

Idiom by Lon Yan

砌詞狡辯

qi4 ci2 jiao3 bian4

A man and a boy pulled hard on a young tree while doing exercise in a country park, and turned nasty when other hikers tried to stop them.

The incident was caught on camera and the two were lambasted by netizens for harming trees. The man tried to defend his conduct, saying that he was just showing his son how to stretch his legs. What the man was doing was “砌詞狡辯” (qi4 ci2 jiao3 bian4).

“砌” (qi4) is “to build by laying bricks.” In this idiom it means “堆砌” (dui1 qi4), “to pile up words and phrases.” “詞” (ci2) is “words,” “statement,” “狡” (jiao3) “crafty,” “foxy,” “cunning,” “sly,” and “辯” (bian4) “to argue,” “to debate.” “狡辯” (jiao3 bian4) is “to argue speciously (似是而非地),” “to quibble (吹毛求疵),” “to resort to sophistry (詭辯術).”

Literally, “砌詞狡辯” (qi4 ci2 jiao3 bian4) is “piling up words to argue cunningly.” The idiom means to “play with words to put forward sly arguments,” “to argue speciously.”

When caught doing something wrong, the first reaction of most politicians is “砌詞狡辯” (qi4 ci2 jiao3 bian4), like the protagonists in Watergate and Lewinskygate.

When an accused in a recent criminal case put forward an outrageous defense, the judge told him that he was just “砌詞狡辯” (qi4 ci2 jiao3 bian4).

And when the prosecution trumps up charges, it is “砌詞捏控” (qi4 ci2 nie1 kong4) - to make an accusation based on fabricated evidence.

Terms containing the character “辯” (bian4) include:

辯論 (bian4 lun4) – to debate; to argue

辯白 (bian4 bai2) – to justify, to protest one’s innocence

辯才 (bian4 cai2) – eloquence in argument; talent in debating

辯駁 (bian4 bo2) – to refute; refutation