



CHINESE PRACTICE

騎虎難下

If you ride a tiger,
it's difficult to get off

(qi2 hu3 nan2 xia4)

李白是盛唐傑出的詩人，也是中國歷史上最偉大的浪漫主義詩人，並有「詩仙」的稱號。

李白的「留別廣陵諸公」一詩中提及「騎虎不敢下」，此詩句後來衍生出成語「騎虎難下」，意即人騎上老虎後，因害怕下來時會被老虎傷害甚至吃掉，所以不敢下來，可譬喻一種無法退出或沒有出路的情況，不得已只能一直持續下去。

英文中也有一些類似的諺語，如 holding a wolf by the ears 與 holding a tiger by the tail，和「騎虎難下」有異曲同工之妙。兩者都是以動物來代表危險。前者出自羅馬劇作家泰倫斯的作品佛密歐，後者跟「騎虎難下」一樣使用老虎作為譬喻。這兩個英文說法都講述一種難以持久的情況，不論動手或不動手解決都一樣不利。此外，英文也有“damned if you do, damned if you don't,” 意即「做也不是，不做也不是」。(台北時報記者古德謙整理)

◆ 他自告奮勇要帶朋友去大峽谷玩，卻完全不會開車，如今騎虎難下。

(He offered to take some friends to see the Grand Canyon, even though he couldn't drive. There's no getting out of it now, though.)

◆ 她在面試時撒謊說自己日文流利，如今主管要她負責聯絡日本客戶，令她騎虎難下。

(During the interview, she fibbed about her Japanese fluency. Now the boss wants her to liaise with the Japanese clients. Hoist by her own petard.)



A wall carving in the Bishan Temple on Mt. Bishan in Taipei's Neihu District, taken on Nov 2.

PHOTO: PAUL COOPER, TAIPEI TIMES

台北內湖碧山巖開漳聖王廟內的雕刻，攝於十一月二日。

照片：台北時報記者古德謙

英文練習

holding a wolf by the ears; damned if you do, damned if you don't

Li Bai, also known as Li Po, was a prominent Chinese poet from the High Tang. He is known as China's greatest romantic poet, and was given the title "the immortal of poetry." In his poem *Farewell to the Gentleman of Guangling* appears the line 騎虎不敢下, literally "once riding the tiger, you don't dare dismount." From this came the Chinese proverb 騎虎難下, meaning that once you are riding on the tiger's back you are reluctant to get off, fearing being hurt, or even eaten, by the beast. It is used in referring to a situation from which one cannot retreat, or from which there is no way out, the

only alternative being to continue in what you are doing.

There are similar phrases in English, such as "holding a wolf by the ears" or "holding a tiger by the tail," with much the same meaning. Both use wild animals to represent danger. The former is taken from the play *Phormio* by the Roman playwright Terence; the latter, like 騎虎難下, invokes the tiger. Both English phrases describe an unsustainable situation, which remains risky whether you continue or desist. Another English phrase with this meaning is "damned if you do, damned if you don't."

(PAUL COOPER, TAIPEI TIMES)

◆ After the Brexit referendum, the British government is left holding the wolf by the ears. It's damned if it leaves Europe, and damned if it doesn't.

(脫歐公投結果出來後，英國政府就陷入了騎虎難下的窘境。)