

POP CHINESE

A CHENG & TSUI
BILINGUAL HANDBOOK
OF CONTEMPORARY
COLLOQUIAL
EXPRESSIONS

SECOND EDITION

话是这么说 汉英中国当代流行口语手册

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Preface

Recent developments in spoken Chinese present enormous challenges for Chinese language learners. There is a trend toward the use of more informal, idiomatic expressions in everyday speech, as well as in contemporary film, television, and literature. Moreover, the spoken Chinese portions of the HSK test, China's official test for Chinese proficiency in foreign students, have recently begun to include more and more of these popular and idiomatic expressions.

For people who are studying Chinese at university programs, the difficulty lies in the fact that most courses do not teach the natural, spoken expressions that are increasingly prevalent among native speakers and in the media. And new dictionaries that attempt to reflect the language changes in modern China include very few of these expressions. Longer phrases, sentences, and proverbs are even harder to find in dictionaries. Those that are included often lack appropriate examples and accurate translations, making it difficult for students to understand the exact meaning of a given expression.

Pop Chinese reflects the changing reality of spoken Chinese by introducing the most common popular vocabulary, phrases, and proverbs. It is intended to aid intermediate and advanced students in understanding Chinese film and television, reading contemporary Chinese fiction, and communicating with native speakers. It is also a useful reference for teachers, scholars, and readers of modern Chinese literature. And because it contains English translations of these popular Chinese expressions, it will be helpful to native Chinese speakers learning English.

This new expanded edition includes an English-Chinese index and a bibliography of all films, TV series, and contemporary literature referenced in the usage examples in this book.

All “Chinese” Isn’t the Same

The source of the challenge for students lies with the spoken Mandarin taught in beginning and intermediate courses. These courses emphasize a spoken Chinese that is neither the informal daily usage of native speakers, nor the refined, formal speech based on written Chinese. Rather, what

is taught is a special, “neutral” language devised for workplaces and educational settings where people from different areas of the country have to communicate for practical purposes. This is just one of three levels of speech in modern Chinese. The other two are the formal speech close to the written language and used in official, diplomatic, and academic contexts; and of particular importance to this book, the informal, lively, natural speech which characterizes today’s Chinese media.

Until recently, the “neutral” language was also the language of choice for film and television productions. Rapid changes in the 1990s toward the use of colloquial language, as well as older influences such as popular stories from the Ming and Qing dynasties and *Pingshu* from the oral storytelling tradition, created problems for language students trying to watch and understand these productions. Beijing slang now appears in television series that are set in other regions of China, while expressions indigenous to those regions appear in productions about life in Beijing. Even some hosts of China Central Television have now begun to use words that were previously considered regional. Because of the massive influence of the media, especially popular television series, many younger viewers have adopted the new expressions used on television into their daily speech.

Contemporary Chinese fiction has followed the same path. One outstanding example is the work of author Wang Shuo, who seeks to capture the racy slang of young people in Beijing’s alleys. Expressions from Shanghai, Guangdong, Northeastern, and Shaanxi dialects have found their way into novels and short stories by authors from all parts of the country, and these lively and humorous idioms now permeate Internet chat rooms and bulletin boards.

How should we evaluate this change in the spoken language of film and television? We think it represents a new development in *Putonghua*, which is more and more enriched by the addition of vocabulary, phrases, and syntactic structures from other Chinese dialects. A great many elements from the natural speech of different regions are becoming part of a common language that can be shared by most Chinese speakers, thus we can call this language “popular.”

Popular speech has a stronger emotional flavor than neutral speech. It is characterized by lively, humorous, and hyperbolic expressions that range from monosyllabic words to aphorisms and proverbs in the form of compound sentences. For example, “掉钱眼儿里去了” (“to be stuck

in the hole of a gold coin”—old Chinese coins had holes in the center) is both more vivid and more insulting than “只想赚钱” (“to think of nothing but making money”). “死哪儿去了你?” or “Where the hell (where in the name of death) have you been?” conveys much more displeasure in fewer words than “你到什么地方去了，怎么这么晚才回来?” (“Where have you been, and why didn’t you come back until now?”).

Even the grammar and syntax of popular expressions may not agree with the rules students have learned. For example, the general rule for the “把” sentence construction demands that the verb be followed by a verbal complement or the particle “了.” In the following sentence, the rule is broken because the complement is replaced by the particle “的” (把 + Sb + V + 的): “我是说着玩儿的，看把你吓的。” (“I was just kidding; who knew you’d be scared stiff?”). Because of this, even if students know the meaning of each character in such an expression, they still struggle to grasp the expression as a whole. This handbook is designed to help by translating the expressions both literally and idiomatically. It also includes examples from common speech and the most popular films, television shows, and literature, so students can see how a phrase is used in different contexts.

About the Entries in This Handbook

Since the boundaries between “neutral” speech and popular speech are not (and can never be) absolute, choosing the entries was a complex process. It is difficult to distinguish between popularly used idioms and those that have remained strictly regional. We have used the source of each expression as a helpful guide. Generally speaking, strictly regional expressions present less difficulty to readers of literary works, who can reread a problematic passage. Viewers of film and television do not have this option; dialogue must be immediately comprehensible. Moreover, the commercial nature of mass media demands language that is understood by the broadest possible audience. Therefore, we have selected our entries primarily from film and television with emphasis on the most frequently heard expressions. As a rule, expressions found only in literary works have not been included.

Many entries have their origins in the Beijing dialect, since that dialect provides the expressions most frequently heard in film and television. However, this handbook is not a dictionary of the Beijing dialect; terms

that are used to reflect only Beijing life specifically, or that are not used beyond the boundary of Beijing, have been excluded. On the other hand, for the convenience of users, we included a small number of expressions from southern dialects and from Taiwanese film and television.

Coarse and vulgar expressions presented a particular challenge. With a rich vocabulary and high frequency of use, they constitute an intrinsic part of everyday speech. Some novels record such language vividly, and it is heard more and more often in television and film productions. Although mass media only reflects the more widespread and least offensive varieties, students need to learn to recognize such vocabulary. Therefore, we have included a small number of these expressions. Of course, we don't recommend that foreign students include them in their speech, so we have clearly labeled vulgar expressions to prevent mistaken use.

Two examples accompany each entry in order to clarify the meaning of the expression and illustrate its correct usage. At least one example is an authentic sample of dialogue from film, television, or fiction. Such selections may be difficult to understand out of context, and in such cases we supply some brief background in English. Often, dialogue spoken by actors does not exactly match the Chinese subtitles that usually accompany film and television productions released in China. In that case, we have chosen to use the actual dialogue. When pronunciation and tones differ from those given in standard dictionaries, we have elected to present them "as-heard." In most cases, the second example has been created by the authors for the sake of greater clarity.

Of course, many expressions do not have an exact English equivalent. Therefore, we have supplied a literal translation so that students can understand the words comprising the expression, as well as its actual meaning in speech. Whenever possible, we strove to translate the examples into contemporary, idiomatic American English.

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A

ā māo ā gǒu 阿猫阿狗 (阿貓阿狗)

“Mr. Cat and Mr. Dog”; anyone and everyone; any Tom, Dick, and Harry;
any warm body

- 这种工作太简单了，找个**阿猫阿狗**都能干。
This kind of work isn't rocket science. Anyone could do it.
- 你别给我唱高调，现在**阿猫阿狗**都当官儿了，我为什么不能？
(From the TV series 孙中山)
Don't get on your high horse with me. These days, any warm body can serve as an official. Why not me? [Sun Yat-sen's older brother is demanding an official position. He's unhappy with Sun Yat-sen's insistence on qualifications.]

āi cīr 挨吡儿 (挨吡兒)

Receive a dressing down; get scolded or criticized; be bawled out

- 本慧和二子往一块一站，男的精神女的漂亮。我心里可是暗暗替他们担心，二子是**挨吡儿**挨惯了的，本慧可没怎么挨过骂。
(From the short story 二子的故事)
When Benhui and Erzi stood side by side, the boy looked sharp and the girl looked pretty, but I was worried for them. Erzi was used to being bawled out, but Benhui had never been scolded much before. [The two high school students are being disciplined by the school for starting to date at too young an age.]
- 怎么了，你，耷拉着脸？又**挨老师吡儿**了吧？
What's wrong? Why the long face? Did the teacher get on your case again?

ǎi yì jiér 矮一截儿 (矮一截兒)

“Shorter by a length”; greatly inferior

- 没儿子怎么了？您不是有五个闺女五个女婿吗？您不比别人**矮一截**。
(From the TV series 今生是亲人)
So what if you don't have a son! You've got five daughters and five sons-in-law. You don't have to take second place to anyone. [The mother just found out that there had been a mix-up: her son is not really hers. Her daughter is trying to console her.]
- 老张看看人家穿的名牌西服，再看看自己穿的打着补丁的衣服，还没开口说话就觉得比人家**矮了一截儿**。
Lao Zhang looked at the designer suits everyone else was wearing, and then at his own patched clothing. He hadn't even opened his mouth to speak yet, and he felt inferior to the others.

ài nǐ shénme shì 碍你什么事 (礙你什麼事)

How does it hinder you? What's it to you? What skin is it off your nose?

- 说她丑？她丑又**碍你什么事**？你自己又有多美？说她丑，我不嫌弃她就行。
(From the short story 祸福无常)

You think she's ugly? If she's ugly, what's it to you? You're not so gorgeous yourself. If I don't mind her looks, that's all that matters.

- “你是不是办了遗体捐赠手续？” “干嘛？犯法啊？”阿奇头皮发麻。“我的确是瞒着老爹娘亲去办的，**碍你什么事？**”
(From the short story 成魔记)
“Did you do all the paperwork to donate your body?” “Why, is it against the law?” Ah Qi froze, “I admit, I did it behind my parents' back. What's it to you?”
[A complete stranger is questioning Ah Qi's decision to donate his body.]

ài shéi shéi 爱谁谁 (愛誰誰)

Whoever you like; whoever; whatever

- 当掉工作带着九只玫瑰过来找我时，我想都没想就和他住在了
一起。我错了吗？他妈的，不想了，头疼，**爱谁谁**吧！
(From the short story 我不是坏孩子，只是想有点出格的事)
When he quit his job and came looking for me with a bunch of roses, I didn't even give it a second thought; I just moved in with him. Was it a mistake? The hell with it, I don't want to think about it anymore. It gives me a headache. Whatever!
- **爱谁谁**，胡判吧你就。谁坚决，闹得凶，你就判给谁，到那天再说吧。
(From the novel 我是你爸爸)
Whatever! Do what you want. Give the custody to whoever's the most pigheaded, whoever kicks up the most fuss. Let's see what happens when the time comes. [The court has to decide on the son's custody and is seeking the son's opinion. The child doesn't care.]

ài zěnmě zěnmě zhāo 爱怎么怎么着 (愛怎麼怎麼著)

Do what you want; do as you please

- 这事儿我管不了，**爱怎么怎么着**吧！
(From the TV series 今生是亲人)
I can't get involved in this. Do what you want! [A woman realizes that her child was switched and wants to find her biological son. The speaker, her husband, doesn't believe that there was a mix-up. He thinks that his wife had the child with someone else. He's not interested in finding the child.]
- 侍卫也没法儿跟这位倒霉皇上叫**真儿**了，得嘞，您**爱怎么怎么着**吧！
(From the novel 王莽)
The guards can't lock horns with this unfortunate emperor anymore. [Finally they give in, telling him,] “All right, do as you please.” [A successful uprising has reached the palace gates. The guards are trying to convince the emperor to hide, but he believes he still has the mandate of heaven and will not agree.]

ān qián mǎ hòu 鞍前马后 (鞍前馬後)

“Before the saddle and behind the horse”; if not before the saddle, then behind the horse; serve as a faithful lackey

- 这么多年我一直**鞍前马后**地跑，没有功劳也总有苦劳吧？
(From the TV series 欲罢不能)
All these years I've been running around doing your scutwork. Even if I don't get any recognition, at least give me credit for my hard work! [A boss who is being accused of financial improprieties tries to shift the responsibility to a subordinate, who begs his boss not to use him as a scapegoat.]

- 虽说成天跟著书记段长**鞍前马后**地跑，**时不时**还挨一顿熊，可大家都很融洽。

(From the short story 笔杆儿们)

Even though they run themselves ragged for the party secretaries and section chiefs all day long and still get told off sometimes, everybody gets along fine. [Describing people who work as secretaries for higher-ups.]

áo chū tóu le 熬出头儿了 (熬出頭兒了)

Tough it out to the end; see light at the end of the tunnel

- 吃了这么多年苦，总算**熬出头**了。

(From the short story 我的初恋就这样幻灭)

After so many years of hardship, there's light at the end of the tunnel. [The young people sent down to the countryside can finally return to the cities.]

- 梅生娘，你才三十几岁的人，可别说这丧气话，**咬咬牙**，把孩子**拉扯**大了，你就**熬出头**了。

(From the short story 粮食)

Meisheng's Mom, you're barely past thirty. Stop talking doom and gloom. Bite the bullet, bring the kid up, and you'll see light at the end of the tunnel. [Meisheng's mother doesn't have any food, and thinks it would best to die and put an end to her misery.]

āo zhe chī 熬着吃 (熬著吃)

"Stew it and eat it"; go off one's rocker; crazy

- “挣那么多钱干什么啊？**熬着吃**、炒着吃也咬不动。” “我也这么想，可她心气儿太高。”

(From the TV series 贫嘴张大民的幸福生活)

"What's the point of making so much money? Stew it, stir fry it—you still can't bite into it." "That's the way I think, too, but she's too driven." [She is determined to open a second store.]

- 咱们在这个城市最多住一个星期，你买那么多地图干吗？**熬着吃**啊！

We're staying in this city for a week at the most. What did you buy so many maps for? Are you crazy? ["Are you going to cook them and eat them?"]

B

bā bǎo shān 八宝山 (八寶山)

Name of a crematorium in Beijing; go to one's grave

- 年轻时候的事儿，咱们也不能带到**八宝儿山**去啊！

(From the TV series 今生是亲人)

We shouldn't carry the problems of our youth all the way to the grave. [The two were rivals when they were young.]

- 我快七十了，马上去**八宝山**也不算少亡！

(From the novel 寻访画儿韩)

I'm almost seventy; if I die right now it wouldn't be considered dying young.

bā chéngr 八成儿 (八成兒)

Eighty percent (certain); most likely

- 我在电视里瞅见的，八成儿就是他。
(From the TV drama 寻兄胡同)
The man I saw on TV was most likely him. [The speaker saw someone on TV who looked like her long lost son. Now the person is standing before her. The more she looks at him the more she is convinced that he is her son.]
- 姑爷回来说，那女鬼八成是被砍死的洋婆子。
(From the novel 曾国藩)
Uncle came back and said that the female ghost was almost certainly that foreign woman who had been hacked to death. [A tall female ghost was seen in the area.]

bā gān zi dǎ bù zháo 八竿子打不着 (八竿子打不着)

"Couldn't hit or reach even with eight poles"; barely related

- 八竿子打不着的事，我给他递什么话？
(From the TV series 大雪无痕)
This matter has nothing to do with me. Why would I pass on a message to him?
[The police want a reporter to deliver a message to an important man who is a crime suspect. The reporter doesn't want to do it.]
- 韩家在北京没有任何亲戚，都是梁家的，而且是八竿子打不着的，久已不来往的。
(From the novel 穆斯林的葬礼)
The Han family has no relatives in Beijing. All the relatives are from the Liang family, and distant relatives at that. They haven't had anything to do with each other for a long time.

bā jiǔ bù lí shí 八九不离十 (八九不离十)

"Eight, nine out of ten"; almost certain

- “我大概得了AIDS了。”“什么？筛检过了？”“没有，不过我想八九不离十了。”
(From the novel 逆女)
“I think I have AIDS.” “What? Have you had the test?” “Not yet, but I think it's almost certain.”
- 只消一看衣着打扮，是暴发户拿钱砸门面，还是穷酸文人打肿脸充胖子，总能猜个八九不离十。
(From the novel 孤星)
One look at his clothes and nine times out of ten you can guess whether he's a nouveau riche type showing off, or a poor scholar trying to “plump up his cheeks by slapping himself in the face.”

bā pí mǎ lā bú zhù/huí lái 八匹马拉不住/回来 (八匹馬拉不住/回來)

"Eight horses can't pull [somebody] back"; can't stop somebody

- 这杨颖啊，也真他妈能折腾。疯起来，八匹马都拉不住。
(From the movie 北京的乐与路)
This bitch Yang Ying really knows how to make trouble. When she gets crazy, nothing can stop her. [Yang is a dancer, arrested for getting into a fistfight with audience members.]

- 他这个人特倔，他认准的事儿就拼命干，**八匹马也拉不回来**。
He's really stubborn. If he makes up his mind about something, he'll put all he has into it. He won't change his course for anything.

bā tái dà jiào 八抬大轿 (八擡大轎)

“Grand sedan chair carried by eight men”; with great pomp and circumstance

- 你就是**八抬大轿**来请我，我也不去。
(From the TV series 红色康乃馨)
Even if you sent a stretch limo for me, I wouldn't go. [A lawyer is determined not to be talked into doing something she doesn't want to do.]
- 城里喝过几瓶墨汁的小伙子，**八抬大轿**请不动，刀搁脖子上也不愿娶个柴禾妞子呀！
(From the novel 吃青杏的时节)
Those city boys with a few scraps of education wouldn't get off their asses and marry a peasant girl [a “firewood girl”], even if you sent a stretch limo or held a knife to their necks.

bā zì hái méi yì piě ne 八字儿还没一撇儿呢 (八字兒還沒一撇兒呢)

“The character for ‘eight’ is still missing a stroke”; the ‘t’s haven’t been crossed and the ‘i’s haven’t been dotted; premature

- 我还早呢。**八字还没一撇**，更何况我现在也没心思想那些。
(From the novel 一屋双男)
It's not the right time yet. Besides I'm not in the right frame of mind to think about this. [The speaker is being urged to find a girlfriend.]
- 花露婵哧哧笑了，她笑男人就是这份德行。**八字还没有一撇**，就先吃醋。
(From the novel 蛇神)
Hua Luchan started to giggle. She found the boorish ways of men funny. Nothing is even settled yet and he's already jealous. [A man is staking his claim on Hua Luchan's affection. Hua Luchan finds that ridiculous. They are hardly that close.]

bā bù de 巴不得

I wish; if only; can't wait for

- 他和小玉恋爱，很好呀，我**巴不得**他们快点结婚！陈虎要是成了咱们家庭的一员，**胳膊肘还能往外拐**吗？
(From the novel 都市危情)
It's great that he's dating Xiaoyu. If only they would get married right away! If Chen Hu becomes part of our family, the left hand will surely take care of the right [“elbows can't turn outwards”]. [Chen Hu is a policeman who is investigating the speaker's economic crime. Xiao Yu is his cousin.]
- 我就**巴不得**他早点死，拿毒药毒死了他，陈家的财产不就让我一个人给占了，百万家产呀，我**眼红**着呢！
(From the novel 红檀板)
I can't wait for him to die. If we poison him, the Chen family fortune will be all mine. We're talking a million dollars worth of property. I'm dying to have it!

bā Sb de pí 扒Sb的皮

“Peel somebody’s skin off”; skin somebody; punish somebody severely

- 你小子要是假公济私，我扒了你的皮！

(From the TV series 黑洞)

Asshole, if you try to use public office for private gain, I’ll skin you alive. [The police chief is warning a subordinate not to mix personal grievances with police cases.]

- 告儿你们，没事儿是没事儿，要是的事儿我扒你们几个的皮！

(From the TV series 贫嘴张大民的幸福生活)

OK, if there’s no problem, there’s no problem. But I’m warning you, if something is wrong, I’ll skin you people alive.

bǎ Sb v de 把SbV的

Colloquial, idiomatic use of the passive voice generally used to show emotion or for emphasis; cause somebody to act in a certain way

- 上回小张也是，胃不舒服，乱吃药，结果是怀孕了，把她后悔的。

(From the TV series 走过花季)

Last time Xiao Zhang did the same thing. She had a stomachache, so she just took any old medicine. Turned out she was pregnant. She really lived to regret it! [The speaker thinks that the listener is pregnant, too, and is warning her not to harm her unborn baby.]

- 牛继红说：“这可坏了！这可坏了！”牛大爷说：“啥就坏了

看你急的！”牛继红说：“军军开始早恋了！”

(From the novel 东北一家人)

Niu Jihong said, “Oh, my God! Oh, my God!” Grandpa Niu asked, “What’s the problem? Look at you, what are you getting so worked up about?” Niu Jihong replied, “Junjun is dating!”

bǎ Sb zěnmē zhāo 把Sb怎么着 (把Sb怎么著)

What can they/you do to somebody?

- 别担心，他们不能把我怎么着。

(From the TV series 欲罢不能)

Don’t worry. What can they do to me? [They wouldn’t dare retaliate.]

- 我就不搬，看他们能把我怎么着！

(From the TV drama 杂牌胡同)

I’m not moving no matter what they say. We’ll see if they can do anything to me! [The speaker refuses to be relocated for urban renewal.]

bǎ wǒ zhè X zì dào guò lái xiě 把我这X字儿倒过来写 (把我这X字兒倒過來寫)

“I’ll write my family name upside down”; I’ll eat my hat

- 要是能从账上查出聂明宇的问题，我把这李字倒过来写。

(From the TV series 黑洞)

If they can find anything wrong with Nie Mingyu’s books, I’ll eat my hat. [Nie Mingyu is the boss of a big company. He’s under suspicion of financial misdeeds. The speaker thinks that even if Nie had committed an economic crime, there wouldn’t be any evidence in the books.]

- 他只会说大话，一点儿实际经验也没有。要是他能赚到钱你把我这徐字儿倒过来写。
All he can do is talk big. He has hardly any practical experience to speak of. If he makes any money, I'll eat my hat.

bāi bù kāi niè zi le 掰不开镊子了(掰不開鑷子了)

"Can't open the pinchers"; feeling the pinch

- 我是实实在在的**掰不开镊子了**。
(From the TV series 北京人在纽约)
I'm really feeling the pinch. [Talking about money problems.]
- 这五十块钱虽然不多，谁家要是真**掰不开镊子了**，还真是俩救命钱儿。
(From the TV series 贫嘴张大民的幸福生活)
Fifty yuan isn't much, but if a family's feeling the pinch it can be a lifesaver. [The union president is urging people to apply for poverty relief.]

bái dā 白搭

"Thrown in for nothing"; in vain

- 在我们见到这批走私车之前，说什么都**白搭**。
(From the TV series 黑洞)
Before we lay eyes on the smuggled cars, talk is cheap. [The police are looking for evidence. Even with a tipoff, there's no case if there's no concrete evidence.]
- 美国好是好，就是找不着工作，念多少书也**白搭**。
(From the TV series 贫嘴张大民的幸福生活)
America is fine, but you can't find work there. Doesn't matter how many degrees you have—you'll search in vain. [A working-class man makes a snide remark about a student returning from America for a family visit.]

bái dāo zi jìn qu hóng dāo zi chū lai 白刀子进去红刀子出来
(白刀子進去紅刀子出來)

"The knife goes in white and comes out red"; kill someone

- 都听着，把钱掏出来！要不，就**白刀子进去，红刀子出来**。
(From the short story 歹徒·警察·小孩)
All of you listen! Your money or your lives! [Criminals try to hijack a bus and rob the passengers.]
- 这钱他要是少支一分，我让他**白刀子进去，红刀子出来**。
(From the short story 母子外伤后)
If he pays even one cent less than the full amount, I'll have his life. [His car hit and killed the speaker's mother. The speaker is demanding a huge sum of money for damages.]

bái dīngr 白丁儿(白丁兒)

An illiterate man; small potato; average Joe; a nobody

- 你们都是共产党员，我呢，什么都不是，**白丁儿**一个。
(From the TV series 大赢家)
You're all party members. What I am? Nothing, just an average Joe.

- 这个连中学都没上完的**白丁儿**怎么当上你们杂志的主编了？
This nonentity who barely finished high school, how did he get to be editor-in-chief of your magazine?

bái fěn 白粉

“White powder”; heroin

- 你琢磨呀，抽“**白粉**”，可比上牌桌和上酒桌往里“吃”钱。你是当“**雷子**”的，应该**门儿清**呀！
(From the novel 百年德性)
Think about it, smoking heroin burns up your money faster than gambling or drinking. You're a cop. You should know better than that!
- 那家伙贩卖**白粉**和摇头丸，听说已经被判了死刑。
That man was pushing heroin and Ecstasy. I heard that he was sentenced to death. [Ecstasy is known as “the head shaking pill” in Chinese.]

bái hu 白乎/唬

Talk nonsense

- 这娘儿们回来，跟我**白乎**，说她如何如何勇斗歹徒。
(From the movie 洗澡)
That broad came back bragging about taking on some criminal. [The speaker's wife was taking a bath at a public bathhouse when a thief took her necklace. She rushed out naked trying to get it back. Her husband is very angry with her.]
- 怎么说随你，你这张嘴不是挺能**白唬**的吗？但有一样儿，别暴露我的身份。
(From the novel 百年德性)
I'll let you do the talking. You're a smooth talker. But just one thing: don't reveal my identity. [A policeman wants to work undercover at a nightclub, so he asks a friend to arrange a job for him there.]

bái yǎnr láng 白眼儿狼 (白眼兕狼)

“White-eyed wolf”; ingrate

- 刘震这孩子不是**没心没肺**的**白眼儿狼**。
(From the TV series 今生是亲人)
This kid Liu Zhen is not a heartless monster. [Liu Zhen just found out that he was adopted. He was so shocked that he left home. The narrator thinks that Liu will come back.]
- 他省吃俭用送儿子上了大学，没想到儿子是个**白眼儿狼**，一毕业就跑到海南去了，三年没回过一次家，更别说给家了钱了。
(From the TV series 其实男人最辛苦)
He scrimped and saved to send his son to college. Who knew, his son turned out to be an ungrateful bastard. Right after graduation he set out for Hainan. For three years he didn't come home even once, let alone send money.

bái zhǐ hēi zì 白纸黑字儿 (白紙黑字兒)

“Black characters on white paper”; in black and white; proof

- 反正我们没有**白纸黑字**，你想毁约我也**没辙**。
(From the novel 风雪缘)

Anyway there's nothing in writing. If you want to go back on our agreement, there's nothing I can do. [Speaking of an oral business agreement.]

- 离婚书上**白纸黑字儿**，受法律约束，你怎么能胡搅蛮缠呢？
(From the TV series 其实男人最辛苦)
The divorce papers are signed and sealed; it's legal now. Why are you still harassing me with your unreasonable demands?

bǎi píng 摆平 (擺平)

Balance; pacify; appease; placate

- 这好办，出几万块钱就把那几个人儿**摆平**了。
(From the TV series 红色康乃馨)
That's easy. A few thousand yuan should take care of them. [The speaker is confident that a payoff can prevent people from giving damaging testimony in court.]
- 现在不是讨论谁是谁非的时候，得赶紧想办法把外面那些人**摆平**。
(From the TV series 走过花季)
Now is not the time to discuss who's right and who's wrong. We have to think of a way to placate the people outside. [The company's promotional sale has gone awry. The prize winners did not get their prizes and are protesting outside.]

bǎi pǔr 摆谱儿 (擺譜兒)

Put on airs; act arrogantly

- 一个九品官儿**摆个屁谱儿**！
(From the TV series 康熙帝国)
A stinking low-level official putting on airs! [屁: pì, fart] [A eunuch is inviting a low-level official to an audience with the emperor. The official is putting on airs, enraging the eunuch.]
- “先租辆好车！” “这笔钱还没到手呢，就**摆谱儿**了？”
(From the TV series 大赢家)
“First of all, let's rent a good car!” “We haven't seen a cent of that money, and you already want to put on a display?” [The man's loan application was just approved.]

bài jiā zǐr 败家子儿 (敗家子兒)

Destroyer of the family fortune; wastrel; prodigal

- “一达最近怎么样？” “不要提他了，这个**败家子儿**！”
(From the TV series 一年又一年)
“How's Yida?” “Don't ask. That good-for-nothing!” [The father is angry at his son Yida, who got into trouble through illegal business practices and escaped to the south.]
- 那个**败家子**，当上总经理不到两年就把个好端端的公司弄破产了。
That wastrel. He was the manager for barely two years and ran a perfectly good company into the ground.

bài mǎ tóu 拜码头 (拜碼頭)

(Of a ship) make a courtesy call at a port; visit important people to cultivate connections

- 我今天来呀，就是想先**拜拜**你爸爸这个**码头**。

(From the TV series 汽车城)

I'm here today to pay my respects to your father. [A man visits his girlfriend's father, hoping to make some money through the father's connections.]

- 现在当领导的新到一地，总有些人要来**拜码头**，这已是规矩了，你想回避也回避不了。

(From the novel 夜郎西)

Nowadays whenever a new official arrives, there are always people lining up to pay their respects. You can count on it. You can't avoid that, even if you want to.

bài tuō 拜托 (拜託)

(Ironic) "trust or rely on someone (not to do something)"; please, I beg you

- 苟云齐同学，**拜托**，请不要再**嗲声嗲气**的说话了，好不好？

(From the novel 梦幻魔界王)

Please, Gou Yunqi, stop all that sweet talk. I beg you.

- 老大，**拜托拜托**，这回练练那些咱们自己写的曲子成不成？

(From the short story 十一月的雨)

Please oh please, boss, this time can we play something we wrote ourselves? [The musicians are tired of rehearsing the same piece again and again.]

bǎn shàng dìng dīng 板上钉钉 (板上釘釘)

"Put the nail in the board"; a done deal

- 你看那姓彭的来头儿，跟小玉已经是**板上钉钉**了，你去找又有啥用呢？

(From the TV series 北京女人)

Xiao Yu and that Peng guy are an item now. What good would it do you to pursue her? [Xiao Yu used to be the listener's girlfriend. She is now going to marry someone else.]

- 房子下来了。但第一榜分配方案中，没有陈维高的名字。陈维高迷惑不解，本以为**板上钉钉**，绝对有自己的一间，这一下可把他弄傻眼了。

(From the novel 热狗)

The apartments were assigned, but Chen Weigao's name was not on the first list of recipients. He didn't understand; he thought his getting one was a done deal. He was dumbfounded.

bàn fēng 半疯儿 (半瘋兒)

"Half-crazy"; crazy

- 我看你们这位大人是个**半疯儿**。

(From the TV series 铁齿铜牙纪晓兰)

I think your master has gone mad. [The official's action goes against convention.]

- 早在上高中的时候，她对男人的看法就已基本定型。那个她的另一半应当是善良稳重，有才学有见识，人缘好又能干的。她不需要天才，天才大都是**半疯**。

(From the novel 纽约丽人)

Even in high school, her opinions about men were firm. Her mate must be kind and dignified, educated and knowledgeable, popular and capable. She 'doesn't need a genius. Geniuses are almost all crazy.

bàn lā 半拉

Half

- 臭显派！结个婚把小半拉北京城都惊动了。

(From the TV series 北京女人)

Such rotten showing-off! Arranging a wedding that inconveniences half of Beijing! [Speaking of an ostentatious wedding procession.]

- 他哪里是什么计算机专家！只不过半半拉拉地学了几天，水平还不如我呢！

He's a computer expert? Yeah, right! All he had was a few days of half-baked training. He knows even less than I do.

bàn píng cù 半瓶醋

"Half bottle of vinegar;" dilettante; amateur; dabbler

- 自以为喝茶老道，其实也不过是半瓶醋。

(From the TV series 田教授的二十八个保姆)

And you imagine you're a tea connoisseur! Turns out you're just an amateur, if anything. [A wife is mocking her husband's failure to identify the variety of tea that he is sampling.]

- 你们二位是中国的大家，我是半瓶醋晃荡，何敢称家。

(From the novel 四个秀才一台戏)

You are two of China's great authorities, but I'm just a dabbler messing around. I wouldn't dare call myself an expert.

bàn suàn 拌蒜

"Toss garlic"; shake; tremble

- 他嘴里拌蒜似地解释着：“你别瞎想啊。我又不是和欧阳兰兰住一个屋。她家有的是地方。”

(From the novel 永不瞑目)

He stammered as he tried to explain, "Don't go imagining things. Ouyang Lanlan and I didn't sleep in the same room. She has plenty of rooms at her house."

- “你看啊，小张还真有点儿大将风度，这么大的场面一点儿都不紧张。” “还不紧张呢？我看他脚底下直拌蒜。”

"Look, Xiao Zhang really looks like he's in command. Such a big occasion and he's not a bit nervous." "Not nervous? Seems to me he's shaking in his boots."

bǎng dà kuǎn 傍大款

Befriend or marry a wealthy older man; have a sugar daddy

- 我爸就不管我，那天还对我说呢，我不反对你谈恋爱，可你不能太傻，找个没有经济实力的人你不得苦一辈子？我说那我就傍大款，他说有本事你就傍。

(From the TV movie script 老宋和他的女儿)

My dad doesn't interfere in my life. Just the other day he said to me, "I don't mind you dating. Just don't be stupid and hook up with someone poor, or you'll have a hard life." I said, "OK, then I'll find a sugar daddy." He said, "go ahead if you can pull it off."

- 肖童你是不是**傍上个女大款**呀?

(From the novel 永不瞑目)

Xiao Tong, did you land an heiress or something? [Xiao Tong is a college student. He has been seen driving around in a luxury car.]

bǎng piào 绑票儿 (绑票兒)

Kidnap

- 我老觉着这**绑票儿**的不是冲着银子来的，他是趁咱们之危，**给咱们点儿颜色看看**，就算把银子送去，孩子也未必领得回来。”

(From the TV series 大宅门)

I somehow feel this kidnapper isn't after the money. He just wants to take advantage of our difficulties and give us a taste of his power. Suppose we give him the money, there's still no guarantee we'll get the kid back.

- 你们干什么，青天白日就想**绑票儿**啊?

What do you think you're doing? Trying to carry off a kidnapping in broad daylight?

bàng chui dàng zhēn 棒槌当针(真) (棒槌當針[真])

"Mistake a wooden club for a needle"; misjudge (a pun, because zhēn 针, a needle, sounds exactly like zhēn 真, truth); be conned; be led astray

- 他是给了**棒槌就当针(真)**，他那耳朵根子是棉花捏的。

(From the TV series 其实男人最辛苦)

He's very easily misled. Anyone can talk him into anything. [His ex-wife sweet talked him into waiting on her hand and foot. Friends and relatives are being sarcastic.]

- 你凭什么这么跟我讲话，哼，你以为你是谁呀？给个**棒槌就当针**！告诉你，我爸都不敢这么骂我！

(From the novel 其实不想走)

How dare you talk to me this way? Who do you think you are? Someone gives you an opening, and you take advantage! Let me tell you, not even my dad yells at me like this! [A chat between two Internet acquaintances has turned nasty.]

bāo èr nǚ 包二奶

Keep a mistress (包: have exclusive use of; 二奶: secondary wife, mistress)

- 乔芳晓得丈夫章大虎**包二奶**的消息后，一下子就六神无主了。

(From the short story 第三者)

When Qiao Fang found out her husband was keeping a mistress, she was totally disoriented by the news.

- 现在的男人个个儿都没有良心，一有点儿钱就想着**包二奶**。

Nowadays men have no conscience. As soon as they have a little bit of money they want to keep a mistress.

bāo yuánr 包圆儿 (包圓兒)

Take the whole lot

- 我就喜欢吃胡的，这菜我**包圆儿**了。
(From the movie 爱情麻辣烫)
I like it charred. Give it all to me. [A boy tries to cook for the first time and burns the food. His father wants to encourage him.]
- 这本书卖得真不错，两天功夫就卖了三万多本，剩下的一个外地书商全**包圆儿**了。
The book is selling well. Thirty thousand copies were sold in two days. A book dealer from out of town took the rest.

bāo zài Sb shēn shang 包在Sb身上

Leave it to somebody

- 往后啊，小妹的事儿就**包在大姨妈**身上了。
(From the TV series 其实男人最辛苦)
From now on, leave Xiao Mei's love life to me. [An aunt volunteers to find a boyfriend for her niece, Xiao Mei.]
- 那个工厂的厂长我认识，这事儿**包在我**身上了，放心吧，三天以后他们就会把机器送过来。
I know the director of that factory. Leave it to me. Don't you worry. They'll deliver the machine in three days.

bǎo bù qí 保不齐 (保不齊)

Can't guarantee completely

- 嗨，人哪，谁也**保不齐**有犯糊涂的时候。
(From the novel 找乐)
Hey, we're only human. People can't guarantee they won't make mistakes.
- 那歌厅人那么杂，**保不齐**还得出事儿。
(From the TV series 手心手背)
That nightclub attracts all sorts of people. There's no guarantee it won't happen again. [There was a brawl at the club.]

bǎo hàn zi bù zhī è hàn zi jī 饱汉子不知饿汉子饥 (飽漢子不知餓漢子饑)

"A man with a full belly can't understand a starving man's hunger"; to not know how lucky one is; be spoiled

- 那么多的女孩，你就一个也看不上？真是**饱汉子不知饿汉子饥**呀！你要是不要，我可就要动手了啊！
(From the short story 一切重头再来)
So many girls, and you don't like any of them? You don't understand how lucky you are! If you're not interested, I'll make a move.
- 我们厂都快关门了，您还来要什么赞助费，真是**饱汉子不知饿汉子饥**。
Our factory is about to be shut down, and you're looking for sponsorship. You don't know how good you have it!

bào dà/cū tuǐ 抱大/粗腿

“Hold on to a big/thick leg”; seek protection from someone powerful; ride on someone's coattails

- 只要焦书记不倒，你抱紧他的大腿，你也倒不了。
(From the novel 都市危情)
As long as the party secretary doesn't fall, you won't fall. Just hang on to his coattails.
- 我看他的官儿还得往上升，你可要抱住了他的粗腿！
I think he'll get promoted again. Cling to him for dear life.

bēi hēi guō 背黑锅 (背黑鍋)

“Carry a black pot on the back”; take the blame

- 上回，还不是我替你背的黑锅？
(From the TV series 今生是亲人)
Didn't I take the blame for you last time? [Two young people got into a fight after getting drunk. One of them hurt someone. The other took the blame for it.]
- 你是经理，现在生意赔了，你让我去跟股东解释，我可不愿意为你背这个黑锅。
You're the manager. Now that we lost money on the deal, you want me to talk to the shareholders. I'm not going to take the blame for you.

bèi bú zhǔ 备不住 (備不住)

“You can't be prepared”(for all eventualities); you never know

- 孩子毕竟是孩子，懂得什么好歹？平时一天三顿地给他讲道理，他还备不住要出点事，这回可好，大撒把没人管了，那他还不上房揭瓦？
(From the novel 我是你爸爸)
Kids are kids. What do they know? Even when I try to talk some sense into him three times a day, I still never know when he's going to get in trouble. Now that there isn't anyone to supervise him, he'll probably wreck the house.
- 路上多带点钱，备不住有用得着的时候。
Take some more money with you on the trip. You never know when you'll need it.

bèi guò qì 背过气 (背過氣)

Lose one's breath; pass out; faint

- 哭可以。愿意掉泪就让她掉几滴，但不要让她哭得背过气去，在大街上引起围观，这样影响不好。
(From the movie 顽主)
She can have a cry. Let her shed a few tears if she wants, but make sure she doesn't cry so hard that she faints. We don't want to draw a crowd on the street. That wouldn't look good. [A man dumped his girlfriend and is asking a “service company” to console her.]
- 我说我要出国留学，这话刚一出口我妈就背过气去了。
I said I wanted to go abroad to study. The words had hardly left my mouth when my mother fainted.

bèi hòu tǒng dāo zi 背后捅刀子(背後捅刀子)
Stab in the back

- 万钢也算是聪明，知道是我**背后捅了他一刀**，可你心里再明白也没用，你抓不住我半点把柄。
(From the novel 大雪作证)
Wan Gang isn't stupid. He knows I stabbed him in the back. But knowing about it doesn't do you any good if you don't have evidence against me. [The speaker took pictures of Wan Gang fooling around with a young woman at a hotel.]
- 老刘这人真够阴的，别看见了面儿笑嘻嘻的，**背后常给你捅刀子**。
Lao Liu is really devious. Don't be fooled by his smile. He'll stab you in the back.

bèir 倍儿(倍兒)
Double; doubly; extremely

- 我挺讨厌街上那批警察的，没什么文化，有点权就**倍儿横**。
(From the novel 永不瞑目)
I can't stand these crude policemen on the streets. Give them a little power, and they'll be twice as obnoxious.
- 齐大妈包的饺子，**倍儿香**！
(From the movie 甲方乙方)
Mrs. Qi's dumplings are incredibly good.

bèng dī 蹦的/蹦迪
Dance disco; go to a discotheque

- 今儿晚上咱们**蹦的**去！
(From the TV series 蓝色马蹄莲)
Let's disco tonight.
- “你怎么这么晚才回来？”“唱歌、跳舞、**蹦迪**去了。”
(From the TV series 失乐园)
“How come you got back so late?” “We went singing, dancing, and discoing.”

bí zi bú shì bí zi liǎn bú shì liǎn 鼻子不是鼻子脸不是脸(鼻子不是鼻子脸不是脸)

- “The nose is not the nose; the face is not the face”; the nose is out of joint; look unhappy
- 大胖子**鼻子不是鼻子脸不是脸**，摔摔打打，庭内〔法庭〕空气陡然紧张起来。
(From the novel 一点正经没有)
The fat guy got ticked off and started smashing things around. The atmosphere in the courtroom suddenly became tense.
 - 这两天老李也不是怎么了，一跟他商量事儿就**鼻子不是鼻子脸不是脸**的。
What's with Lao Li these couple of days? The minute you try to discuss anything with him, his nose is out of joint.