

Conference Report

'International Symposium on Translingual and Transcultural Studies', AHRC Open World Research Initiative, Cross-Language Dynamics: Reshaping Community, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China, 21–23 March 2018

Supported by the OWRI CLDRC Translingual Strand (IMLR, SAS University of London) and Transnational Strand (Durham University), the international symposium was organized by Qing Cao, School of Modern Languages and Cultures, Durham University in collaboration with distinguished Changjiang Professor Jie Wang, of the College of Media and International Culture, Zhejiang University. Founded in 1897 in the historical city of Hangzhou in Southeast China, Zhejiang University is one of the country's top five universities. Generously sponsored by Zhejiang University, the symposium was held in the Yuanzheng Qizhen Hotel in the beautiful Zijingang campus near the national wetland park in the west of Hangzhou.

This international symposium aimed to contribute to the intellectual and multidisciplinary framework of studying translingual and transcultural communication that helps develop a deeper understanding of key issues in the practice of translingualism (and extralinguism) and transculturalism. The symposium brought 20 scholars from ten universities in the UK and China to share their research in this exciting area of inquiry. They examined the fundamental role of language in translingual and transcultural communication, identity formation, the negotiation of meaning across languages, and multimodal communication. Their papers drew on theories and approaches from diverse fields such as linguistics, cultural studies, media and communication, film, and aesthetics studies. They discussed the most recent debates on this topic in an analytic, critical, empirical, or comparative mode. The examples they drew on included films, novels, poetry, music, newspapers, dictionary compilation, fine arts, fashion, and translation.

Claudia Nitschke, Durham University, discussed the interlingual adaptation of the German *Robinson Crusoe*. Francisco-J. Hernández Adrián, also Durham University, focused on key issues surrounding transnational cinema languages. Qing Cao investigated linguistic adaptation of Western ideas to the late

imperial society in China around the turn into the twentieth century. All three speakers came to a similar conclusion: that underneath linguistic forms lie the problems of transcultural understanding, interpretation, and communication. Linguistic adaptation functions as a mode of intercultural mediation that exerts an inevitably important impact upon sociocultural processes. A major theme of the symposium was the fusion of Western and Chinese cultures as a translingual and transcultural practice. A range of views were presented and discussed. Benqing Li, Hangzhou Normal University, argued for an appreciation of the differences between European and Chinese traditional values in their original form – linguistic, aesthetic, and philosophical – as the basis for a productive dialogue and adaptation. In a similar vein, Shengpeng Liu, Zhejiang University of Technology, proposed a cultural politics of mutual interpretation as a productive approach to a convergent modernity. In recognizing indigenous traditions expressed through unique linguistic forms, a convergent modernity can be arrived at by accepting universality emerging from multiple modernities embedded in local cultural experiences.

An important feature of the symposium was the inclusion of multiple modalities, or extralinguistic dimensions, in intercultural communication. These non-verbal forms are conceptualized as different ‘languages’ that engage humans as effectively as linguistic forms in expressing emotions and ideas. Ningkang Jiang, Nanjing University, examined the notion and implications of ‘taste’ in transcultural fashion. Feng Gu, Yangzhou University, engaged with ‘five types of colour’ as a category of beauty. Yanshan He, School of Dance, Guangzhou University, investigated ‘the Zen sound’ in traditional music and its modern revival in a transcultural context. These extralinguistic forms, they argued, sometimes communicate cultural practices and values more successfully as they are ‘languages of the heart’ in contrast to linguistic forms, which are ‘languages of the mind’. Discussions are underway to publish selected papers in an edited volume.

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