal Names

As the discussions in the proceeding section have covered these four cases, this section follows the same method, i.e., it deals with cases of coincidence according to the first two cases and treats those of divergence in conformity with the latter two.

To substantiate Case 1, a duck could be taken as an example. With focuses on its manner of walking and its ability to swim in water, a duck is represented as an awkward walker but also an excellent swimmer. Therefore, both 鸭 [yā] ‘duck’ and *canard* signify clumsiness as in ‘To force a duck to jump onto a shelf is as impossible as to oblige a cock to lay eggs’ (打鸭子上架, 逼公鸡下蛋) and ‘to walk, waddle like a duck’ (*marcher, se dandiner comme un canard*); the two animal names also imply proficiency in swimming as in ‘Mountains are never high enough to hide the Sun, and waters are never abundant enough to drown a duck’ (山高挡不住太阳, 水大漫不过鸭子) and ‘to swim like a duck’ (*nager comme un canard*). Another example concerns a pig, which is an omnivorous animal with a stout body and is kept in pens for its meat. Since focuses are placed on these aspects of the species, representations of a pig seems to be negative in both Chinese and French cultures. That is why 猪 [zhū] ‘pig’ and *cochon* equally receive pejorative connotations such as greediness, stupidity and dirtiness, as shown respectively in the following:

- 6a) A herd of pigs crowd around the trough—to fall over each other. (群猪争食——互不相让);
- 6b) to eat like a pig (*manger comme un porc, un cochon*).¹
- 7a) A man with a head of pig—he is so stupid. (猪脑袋——不开窍);
- 7b) It is as silly as a pig. (*C'est bête comme cochon*).²
- 8a) As contemptible as a pig, and as insidious as a dog. (猪卑狗险);³
- 8b) to play a pig's trick (*jouer un tour de cochon*).⁴

As a third example, consider the mouse, a small rodent with pointed snout and a long tail.⁵ Due to the observation of its appearance as well as its cowardly nature,

1 It is used to describe a person who eats gluttonously and dirtily.

2 It signifies an extraordinarily simple or easy thing, so that even a pig is capable of knowing or doing it.

3 In this phrasal idiom with four Chinese characters, the figurative/symbolic signification of dirtiness is related to the focus on the fact that a pig is always accustomed to its dirty pen.

4 It refers to a person who plays a dirty trick on someone else.

5 Among domesticated animals mentioned in this section, the mouse is an exception. However, it

a mouse is endowed with similar representations with the same focuses in Chinese and French cultures. In consequence, 鼠 [shǔ] ‘mouse’ symbolizes insignificance and cowardice as in ‘A person who is as petty as a mouse or sparrow’ (鼠雀之辈) and ‘When a mouse intends to run out from its cave—it looks around’ (出洞的老鼠——左顾右盼); likewise, *souris* ‘mouse’ has similar figurative/symbolic significations as in ‘A mountain gives birth to a mouse’ (*La montagne accouche d’une souris*)¹ and ‘It seems that he would be forced to hide himself in a mouse’s cave’ (*On le ferait se cacher dans un trou de souris*). Furthermore, a mouse is regarded as the prototype of a thief in both Chinese and French cultures, for this small rodent collects and hides food in its hole everything, especially cereals. Thus, both 鼠 [shǔ] ‘mouse’ and *souris* ‘mouse’ imply thieving as in ‘A mouse takes charge of a granary—the longer it remains at its post, the less cereal will be left’ (老鼠管粮仓——越管越少) and ‘to act like a mouse’ (*faire la souris*).²

For Case 2, supporting evidence seems to be marginal. As farm animals, cattle receive similar positive representations with a focus on the exploitation of their meat in Chinese culture and a focus on that of the milk of females in French culture. Because of this, both 牛 [niú] ‘cattle’ and *vache* imply an affluent life as in ‘A head of cattle is worth half the fortune of a peasant’s family’ (一头牛, 半个家) and ‘a cow that offers its milk’ (*la vache à lait*).³ By contrast, cattle are associated with similar negative representations in the eyes of human beings: the Chinese focus attention on their large bodies and slow movement while the French prefer to focus on their contemplative appearances. Consequently, both the Chinese and French names signify sluggishness and clumsiness as in ‘to play the Chinese lute for a head of cattle’ (对牛弹琴)⁴ and ‘to resemble a cow that is watching trains pass by’ (*ressembler à une vache qui regarde passer les trains*).⁵ In addition, the massive bodies of cattle are not neglected in French culture and *bœuf* ‘cattle’ or ‘ox’ has the same connotations as in ‘as heavy

concerns a common animal in human society, which dares to live near human beings and “share” with them food and fate. That is why this species is taken as an example to strengthen the point in the above discussions.

1 It signifies in an ironic manner an ambitious enterprise that ends up with no result.

2 This is an old idiomatic expression, which signifies that a person skillfully searches some else’s pocket.

3 It signifies a person or a thing that one profits from.

4 It is used to ridicule a person who is too stupid to appreciate the music played by an expert, or a person who is so stupid to play a piece of wonderful music for someone unable to understand it.

5 It refers to a person with an apathetic and simple expression.

as a bull/an ox' (*lourd comme un bœuf*).¹ It can be seen from this example that similar representations with distinct focuses would be formed across cultures but also within a given culture, leading to the coincidence of the polysemy of animal names between different languages and even in the same language.

3.3.2 Divergence

With regard to Case 3, the first example would be a chicken, a common domestic fowl. Despite the same focus on its combative behavior, a cock is represented as a brave animal in Chinese culture and a belligerent animal in French culture. Accordingly, 公鸡 [gōng jī] 'cock' signifies courage as in 'When cocks meet in a fight—they glare at each other' (公鸡打架——头对头);² while *coq* 'cock' implies impetuosity and bellicosity as in 'as red as a cock' (*rouge comme un coq*).³ Regarding a hen, the same focus on its call does not bring about similar representations: pompous in the eyes of the Chinese but noisy for the French. Thereby, 母鸡 [mǔ jī] 'hen' and *poule* connote respectively pompousness and noisiness as in 'A hen cackles when it has laid an egg, yet small merits are not worth loud praise for oneself' (母鸡下蛋咯咯哒, 有了成绩莫自夸) and 'Squawks with a good beak, just like the hen of my aunt' (*Caquet bon bec, la poule à ma tante*).⁴ To give another example, a donkey is widely used as a beast of burden. Since its representations exhibit more similarities than differences between Chinese and French, 驴 [lǘ] 'donkey' and *âne* both symbolize foolishness, stubbornness as well as laziness. However, with a focus on its silence in work, a donkey is endowed with a relatively complicated representation in Chinese culture. That is why the Chinese name receives the connotation of resignation, which is absent from its counterpart in French, as in 'A harnessed donkey—it works to the benefit of human beings' (戴上笼头的小毛驴——听人使唤). In other words, the focus mentioned above complicates the representation of a donkey in Chinese culture, but seems to be neglected by the French or contribute to strengthen the established representation of a donkey as a silly animal in French culture. For this reason, 驴 [lǘ] 'donkey' has more figurative/symbolic significations by comparison with *âne* 'donkey'.

A third example is still more particular. Kept by human beings to guard or hunt,

1 In this idiom, heaviness of the body of this species is believed to account for its slow-witted mind.

2 This aggressive behavior of a cock at the beginning of a fight is considered in Chinese culture as the manifestation of courage in front of antagonists.

3 It is used to describe a person who is easily irritated, and by extension refer to a person touched by a strong emotion such as shame or shyness.

4 It signifies an unflinching talk or a chattering and defamatory person.

a dog is associated with an ambivalent representation in Chinese culture: it concerns a faithful protector but also a blind servant. In consequence, 狗 [gǒu] ‘dog’ signifies fidelity and servility as in ‘A son will never abandon his mother because of her ugliness, a dog will never leave a house in view of its poverty’ (子不嫌母丑, 狗不嫌家贫) and ‘A dog growls by counting on its master’s power’ (狗仗人势).¹ In French culture, the same focus on the services offered by a dog to human beings accounts for a similar representation with more emphasis on its negative aspect. That is to say, a dog is rather a blind servant than a faithful protector in the eyes of the French. Thus, *chien* ‘dog’ has the commendatory signification in addition to the pejorative one as in ‘as faithful as a dog’ (*fidèle comme un chien*) and ‘to act like a couchant dog’ (*faire le chien couchant*).² It can be seen from this example that the same focus would lead to (an) ambivalent representation(s) across cultures as well as within a given culture, and that the parallelism between two cultures does not exclude minor differences.

Concerning the fourth case, it is possible to mention chickens again, due to the complexity of their representations. In Chinese culture, a cock is considered as an honest animal since the focus is placed on its regular crows whereas in French culture, it constitutes the prototype of masculinity for the focus is put on its role as a male. Consequently, 公鸡 [gōng jī] ‘cock’ connotes honesty as in ‘With neither praise nor reward, a cock always announces the start of a new day’ (雄鸡没人嘉奖, 照样天天报晓)³ but *coq* ‘cock’ implies masculinity as in ‘a cock of the village’ (*le coq du village*).⁴ Besides its squawks, a hen receives a relatively complicated representation in French culture, with a focus on its timorous nature and another on its overprotection of its chicks. That is why *poule* ‘hen’ signifies timorousness and indulgence as in ‘to be like a hen which has found a knife’ (*être comme une poule qui a trouvé un couteau*)⁵ and ‘a mother who acts like a hen’ (*mère poule*).⁶ As another typical example, a horse is indispensable to human society with its various roles in agriculture, transport, war,

1 It refers to a person who does violent or dishonest things to others in order to execute the orders of his ringleader.

2 It describes a person who flatters someone else or obeys despicably the requirements of this person in order to obtain his favor.

3 It should be noted that 雄鸡 [xióng jī] ‘cock’ in this idiom is synonymous to 公鸡 [gōng jī] ‘cock’.

4 It is used to describe a seducer who runs after every girl in the village or who is the most admired by all the girls of the village.

5 It describes a person who is stunned or embarrassed by nothing important.

6 It refers, in a tempered or kindly ironic manner, to a mother who pays too much attention and devotes too much to her child.

etc. Owing to the focus on its remarkable ability to run, a horse is represented as a fast and tireless runner in the eyes of the Chinese. Therefore, 马 [mǎ] ‘horse’ symbolizes speed and endurance as in ‘A horse keeps prancing on its way’ (马不停蹄). Moreover, this representation of a horse leads to other connotations of its Chinese name like courage and determination as in ‘to be the first among horses’ (一马当先).¹ On the contrary, the French prefer to focus attention on the appearance of a horse as well as its role as a beast of burden. Hence, *cheval* ‘horse’ implies robustness and ignorance as in ‘This is a big horse’ (*C’est un grand cheval*)² and ‘a horse used for pulling coaches, ploughs’ (*cheval de carrosse, de charrue*).³ It can be seen from this example that commendatory significations of the Chinese name of a horse depends greatly on the positive representation of this animal, while pejorative significations of the French name of a horse relies a great deal on its negative representation. To illustrate the point with a third example, a mule is a common farm animal in China as well as in France. While a focus is placed on the origin of this species, accounting for its representation as a hybrid animal in Chinese culture, another focus is put on its role, leading to the representation of a beast of burden in French culture. Accordingly, 骡子 [luó zi] ‘mule’ connotes hybridism as in ‘a mule’s face—it resembles neither a donkey nor a horse’ (骡子的脸——非驴非马) but *mule* ‘female mule’ or ‘jenny’ signifies labor as in ‘to be loaded like a jenny, a mule’ (*chargé comme une mule, un mulet*).⁴

3.4 Animals in the Common Imagination: The Superstratum of Animal Representations

Emerging in human minds are animal personages or imaginary animals that receive shared representations depending on the will of human beings, i.e. their representations are formed to a great extent on the basis of human beings’ ways of thinking and systems of value. Because of this, “equivalent” animal names have particular figurative/symbolic significations within given cultures, as in Chinese or French culture.

1 It refers to a person who takes the initiative in an enterprise.

2 It describes a woman of imposing stature or at a masculine pace.

3 It refers to a person who is ignorant, coarse and often insubordinate.

4 It means that a person carries a heavy load. In addition, it should be noted that mule ‘female mule’ or ‘jenny’ and mulet ‘mule’ have similar connotations in French.

3.4.1 Animal Personages

Among animals in the physical world, some are regarded by people to be animal personages in fairy stories, literary works and traditional beliefs. Regarding a certain species, its representation as an animal personage may change to some extent by comparison with that as an animal in nature or human society. In other words, when an animal referent shifts the position from the physical world to common imagination, the previously established representation may be enhanced or modified. Consequently, animal names highlight some of their figurative/symbolic significations or receive additional ones in the corresponding cultures.

In some cases, previous representations are enhanced with an emphasis on the focuses that have already been noticed. In Chinese culture, one of the most famous animal personages is 孙悟空 [sūn wù kōng] ‘Monkey King’, disciple of the monk Xuanzang (Tripitaka) in *Journey to the West* (《西游记》).¹ With arboreal habits and the ability to imitate others, a monkey is represented as an agile, intelligent but impetuous animal. These focuses are emphasized to endow the Monkey King with extraordinary capabilities; e.g., he can jump into the air and travel on clouds over vast distances, he can overcome all kinds of difficulties during a pilgrimage, he can transform himself into 72 different figures and so on. But the Monkey King also has an impatient temperament as well as a tendency to disobey his master. In fact, the representation of a monkey has been enhanced to form a new one for the Monkey King, and thereby the two names 猴 [hóu] ‘monkey’ and 孙悟空 [sūn wù kōng] ‘Monkey King’ have similar connotations such as agility, intelligence, irritability and disobedience. As an animal personage, the Monkey King is widely known in China to the extent that some episodes in *Journey to the West* are summarized in idiomatic expressions in Chinese, as in the following:

- 10a) By a somersault, the Monkey King is able to travel 108 000 *li*. (一个筋斗十万八千里);²
- 10b) The Monkey King defeated the Baigu Spirit three times. (三打白骨精);³

1 *Journey to the West* (《西游记》), as one of the Four Great Classical Novels of Chinese literature, is a fictionalized account of the pilgrimage to India of the Buddhist monk Xuanzang with his four disciples.

2 *Li* is a Chinese unit of length. 1 *li* = 0.5 kilometer.

3 During the pilgrimage, Tripitaka and his disciples encounter 81 tribulations, for various monsters, demons as well as animal spirits try eat Tripitaka’s flesh in order to obtain immortality. Formed from skeletons, the Baigu Spirit has the same intention and transforms itself into a human figures to cheat Tripitaka’s sympathy. However, the Monkey King sees through this disguise; he fights off the Baigu Spirit

10c) The Monkey King revolted in the Palace of Heaven. (大闹天宫).¹

Likewise, carps become animal personages without specific names in an ancient Chinese legend. It was long ago when Da Yu² had been given charge of fighting floods. One day, he found a high mountain that impeded a watercourse and split it in half with his axe in order to drain the floodwater. However, this exploit dissatisfied the carps previously living upstream, for they were brought downstream and could never return back home. Da Yu's wife was so intelligent that she quickly had an idea: these carps should be authorized by the Jade Emperor³ to try jumping over this split mountain, named the "Portal of Dragon". Any carp that succeeds will be transformed into a real dragon; otherwise, it will pass its life downstream as a fish. Since this compromise was made, every carp comes to get its chance but hardly any succeeds. As time passes, this legend has turned into an idiomatic expression in Chinese "鲤鱼跳龙门", which signifies literally a carp having jumped over the "Portal of Dragon" and refers figuratively to a person who has obtained the greatest honor because of his success. It can be seen from this example that the connotations of vitality and energy are highlighted for the Chinese name 鲤鱼 [lǐ yú] 'carp' due to an enhanced representation emphasizing the focus on the fact that carps jump energetically and constantly once out of water.

In French culture, the Renart is a famous animal personage as the protagonist in *Roman de Renart*.⁴ With pointed muzzle and ears, reddish-brown fur as well as a bushy tail, a fox is represented as a sly and deceitful predator and thereby its name *renard* 'fox' implies slyness, malice, artifice and deception. Having the same appearance and habits, the fox named Renart receives an enhanced representation of its species to such an extent that the original name of a fox in French *goupil* 'fox' has been finally replaced by the name of this animal personage Renart, with a minor modification of the final sound shift (t > d) during language evolution, and always highlighting the similar pejorative connotations. Also, some of the episodes in *Roman de Renart* have been transformed into idiomatic expressions in French, e.g., *Il ne faut pas se confesser au renard* 'Never

twice and, in the third encounter, beats it to death.

1 This episode demonstrates the Monkey King's rebellion against Heaven.

2 Da Yu (大禹[dà yǔ]), literally 'the Great Yu', is a Chinese legendary hero famed for his fight against floods.

3 The Jade Emperor (玉帝[yù dì]) is the ruler of Heaven in Chinese mythology.

4 *Roman de Renart* 'Stories of Reynard the Fox' is a compilation of medieval stories concerning Renart.

confess to a fox’, evoking the scene in which Renart pretends to be a priest in an attempt to catch some ewes. Besides, various animals become personages in *Fables de La Fontaine*.¹ To be specific, ants are social insects that reserve food in their colonies for winter. Emphasizing the focus on this habit, the representation of an ant as an animal personage is an enhanced version of that of an ant in the physical world. Accordingly, connotations such as foresight, egoism and stinginess are highlighted concerning the French name *fourmi* ‘ant’ as in *La fourmi n’est pas prêteuse* ‘The ant is never willing to lend’,² formed from a fable titled *La cigale et la fourmi* ‘The Ant and the Grasshopper’.

In other cases, previous representations are modified with new focuses placed on other aspects of the related animals. In Chinese culture, a sheep is usually represented as a docile and defenseless animal, which is readily preyed upon. That is why its name 羊 [yáng] ‘sheep’ symbolizes docility, vulnerability and lack of aggressiveness. As a new focus is placed on the fact that a lamb kneels when it sucks its mother’s breast, this species has become in the eyes of the Chinese a perfect incarnation of filial piety and respect towards one’s parents. Therefore, a sheep is endowed with a modified representation according to Chinese traditional beliefs, and 羊 [yáng] ‘sheep’ receives the connotation of filial obedience as in ‘A lamb kneels when a ewe nurses it, with a view to show respect towards its mother’ (羊有跪乳之恩). Another example concerns a magpie, a common bird with black-and-white feathers and a long tail. In addition to its habits, a magpie is traditionally believed to presage the arrival of propitious things and hence represented as an auspicious omen for happiness. As proof, the Chinese name 喜鹊 [xǐ què] ‘magpie’ signifies literally ‘a magpie, which brings happiness’ and implies auspiciousness in idiomatic expressions such as ‘A magpie stops just in front of our house—a happy thing is coming soon’ (门前喜鹊叫——好事儿来了).

In French culture, a swan has a positive representation owing to its white plumage and its name *cygne* ‘swan’ connotes beauty and elegance. Besides this, the focus on the call of a swan may have inspired an ancient legend in which a swan utters the most melodious call when it is dying. Consequently, the modified representation of a swan enriches the connotations of its name as in *le chant du cygne* ‘a song of a swan’, which refers figuratively to a talented artist’s last work, considered as his best creation.

1 *Fables de La Fontaine*, published in several volumes from 1668 to 1694, is viewed as a classic of French literature.

2 It refers in particular to a stingy person.

To give another example, a snake is represented as a pernicious and devious animal, accounting for the pejorative significations of its name. Moreover, *serpent* ‘snake’ implies ingratitude due to a modified representation of this species, probably formed in a fable titled *The Peasant and the Snake*:¹ One day in a glacial winter, a peasant saved a snake that had become numb. However, no sooner had the snake come to life than it gave a fatal bite to its benefactor. There is also an idiomatic expression related to this fable: *réchauffer un serpent dans son sein* ‘to warm up a snake at one’s breast’, signifying that a person becomes victim of the one he once helped.

3.4.2 Imaginary Animals

Imaginary animals have no existence in the physical world, but obtain their representations and names as real animals. In fact, these representations are created by human beings according to those of animals in the physical world. That is to say, an imaginary animal’s representation constitutes in a sense a mosaic of several real animals’ appearances as well as their characteristics. As a result, it is possible that “equivalent” animal names² refer to distinct imaginary animals in different cultures, and their figurative/symbolic significations vary greatly from culture to culture.

One of the best examples is 龙 [lóng] ‘Chinese dragon’/‘dragon’. An emblem of China, a Chinese dragon occupies an indispensable place in the common imagination of the Chinese, who believe themselves to be the descendants of this giant legendary creature. It originally had the elongated body of a snake covered with the scales of a fish, and as time passes acquires successively the branched antlers of the deer, the mane of the horse, the claws of the hawk as so on. With such an appearance as well as many extraordinary abilities, a dragon is represented in Chinese culture as the King of aquatic animals, and hence its name implies majesty and danger as in ‘A Chinese dragon engenders a Chinese dragon and a Chinese phoenix brings forth a Chinese phoenix, while a mouse’s offspring is congenitally capable of digging holes (龙生龙, 凤生凤, 老鼠儿子会打洞)³ and ‘Hardly has he escaped from the pool where hides a

1 The Peasant and the Snake is a fable credited to Aesop.

2 In this paper, “equivalent” animal names are generally used in the sense that they refer to the same species in different languages. With regard to imaginary animal names, the term “equivalent” has a different meaning. Specifically, these names are believed to or seem to denote the same imaginary animal. However, as representations of imaginary animals are closely related to the given cultures, “equivalent” animal names concern effectively distinct imaginary animals in different cultures.

3 In a figurative manner, this proverb emphasizes the distinction between people of nobility and those of humble birth.

Chinese dragon when he falls into a tiger's den' (才脱龙潭，又入虎穴)。¹ Based on this, 龙 [lóng] 'Chinese dragon' became in Chinese feudal society a term exclusively reserved for emperors, as in 'the real Chinese dragon and son of Heaven' (真龙天子)。² Related to its majestic status, a Chinese dragon would be rarely seen, which accounts for another signification of its name: a remarkable person with distinguished morality and talent. As evidence, 望子成龙 'to hope that one's son will become a Chinese dragon' expresses in a figurative sense the ardent expectations held by a pair of parents for their son. Furthermore, 龙 [lóng] 'Chinese dragon' symbolizes masculinity when compared with 凤 [fèng] 'Chinese phoenix', symbol of femininity, and the coexistence of the two names connotes matrimonial harmony as in 龙凤呈祥 'A couple of a Chinese dragon and a Chinese phoenix constitutes an auspicious omen for happiness'. On the contrary, a dragon in French culture is represented as having wings of a hawk, claws of lion and a tail of a snake (Legrain et al., 2001, p. 348). It concerns in mythology a legendary creature that breathes fire, never sleeps and guards the Golden Fleece. This representation of a guardian explains that *dragon* 'dragon' implies austerity and ferociousness as in *dragon de vertu*³ 'a dragon of virtue' and *faire le dragon* 'to act like a dragon'.⁴ Besides, a dragon is considered in Bible stories as a symbol of evil and diabolic tendencies. That is why its name becomes the synonym of a demon as in *le dragon, le dragon infernal* 'the (infernal) dragon'.

To give another example, a Chinese phoenix is an imaginary creature with a beak of a parrot, a body of a mandarin duck, feathers of a pheasant, wings of a rook and the claws of a crane. It is represented as the King of flying animals and believed to perch only on Chinese parasols, divine trees according to Chinese traditions. Because of this, 凤 [fèng] 'Chinese phoenix' has connotations similar to those of 龙 [lóng] 'Chinese dragon', i.e. majesty⁵ and rarity. On the one hand, 凤 [fèng] 'Chinese phoenix' appears in idiomatic expressions such as 没有梧桐树，引不了凤凰来⁶ 'Without the Chinese

1 It signifies that a person is unconsciously involved in a succession of extremely dangerous situations.

2 This idiomatic expression constitutes another manner of referring to emperors, for an emperor is believed in Chinese culture to be the son of Heaven and thus the incarnation of a real Chinese dragon.

3 It refers to a person with an austere temperament.

4 It describes a person as ferocious.

5 The connotation of majesty of 龙[lóng] 'Chinese dragon' implies that of danger, while it is not the same case for 凤[fèng] 'Chinese phoenix'.

6 In this proverb, the majestic status of a Chinese phoenix is associated with, or in a sense justified by, the divinity of Chinese parasols.

parasol tree, there will be no Chinese phoenix' and is used as a synonymous term for empresses in Chinese feudal society. On the other hand, the rare appearance of a Chinese phoenix enables its name to signify a distinguished talent as in 凤鸣朝阳¹ 'A Chinese phoenix crows when a new day begins' but also a propitious omen for both the country and a newly married couple as in 凤凰来仪² 'A pair of phoenixes appear and dance with elegance'. Moreover, it should be mentioned that 凤 [fèng] 'Chinese phoenix' symbolizes femininity by comparison with 龙 [lóng] 'Chinese dragon' as in the example above. By contrast, a phoenix in French culture has its origin in Egyptian mythology and is endowed with the ability to revive from its own ashes (Legrain et al., 2001, p. 1591). It is for this reason that *phénix* 'phoenix' implies immortality. Whereas, there seems to be in French no idiomatic expression concerning this legendary creature.³

As a third example, a Chinese unicorn is distinct from a unicorn in French culture, despite the unique horn growing from their foreheads. The former has a body of *milu*⁴ covered with the scales of a fish, hoofs of a horse, the tail of a bull as well as a fleshy horn; while the latter is characterized by a long spiraling horn and a body of a horse (Legrain et al., 2001, p. 595). In addition, a Chinese unicorn is believed to live as long as 2000 or even 3000 years and to be able to bring babies to sterile couples, but its counterpart is considered to have the particular habit of laying its head on the breast of a virgin. These different representations lead to the divergence of the Chinese and French names in terms of both literal meaning and figurative/symbolic signification. Similar to 龙 [lóng] 'Chinese dragon' or 凤 [fèng] 'Chinese phoenix', 麒麟 [qí lín] 'kylin'/'Chinese unicorn' connotes nobility and rarity as in the following:

1 It signifies figuratively that a talented person takes advantage of opportunities in order to show his aptitude.

2 The Chinese name 凤[fèng] 'Chinese phoenix' is a simplified form of 凤凰[fèng huáng] 'Chinese phoenix', in which the two Chinese characters 凤[fèng] and 凰[huáng] refer respectively to male and female phoenixes. That is why the co-appearance of a pair of phoenixes constitutes in Chinese culture an auspicious omen for the country as well as for a newly married couple. However, as the cult of the Chinese dragon is widely spread during a long history in China, the Chinese phoenix has been greatly feminized and ends up being the companion of the Chinese dragon.

3 It should be noted that our studies rely on the two corpora, which are expected to be representative but effectively restrained. In consequence, if there is no idiomatic expression containing a certain animal name in the corpora, it does not signify that the related animal name does not appear in any idiomatic expression in the corresponding language. The same remarks would be valid for the third example in this section.

4 It concerns a species resembling the chevrotain and living only in China.

- 9a) an offspring of a Chinese unicorn or a nestling of a Chinese phoenix (麟子凤雏);¹
- 9b) Those who study are as many as the hairs on a head of cattle; while those who will succeed are as few as the horn of a unicorn. (学如牛毛, 成如麟角);²
- 9c) A unicorn appears only at a prosperous time. (盛世出麒麟).³

It also evokes the extraordinary ability of this legendary creature as in ‘A unicorn brings to a sterile couple a son, who will serve the country when he is grown up’ (麒麟送子).⁴ Conversely, *licorne* ‘unicorn’ symbolizes in French culture masculinity, sexuality and by extension virginity.

4. Summary and Conclusion

This paper has investigated the polysemy of animal names in Chinese and/or French idiomatic expressions in an attempt to answer questions such as: (1) Why do some of the animal names in a certain language receive figurative/symbolic significations and eventually appear in idiomatic expressions? (2) Concerning the animal names used in idiomatic expressions, what are the cases of coincidence and those of divergence in terms of polysemy between Chinese and French? (3) How may we elucidate these linguistic phenomena from a sociolinguistic perspective? To achieve the above objectives, our studies were carried out on the basis of two small corpora of idiomatic expressions, which limit the research scope to representative animal names, i.e. 76 in Chinese and 77 in French, and in the meantime provide examples as supporting evidences in discussions. By means of comparative analysis, it is found that some animal names seem to appear in either Chinese or French idiomatic expressions while others are used “correspondingly” in both languages with either coincidence or divergence of their figurative/symbolic significations.

1 It refers to a person of noble birth.

2 The signification of this idiomatic expression is strengthened by the contrast that every head of cattle has numerous hairs while each unicorn has only one horn.

3 Analogous to 凤凰[fèng huáng] ‘Chinese phoenix’, 麒麟[qí lín] ‘kylin’/‘Chinese unicorn’ is a combination of the name of males and that of females of this imaginary animal, i.e. 麒[qí] and 麟[lín]. And the co-appearance of a couple of unicorns equally constitutes an auspicious omen for the country and to a great extent justifies its prosperity. However, as time passes, 麒麟[qí lín] ‘kylin’/‘Chinese unicorn’ is usually considered as a general term for any unicorn, regardless of sex.

4 In this phrasal idiom with four Chinese characters, the baby brought by a Chinese unicorn is usually called 麟子[lín zǐ] ‘the son of a unicorn’ and thus believed to become a talented person in the future.

From the perspective of *representation*, the polysemy of animal names as well as its coincidence and divergence across languages is attributable to the shared representations associated with animal referents in the given societies/cultures, and these animal representations are rooted in close relationship between animals and human beings. First, animals are referred to in human languages since they are endowed with shared representations depending on the cognition of the related species. Besides literal meanings, some animal names receive gradually figurative/symbolic significations due to the complicatedness of animal representations as human beings deepen their understanding of the related species. Meanwhile, with remarkable cultural impresses on animal representations, these animal names become culturally loaded terms. In short, shared representations bring about a solid foundation on which rely not only literal meanings but also figurative/symbolic significations, i.e. the polysemy of animal names. Based on this, polysemic animal names may appear in idiomatic expressions for a relation of familiarity has been established in human contact with animals. For the same reason, terrestrial animals have relatively complicated representations and their names are used in more idiomatic expressions with much richer figurative/symbolic significations.

Secondly, shared representations are characterized by four levels as regards animals, and this accounts for the coincidence and divergence of the polysemy of animal names between Chinese and French. Level 1 concerns animals existing in the physical world and constitutes the precondition for animal representations. Specifically, animals appearing within the scope of human cognition have the possibility of receiving their representations; animals that human beings have no experience with or cognition of would be seldom endowed with representations. In consequence, the use of animal names in either Chinese or French idiomatic expressions might be explained by the fact that the related animals are absent from the biosphere in France or that in China; although there are rare cases where absent animals are referred to and associated with representations owing to various exchanges between different cultures. At the second and third levels, it concerns respectively animals in nature and human society, and accordingly the substratum and the middle-stratum of animal representations. Regarding the “equivalent” animal names used “correspondingly” in both Chinese and French idiomatic expressions, there are at both of the levels equally four cases providing a detailed explanation for the coincidence and divergence of figurative/symbolic significations of animal names. That is to say, with the same focus

or distinct focuses, similar representations lead to the coincidence of the polysemy of animal names in Case 1 and Case 2; while with the same focus or distinct focuses, different representations result in the divergence of the polysemy of animal names in Case 3 and Case 4. Moreover, for animals in nature, representations rely heavily on their appearances, habits and relations with other animals; and for animals living within human society, representations depend greatly on the observation and the exploitation of animals by human beings. The fourth level concerns animals in the common imagination of human beings, and serves as the superstratum of animal representations. While animal personages have physical existence in the world and their representations are enhanced or modified in fairy stories, literary works, traditional beliefs, etc., imaginary animals do not exist in the physical world but still receive representations, which are formed by the combination of real animals' appearances and their characteristics. As a result, animal names highlight some previous figurative/symbolic significations or acquire additional connotations in the given cultures, whereas animal names of legendary creatures vary from culture to culture in terms of both literal meaning and figurative/symbolic signification. These four levels are illustrated in order of hierarchy in Figure 3:

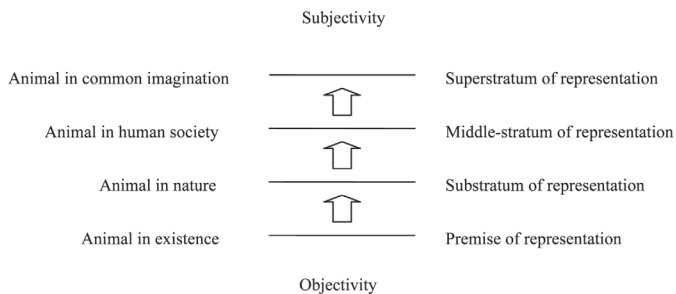


Figure 3: Four-level hierarchy of shared representations

It can be seen from Figure 3 that from the lowest level to the highest level, animal representations are formed according to different degrees between Objectivity and Subjectivity.

Lastly, shared representations are rooted in the coexistence of animals and human beings in the world. On the one hand, animals as objects of human cognition offer a world of familiar images in the eyes of human beings. On the other hand, human

beings consider animals as another self and tend to attribute their moral values and spiritual expectances to them. That is to say, in their life experiences, human beings have feelings or emotions about animals, and they make judgments or evaluations for animals according to personal likes and dislikes; meanwhile, human beings mark animal representations with cultural impresses, i.e. their ways of thinking, systems of value, etc. which vary from culture to culture. It is in this way that human beings attempt to comprehend the world, reflect on themselves and behave in an appropriate manner.

Based on the discussions in the previous sections, we have come to other conclusions, which are not less significant: (1) For animals absent from a certain biosphere, a translated name would receive a distinct representation when it enters the new culture¹ or bring a new representation formed in conformity with the original one.² (2) Positive representations result in commendatory significations for animal names and negative representations account for pejorative significations;³ while an ambivalent representation leads to both commendatory and pejorative figurative/symbolic significations.⁴ (3) Similar representations with distinct focuses can be formed within a given culture as well as across cultures, causing the coincidence of the polysemy of animal names in the same language and between different languages;⁵ while the same focus could bring about (an) ambivalent representation(s) not only within a given culture but also across cultures, producing the divergence or parallelism of the polysemy of animal names in the same language and between different languages.⁶

In any case, all the representations are effectively incomplete and simplified versions of a complex reality. Incapable of mirroring the physical world, representations are always limited by human cognition, and, at the same time, are susceptible to further development as human beings deepen their cognition. To sum up, the investigations in this paper are not oriented only to the polysemy of animal names as well as its coincidence and divergence between Chinese and French in idiomatic expressions, but also contribute to further research in the areas concerned and application to foreign language teaching and learning.

1 See the example of 虎[hǔ]/tigre 'tiger'.

2 See the example of 蚕[cán]/ver à soie 'silkworm'.

3 See the example of 马[mǎ]/cheval 'horse'.

4 See the example of 孔雀[kǒng què]/paon 'peacock'.

5 See the example of 牛[niú] 'cattle', bœuf 'cattle' or 'ox' and vache 'cow'.

6 See the example of 狗[gǒu]/chien 'dog'.

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Appendix I

	Chinese animal names	French animal names
Category 1: flying creatures	百灵鸟[bǎi líng niǎo]- ‘lark’、白鹭[bái lù]-‘egret’、 蝙蝠[biān fú]-‘bat’、 鹅[é]-‘goose’、凤[fèng]- ‘Chinese phoenix’、海 鸥[hǎi ōu]-‘seagull’、 海燕[hǎi yàn]-‘petrel’、 鸡[jī]-‘chicken’、孔雀 [kǒng què]-‘peacock’、 鲲鹏[kūn péng]-‘roc’、麻雀[má què]-‘sparrow’、鸟[niǎo]-‘bird’、 天鹅[tiān é]-‘swan’、乌鸦 [wū yā]-‘crow or raven’、 喜鹊[xǐ què]-‘magpie’、 鸭[yā]-‘duck’、雁 [yàn]-‘wild goose’、 燕子[yàn zi]-‘swallow’、 鸱[chī]-‘harrier’、 鹰[yīng]-‘hawk’、 鹦鹉[yīng wǔ]-‘parrot’	<i>l’aigle</i> -‘eagle’, <i>la caille</i> -‘quail’, <i>le canard</i> -‘duck’, <i>la chouette</i> - ‘owlet’ or ‘owl’, <i>le coq</i> - ‘cock’, <i>le corbeau</i> -‘raven’, <i>la corneille</i> -‘crow’, <i>le coucou</i> -‘cuckoo’, <i>le cygne</i> -‘swan’, <i>le</i> <i>dindon</i> -‘turkey’, <i>la grive</i> -‘thrush’, <i>la grue</i> -‘crane’, <i>le hibou</i> -‘owl’, <i>l’hirondelle</i> -‘swallow’, <i>le merle</i> -‘blackbird’, <i>le moineau</i> -‘sparrow’, <i>l’oie</i> -‘goose’, <i>l’oiseau</i> - ‘bird’, <i>le paon</i> -‘peacock’, <i>le perroquet</i> -‘parrot’, <i>la pie</i> -‘magpie’, <i>le pigeon</i> -‘pigeon’, <i>le pinson</i> -‘chaffinch’, <i>la poule</i> -‘hen’, <i>le tourtereau</i> -‘little turtledove’

<p>Category 2: a great family of terrestrial animals</p>	<p>豹[bào]-‘leopard’、豺[chái]-‘jackal’、刺猬[cì wei]-‘hedgehog’、狗[gǒu]-‘dog’、猴[hóu]-‘monkey’、虎[hǔ]-‘tiger’、狐狸[hú li]-‘fox’、黄鹿[huáng lù]-‘yellow deer’、黄鼠狼[huáng shǔ láng]-‘yellow weasel’、狼[láng]-‘wolf’、狸猫[lí māo]-‘leopard cat’、骆驼[luò tuo]-‘camel’、骡子[luó zi]-‘mule’、驴[lǘ]-‘donkey’、马[mǎ]-‘horse’、猫[māo]-‘cat’、牛[niú]-‘cattle’、麒麟[qí lín]-‘kylin/Chinese unicorn’、蛇[shé]-‘snake’、兽[shòu]-‘beast’、鼠[shǔ]-‘mouse’、兔[tù]-‘rabbit’、象[xiàng]-‘elephant’、猩猩[xīng xing]-‘ape’、羊[yáng]-‘sheep’、猪[zhū]-‘pig’</p>	<p><i>l’agneau</i>-‘lamb’, <i>l’âne</i>-‘donkey’, <i>la bête</i>-‘beast’, <i>le bœuf</i>-‘cattle’ or ‘ox’, <i>la bourrique</i>-‘donkey’ or ‘jenny’ in familiar language, <i>le chat</i>-‘cat’, <i>le cheval</i>-‘horse’, <i>la chèvre</i>-‘goat’, <i>le chien</i>-‘dog’, <i>le cochon</i>-‘pig’, <i>la couleuvre</i>-‘grass snake’/‘ringed snake’, <i>la girafe</i>-‘giraffe’, <i>le lapin</i>-‘rabbit’, <i>le lézard</i>-‘lizard’, <i>le lièvre</i>-‘hare’, <i>le loup</i>-‘wolf’, <i>le mouton</i>-‘sheep’, <i>la mule</i>-‘female mule’ or ‘jenny’, <i>l’ours</i>-‘bear’, <i>le rat</i>-‘rat’, <i>le renard</i>-‘fox’, <i>le sanglier</i>-‘wild boar’, <i>le serpent</i>-‘snake’, <i>le singe</i>-‘monkey’, <i>la souris</i>-‘mouse’, <i>la taupe</i>-‘mole’, <i>le taureau</i>-‘bull’, <i>le tigre</i>-‘tiger’, <i>la vache</i>-‘cow’, <i>le zèbre</i>-‘zebra’</p>
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<p>Category 3: aquatic creatures</p>	<p>鳄鱼[è yú]-‘crocodile’、蛤蜊[gé li]-‘clam’、龟[guī]-‘turtle, especially tortoise’、蛤蟆[há ma]-‘toad’、甲鱼[jiǎ yú]-‘soft-shelled turtle’、鲤鱼[lǐ yú]-‘carp’、龙[lóng]-‘Chinese dragon’、蚂蟥[mǎ huáng]-‘leech’、泥鳅[ní qiū]-‘loach’、螃蟹[páng xiè]-‘crab’、青蛙[qīng wā]-‘frog’、鲨鱼[shā yú]-‘shark’、虾[xiā]-‘shrimp’、鱼[yú]-‘fish’、猪婆龙¹[zhū pó lóng]-‘Chinese alligator / Yangtze alligator’</p>	<p><i>la baleine</i>-‘whale’, <i>la carpe</i>-‘carp’, <i>le crabe</i>-‘crab’, <i>le crapaud</i>-‘toad’, <i>l’écrevisse</i>-‘crayfish’, <i>la grenouille</i>-‘frog’, <i>le hareng</i>-‘herring’, <i>le poisson</i>-‘fish’, <i>le requin</i>-‘shark’, <i>la sangsue</i>-‘leech’</p>
<p>Category 4: the “smallest” animals</p>	<p>蚕[cán]-‘silkworm’、苍蝇[cāng yíng]-‘fly’、虫[chóng]-‘insect or worm’、黄蜂[huáng fēng]-‘wasp’、蚂蚁[mǎ yǐ]-‘ant’、蜜蜂[mì fēng]-‘bee’、螟虫[míng chóng]-‘snout moth’s larva’、蜻蜓[qīng tíng]-‘dragonfly’、虱子[shī zi]-‘louse’、螳螂[táng láng]-‘mantis’、蚊子[wén zi]-‘mosquito’、蜗牛[wō niú]-‘snail’、蜈蚣[wú gōng]-‘centipede’、蜘蛛[zhī zhū]-‘spider’</p>	<p><i>l’abeille</i>-‘bee’, <i>l’araignée</i>-‘spider’, <i>l’escargot</i>-‘snail’, <i>la fourmi</i>-‘ant’, <i>la guêpe</i>-‘wasp’, <i>le hanneton</i>-‘cockchafer’, <i>l’insecte</i>-‘insect’, <i>la mouche</i>-‘fly’, <i>le papillon</i>-‘butterfly’, <i>le pou</i>-‘louse’, <i>la puce</i>-‘flea’, <i>le ver</i>-‘worm’</p>

1 猪婆龙[zhū pó lóng], commonly believed to be the colloquial name ‘Chinese alligator’/‘Yangtze alligator’, was described in Strange Tales of Liaozhai (《聊斋志异》) as a creature resembling the Chinese dragon, which can fly and live by eating geese and ducks near rivers.

Appendix II

	Chinese animal names	French animal names
Category 1: flying creatures	鹅[é]-‘goose’、鸡 ¹ [jī]-‘chicken’、孔雀[kǒng què]-‘peacock’、麻雀[má què]-‘sparrow’、鸟[niǎo]-‘bird’、天鹅[tiān é]-‘swan’、乌鸦 ² [wū yā]-‘crow or raven’、喜鹊[xǐ què]-‘magpie’、鸭[yā]-‘duck’、燕子[yàn zi]-‘swallow’、鹰[yīng]-‘hawk’、鹦鹉[yīng wǔ]-‘parrot’	<i>l’aigle</i> -‘hawk’, <i>le canard</i> -‘duck’, <i>le coq</i> -‘cock’, <i>le corbeau</i> -‘raven’, <i>la corneille</i> -‘crow’, <i>le cygne</i> -‘swan’, <i>l’hirondelle</i> -‘swallow’, <i>le moineau</i> -‘sparrow’, <i>l’oie</i> -‘goose’, <i>l’oiseau</i> -‘bird’, <i>le paon</i> -‘peacock’, <i>le perroquet</i> -‘parrot’, <i>la pie</i> -‘magpie’, <i>la poule</i> -‘hen’
Category 2: a great family of terrestrial animals	狗[gǒu]-‘dog’、猴[hóu]-‘monkey’、虎[hǔ]-‘tiger’、狐狸[hú li]-‘fox’、狼[láng]-‘wolf’、骡子[luó zi]-‘mule’、驴[lú]-‘donkey’、马[mǎ]-‘horse’、猫[māo]-‘cat’、牛[niú]-‘cattle’、蛇[shé]-‘snake’、兽[shòu]-‘beast’、鼠[shǔ]-‘mouse’、兔[tù]-‘rabbit’、羊[yáng]-‘sheep’、猪[zhū]-‘pig’	<i>l’âne</i> -‘donkey’, <i>la bête</i> -‘beast’, <i>le bœuf</i> -‘cattle or ox’, <i>le chat</i> -‘cat’, <i>le cheval</i> -‘horse’, <i>le chien</i> -‘dog’, <i>le cochon</i> -‘pig’, <i>le lapin</i> -‘rabbit’, <i>le loup</i> -‘wolf’, <i>le mouton</i> -‘sheep’, <i>la mule</i> ³ -‘female mule’ or ‘jenny’, <i>le renard</i> -‘fox’, <i>le serpent</i> -‘snake’, <i>le singe</i> -‘monkey’, <i>la souris</i> -‘mouse’, <i>le tigre</i> -‘tiger’

1 As the Chinese character 鸡[jī] is used as a general term for the gallinaceous fowl, there are two corresponding French words *coq* and *poule*, referring respectively to males and females.

2 The Chinese animal name 乌鸦[wū yā] corresponds semantically to the French word *corneille* ‘crow’, and might extend its denotation to *corbeau* ‘raven’ in the daily life of the Chinese, for both of the two species have black plumage.

3 The French language is characterized by the linguistic phenomenon ‘grammatical gender’ such that all nouns are categorized as either masculine or feminine. Used as a feminine word in French, *mule* refers to females of the species, although it usually has a general signification. That is why we tolerate in our research an approximate “correspondence” between 骡子[luó zi] and *mule*.

Category 3: aquatic creatures	蛤蟆[há ma]-‘toad’、鲤鱼[lǐ yú]-‘carp’、蚂蟥[mǎ huáng]-‘leech’、螃蟹[páng xiè]-‘crab’、青蛙[qīng wā]-‘frog’、鲨鱼[shā yú]-‘shark’、鱼[yú]-‘fish’	<i>la carpe</i> -‘carp’, <i>le crabe</i> -‘crab’, <i>le crapaud</i> -‘toad’, <i>la grenouille</i> -‘frog’, <i>le poisson</i> -‘fish’, <i>le requin</i> -‘shark’, <i>la sangsue</i> -‘leech’
Category 4: the “smallest” animals	苍蝇[cāng yíng]-‘fly’、虫 ¹ [chóng]-‘insect or worm’、黄蜂[huáng fēng]-‘wasp’、蚂蚁[mǎ yǐ]-‘ant’、蜜蜂[mì fēng]-‘bee’、虱子[shī zi]-‘louse’、蜗牛[wō niú]-‘snail’、蜘蛛[zhī zhū]-‘spider’	<i>l’abeille</i> -‘bee’, <i>l’araignée</i> -‘spider’, <i>l’escargot</i> -‘snail’, <i>la fourmi</i> -‘ant’, <i>la guêpe</i> -‘wasp’, <i>l’insecte</i> -‘insect’, <i>la mouche</i> -‘fly’, <i>le pou</i> -‘louse’, <i>le ver</i> -‘worm’

1 The Chinese character 虫[chóng] has a broader signification corresponding to insecte ‘insect’ but also refers to various small elongated animals with no bones or legs, known by the name of ver ‘worm’.