Translating the socialist world: Cross-national translation and consumption of literature between China and East Germany

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After 1949, the People’s Republic of China and the German Democratic Republic became part of an emerging socialist world that covered half the globe - from Berlin to Pyongyang, and from Moscow to Hanoi. The governments of the socialist states initially shared two tasks: Gaining recognition from its new allies and reshaping the nations’ identity in the minds of its citizens. This identity had to be both national and international. In this process of creating a feeling of solidarity and shared goals and values, the promotion of cultural exchanges played a key role. A particularly important element of cultural diplomacy was the translation of literature across the socialist camp. In a coordinated endeavor, representative examples of the national literatures, especially new titles written in the socialist spirit, were simultaneously translated into various languages and circulated in the socialist countries. These exchanges shed light on the broader dynamics of the inter-bloc and inter-country cooperation. In its leadership role the Soviet Union provided the models for a new socialist literature that were widely translated and imitated in other countries of the Eastern bloc. At the same time, the nations of the periphery would promote examples of their own literatures to prove their successful integration into the socialist world. Thus, the translation of Chinese literature in East Germany and vice versa was to some extent part of a larger translation campaign to foster transnational socialist identity-building and the creation of a common literary canon. Literature from China had been introduced to Eastern Germany right after the founding of the two states. The total number of works translated into German was comparatively high. It is little surprise that among the most popular Chinese books were “Red Classics” and novels of left-wing authors, but classic literature, poems and fairy tales from China also found their way to the East German readers. Which titles were selected for translation, and what are the reasons behind their selection?

About the Presenter:
Babette Bernhardt is a PhD student at the University of Hamburg and Fudan University in Shanghai. She has studied translation, transcultural communication and communication science at the University of Vienna, Austria and the University of Leipzig, Germany, and graduated with a Master of Arts in Translation (English and Chinese) in 2015. During her B.A. studies she participated in an exchange program with Peking University in China. In her current research she focuses on the topic of Chinese literature in East Germany and analyses the translation and publication processes in view of state control and cross-national cultural policies.
Passing, Reinterpreting and Deducing of "tao guang yang hui"
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With the perspective of culture translation, the discussion will focus on the translation and dissemination of the Chinese diplomatic term “tao guang yang hui”. Taking into account the social historical context and complex political power system, the paper examines the acceptance and transmission of this term and the various ideological considerations that underpin it, focusing on the US, UK and Indian media. To conduct this interdisciplinary research on diplomatic terms with Chinese characteristics, involving historical development, reinterpretation and deduction, corpus and case analysis will be the main research methods used. The paper aims ultimately to reinforce academic understanding as to the standardized translation of diplomatic terms with Chinese characteristics and to provide theoretical support for their translation and dissemination.

About the Presenter:
SHAN Yu is a Professor of Central South University. She will obtain her PhD on Sci-Tech Translation Textbooks Studies in Oct. 2019 from CSU. She is the author of two books: 大資料時代科技翻譯研究：回顧與展望 (Research on Translation of Science and Technology in the Era of Big Data: Review and Prospect) and 科技英語學習策略與研究 (Research and Learning Strategies of EST). She has also published 36 academic papers in major Chinese journals, including 中國科技翻譯 (Chinese Science & Technology Translators Journal), 上海翻譯 (Shanghai Journal of Translators) and several Journals with CSSCI searching. Her interests include the theories and practices of Sci-tech translation, the historiography of translation, translation technology, teaching terminology translation, and corpus translation studies.
Ethical Issues in Political Translation: On the English Translation of Political News
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Political news provides an important window for people to learn the current political trends and the policies of a country, therefore, the translation of political news plays a crucial role in spreading the national image and building the national discourse correctly in the international stage. In China, the linguistic level of translating political discourse has been greatly focused on in the translation field, including the pragmatics, strategies, etc; however, few people discuss the ethics of translating political discourse according to the data in the CNKI online.
Translation ethics has become a heated topic in recent years as the ethical turn has come after the cultural turn in translation studies. We cannot avoid but to consider more on the ethical issues of translators when translating political discourse, especially nowadays with the current increasingly tight international situation. There are many debates on translation ethics such as profession oriented ethics represented by Pym, political ethics represented by Mona Baker and foreignization ethics by Venuti. This article selects the English translation of political news in newspaper like Global Times and China Daily and the English subtitles of Chinese political news on official websites such as CNN as materials, and analyzes the mistranslation, the transformation and the effect on translation acceptance from the perspective of translation professional ethics. The concept of “political equivalent” and the translator’s ideology are also applied to the research.

About the Presenter:
Ms Yang Dan, MA, graduated from Sichuan International Studies University majoring in translation theory and practice, and now works in the International Cooperation and Exchange Department at the Southwest University of Science and Technology. Her work focuses on foreign affairs, particularly the management of international teachers and experts, and she undertakes some teaching tasks in the foreign language school. She has also worked on translation studies both in practice and theoretical researches.
Power Discourse of Western Religious Culture in Modern Times - A Case Study of the Chinese Translation of "God"
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As western religions (Roman Catholicism, Christianity, etc.) spread eastward, Chinese native culture was inevitably somehow eroded. Many Chinese Translations of the western religious vocabulary in use today were not new coinages, but rather existing terms and concepts borrowed from classic Chinese works, legends and stories. This approach aimed to foster the practices of western missionaries in China, allowing them to adapt to the local cultural environment as needed, a situation which created a sense, for some Chinese, of an artificial relationship between that could lead to confusion. Although most of these terms and concepts borrowed were not equivalent to those from western religions, they did gradually become the exclusive Chinese translation of the western religious vocabulary and their original meanings became known by less and less people, or even completely forgotten. In essence, that is actually a kind of power discourse. Taking the western religious word "God" and its Chinese translations “Shangdi” and “Tianzhu” as examples, the author explores the formation and evolution of this power discourse, and tries to discuss how to simultaneously eliminate the old power discourse and construct a new one.

About the Presenter: