



Translation and Time: Exploring the Temporal Dimension of Cross-cultural Transfer

Presentation Details

Title of Paper:

The Temporalities of Translation in the May-Fourth Discursive Spheres—On Wu Mi’s Discussions about Imitation, Translation, and Literary Creation

Abstract:

In the May Fourth Era (mid 1910s to 1920s), Chinese intellectuals, usually members of different literary societies or cliques, engaged with each other and attempted to shape public opinion in a flourishing modern journalism. They debated the various literary, cultural, social and political issues of the newly founded Republic of China. Issues surrounding translation also featured prominently in these public discursive spheres, where the question of constructing a modern Chinese culture was central.

In this paper, I examine how Wu Mi (1894–1978), a core member of the Xueheng School, critically engaged with New Culturalists in the May-Fourth modernity debate through discussing translation issues. I specifically focus on Wu’s discussions about the relationships between imitation, translation, and literary creation in two articles that he published in the journal *Xueheng*. I argue that Wu Mi’s introduction of a temporal dimension—the imitation and continuation of the past—to the May-Fourth discourse on “translation versus literary creation” offered him a nuanced angle from which to critique the iconoclasm of the New Culture Movement. In his writings about translation in relation to imitation and literary creation, Wu presented an alternative avenue for envisioning literary modernity for China. By analyzing Wu’s views on translation issues, I will further challenge the still prevalent conceptual dichotomy between tradition and modernity in Chinese translation history.

Author's Biography:

Yumiao BAO is currently a 2nd-year PhD student in Translation Studies at the University of Edinburgh, UK. Her PhD research is about conceptualizations of translation in early modern China.

Before working on her PhD in Edinburgh, she studied at Tsinghua University, China, where she obtained her Master's degree in Foreign and Applied Linguistics and Bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature.

She is also a certificated English-Chinese translator and interpreter. Her published works include a Chinese rendition of Peter Ackroyd's *Charles Dickens* and a Chinese rendition (co-translation) of Ackroyd's *Shakespeare: The Biography*.