

Idiom by Lon Yan

乘虛而入

cheng2 xu1 er2 ru4

Under the shadow of Brexit, the pound falls, so too British property prices.

The British are understandably downbeat, but foreign investors are rubbing their hands with glee as they went in for the kill, buying up property.

According to figures from a leading global real estate consultant, Asian capital was behind the purchase of £695 million (HK\$6.7 billion) worth of commercial properties in London since June, and Hong Kong investors were said to be particularly active. US and European investors were also reported to be on a buying frenzy there.

What these outsiders are doing can be described by the idiom “乘虛而入” (*cheng2 xu1 er2 ru4*).

“乘” (*cheng2*) is “to make use of,” “to take advantage of,” “to ride,” “to ride on,” “虛” (*xu1*) “weak,” “feeble,” “a void,” “而” (*er2*) “to,” and “入”

(*ru4*) “to enter.” “乘機” (*cheng2 ji1*) is “to make use of an opportunity,” “to take advantage of an opportunity.”

Literally, “乘虛而入” (*cheng2 xu1 er2 ru4*) is “take advantage of weakness to enter,” “to enter by exploiting a weak spot.” The idiom means “to attack where the enemy is unguarded,” “to get a chance to step in,” “to take advantage of a lapse.”

Foreigners coming in to snap up property have been a source of grievances in many parts of the world for locals who are priced out of the market. But “乘虛而入” (*cheng2 xu1 er2 ru4*) is just a commercial reality in the capitalist world.

“乘虛而入” (*cheng2 xu1 er2 ru4*) is actually a strategy that people often use in many different kinds of situations, including those involving romantic relationships.

Terms containing the character “虛” (*xu2*) include:

虛擬 (*xu1 ni3*) – virtual; fictitious

虛假 (*xu1 jia3*) – false; untruth

虛偽 (*xu1 wei3*) – hypocritical

虛弱 (*xu1 ruo4*) – weak; feeble