

Research Assessment Exercise 2020
Impact Case Study

University: Lingnan University
Unit of Assessment (UoA): 32 – Translation

Title of case study: Empowering the Disadvantaged Through Translation

(1) Summary of the impact

Hong Kong, China, and Taiwan are the home to a number of disadvantaged groups who suffer as a direct result of discrimination based on their ethnicity, disability status, gender and sexual orientation.

Research conducted at Lingnan University explored how translation can be used as a tool to bring about positive impact on these disadvantaged groups. Between 2014 and 2019, Isaac Hui and Darryl Sterk, together with Andy Chan, another member of the UoA, conducted research-based outreach activities to serve three kinds of disempowered groups: first those who have trouble expressing themselves (special needs and rural children, the visually impaired and the hard of hearing), second those who have been discriminated against (ethnic minorities), third those whose languages or cultures are at risk (also ethnic minorities).

(2) Underpinning research

Translation scholars have made what has been called “the power turn”, meaning a reorientation towards the issue of power in translation research. The main idea is that, just as there are economic inequalities that determine what gets translated and how, so are there power inequalities that determine what gets translated and how. Yet translation studies scholars have tried to show how translation might be a double-edged sword: translation might help perpetuate, or it might mitigate, economic and political inequalities. This is the principle that Isaac Hui and Darryl Sterk have been following in their respective research projects.

Isaac Hui (2016; 2017; ref. no. 1-2) showed that translation has the potential to empower groups such as homosexuals, who face prejudice among in the comparatively conservative Chinese society, and women, who remain disadvantaged by patriarchy.

Darryl Sterk, building on his research into indigenous cultural representation, argued that translation from Mandarin into Seediq - an endangered language - for a feature film called Seediq Bale (dir. Wei Te-sheng, 2011) was an opportunity for translators to develop and express their perspectives on an important historical event and on their own culture as they reinterpret that culture for their contemporary needs (2019b and 2019c; ref. no. 4-5). Sterk’s methodology was to compare the Mandarin original to the Seediq translation and explain the changes the Seediq translators made in terms of empowerment. Sterk has also shown how the translation of modern terminology into Seediq has empowered Seediq speakers to discuss modern issues in their own terms – Seediq neologisms, not loanwords – and that through the dissemination of Seediq neologisms through education the younger generation will be empowered to discuss any topic in Seediq (2019a; ref. no. 3).

(3) References to the research

1. Hui, Isaac. “Re-negotiating domesticating and foreignizing: bridging *The Symposium* and *Niezi* through the imagery of emptiness.” *Asia Pacific Translation and Intercultural Studies*. 2016: 33-46.

2. Hui, Isaac. "Translating Hong Kong Female Writing into English - Wong Bik-wan's Language of the Repressed." *Frontiers of Literary Studies in China*. 11.1 (April 2017): 206-231.
3. Sterk, Darryl. "Ecologizing Seediq: Towards an Ecology of an Endangered Indigenous Language From Taiwan." *International Journal of Taiwan Studies*. 3.1 (2019a, accepted September 2019).
4. Sterk, Darryl. *Indigenous Cultural Translation: A Thick Description of Seediq Bale*. Routledge. (2019b, accepted September 2019).
5. Sterk, Darryl. "Quest for Roots: Trauma and Heroism in Wu He's *Yusheng* and Tang Xiangzhu's *Yusheng: Seediq Bale*" *The Musha Incident: A Reader*, edited by Michael Berry, Columbia University Press. (2019c, accepted September 2019).

(4) Details of the impact

Isaac Hui and Darryl Sterk, together with Andy Chan, a third member of the UoA, have each facilitated the dissemination of the knowledge they have created in their research, thereby allowing it to have a positive impact on their target communities.

Isaac Hui, whose research has treated empowerment of homosexuals and women through translation, has since 2014 served vulnerable members of the community through his translation of film subtitles. He has contributed to six organizations and projects helping vulnerable minorities: (1) the Yuk Chi Resource Centre (a centre for parents and children with special needs), (2) a Village Adoption Project in Yunnan, China (with the Office of Service-Learning of the university), (3) a project on promoting art and museums in Hong Kong (with the Department of Visual Studies of the University), (4) Silence (an organization serving the deaf and hard of hearing), (5) Yan Oi Tong and (6) the Jane Goodall Institute Hong Kong (for a short film on environmental protection). With the assistance of students, he translated and edited subtitles for short films produced by or for these organizations and helped these organizations raise awareness and seek support in society.

Evidence of the impact that Hui's work has been clearly supported by testimonials from the people and organisations involved. The Centre Head of Silence stated: "It is our pleasure to have the students of Lingnan University to add the English subtitle in our movie '回家' so that our film can reach to other non-Chinese." (sources #1). Additionally, Yan Oi Tong stated that "The films with the subtitles will be put on [their] Facebook page so that [their] messages can be spread to the South Asians community in Hong Kong" (sources #2). Moreover, the Executive Director of the Jane Goodall Institute Hong Kong confirmed that more than 120 audiences from all walks of life have enjoyed the film since the completion of its translation in more than four screenings and they "were empowered to take daily action to reduce the use of single plastic." He said that "the impact of your [Hui's] work is drastic" (sources #3).

Darryl Sterk has applied his research on translation in vulnerable language communities in four different ways: by advising Seediq translators, by publishing annotated Seediq translations, by producing language learning aids, and by raising the visibility of Seediq translators.

At the request of Principal Lituk Teymu of Qin-ai Elementary, he drew on his research findings to make an impact on various projects. Darryl Sterk's study of the translation of the screenplay for the feature film *Seediq Bale* (Sterk 2019a) has raised the visibility of Seediq translation. In the words of the original translator himself: "Your sacrifices and contributions for our language have been witnessed by my people. I and my people owe you a lot. I truly hope that you can celebrate our language and let the world bear witness." (sources #8).

Darryl Sterk's research was also impactful through the creation of training programmes for

Seediq translators based on his findings. Thanks to their acquired skills, translators now have the tools and awareness to improve the tourist experience – for example, by translation of signs at tourist sites. Principal Lituk Teymu has expressed her gratitude: “On August 31, 2018 (Friday) the last day of August, I happened to get together with two very different talented individuals. In a limited time we had a deep discussion of the basic principles of ‘translation.’ Thanks to Temu Dame (Darryl Sterk) for generously sharing his work and explicating translation in terms of fidelity, transmission, and style.” (sources #4).

Sterk has also given a talk at Puli Elementary on June 14, 2019 on his terminology translation research (Sterk 2019b). During the talk, he advised translators to adopt calques from Chinese instead of loanwords, because the translators all speak Mandarin so well they simply codeswitch into Mandarin. They may write *huwapiyau* for *fapiao* (發票), meaning receipt, where *huwapiyau* would be the Seediq pronunciation, but they actually pronounce it perfectly in Mandarin, not in Seediq pronunciation. Moreover, translators should avoid complicated adaptations. For instance, volcano was translated *dgiyaq* (mountain) *spreqan* (burst) *puniq* (fire), a mountain that bursts with fire, by a terminology translation committee. But even the members of the committee found this hard to remember. I recommended instead translating it *dgiyaq* (mountain) *puniq* (fire), which is mountain of fire, the same as in Mandarin (火山). It is easy to remember and to understand. He also offered the translation a rhetorical analysis of a Seediq translation to encourage them to use rhetorical techniques. For instance:

Niq-an king-an ddupun ga – There is a hunting ground there
stngay-an camac ka – full of prey animals
tnlang-an rud-an ta – the village of our ancestors.

This presentation makes it easy for translators to see how rhyme and rhythm and other rhetorical techniques can be used in translation. This practical knowledge was a direct product of Sterk's research and no one else in the field offers equivalent learning resources. His host, Lituk Teymu, has indicated her appreciation of his analysis: “Shi Dailun [Darryl Sterk] carried out an analysis and comparison of new terms in the sentence patterns and vocabulary in this film [Seediq Bale] and in the dictionaries by Aking 黃美玉 and Zeng Ruilin.” (sources #9).

Sterk has published annotated Seediq texts to raise awareness of Seediq (sources #5). Amongst the most impactful of these translations was that of a video with more than 200,000 views on YouTube in which Obing Tado, a survivor of the Wushe Incident, recalls her experience 50 years later. Her grandson Tado Nawi wrote to Sterk via Messenger: “Thanks for sharing your translation, which brings back many memories of my grandmother.” He has also published a bilingual cell phone app for Android to facilitate language learning, which has 10 active installs. This may not sound like many but it is a very small community; and the fact that it is available has given Seediq educator Aking Nawi great encouragement (sources #6-7).

Sharing the same objectives as Hui and Sterk, Andy Chan coordinated and guided 19 students in an audio description project for the Hong Kong Society for the Blind (HKSB) in 2017-18. After consultations with Chan, students wrote drafts of audio-description, edited them based on the feedbacks from Chan, and used the script during a half-day visit to the Ping Shan Heritage Trail on 7 April 2018 with five visually impaired participants. The scripts they have written are to be used by similar trips organized by the HKSB. This work has led to greater linguistic rights of the visually impaired in Hong Kong. An email written by Stella Leung, Project Co-ordinator (Programme & Public Education), from HKSB, evidences the positive impact that this project had: “The students were quite engaged, and actively asked questions. In addition to writing the audio-description, they enthusiastically served visually impaired persons.” (sources #10)

Chan has also submitted a successful Knowledge Transfer Project to train forty teenage ethnic minority community interpreters in Tin Shui Wai and Yuen Long, with Agent of Change

Foundation Limited as the external partner. The participants came from a wide range of ethnicities including Pakistani, Indian, Filipino, Nepalese and Indonesian. Training materials and online resources have been developed for community interpreting of the ethnic minority communities in Hong Kong. These include a dedicated webpage and an Instagram page.

(5) Sources to corroborate the impact

Testimonials by organization/community representatives:

1. Mr. Stanley FP Fung, the Centre Head of Silence, by e-mail, to Isaac Hui
2. Miss Clarion Wan, social worker from Yan Oi Tong, by e-mail to Isaac Hui
3. Letter from Willy Kwong, Executive Director of the Jane Goodall Institute HK, to Isaac Hui
4. Social media post by Lituk Teymu, Principal of Qin-ai Elementary, a prominent figure in the Seediq community, 31 August 2018
5. Tado Nawi via Messenger to D. Sterk. The Blogger page has 58 views; the video has 294,084 views.
6. Message on Messenger from Hsini Yen to Darryl Sterk, thanking him for translating her mother Aking Nawi's story from Seediq to English
7. Message on Messenger from Aking Nawi to Darryl Sterk
8. E-mail to Darryl Sterk from Dakis Pawan, head translator of the feature film *Seediq Bale*
9. Social media post by Lituk Teymu, Principal of Qin-ai Elementary, a prominent figure in the Seediq community, 14 June 2019
10. E-mail from Stella Leung, Project Co-ordinator (Programme & Public Education), from the Hong Kong Society for the Blind to Andy Chan