

**Forum on Academic Publishing in the Humanities**  
**Panel II: Publishing Crisis, Institutional Perspectives**  
**Roundtable Discussion**  
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Since the 1990's, I have been involved in a project of international publishing. Together with my friends, I worked to publish a multilingual series called 'Traces, a multilingual series of cultural theory and translation' in four languages, English, Chinese, Korean and Japanese. We have so far published four issues in four different versions, a separate volume for each language market. The fifth issue is about to come out.

In this process, I came to realize that, in most industrialized societies today, publishing is one of the industries most thoroughly restricted by the inner premises of the nation-state. Unlike other industrial products, books are to be sold within the demarcated market of the national language. Furthermore, national languages are supposed to inhabit each of the geographically-enclosed territories of the nation-states. Most publishers believe that they should promote their products only within the market of their own national language; they know that a small number of their products are also purchased outside that market, but usually the number is negligible from the marketing perspective. Therefore, it is difficult for them not to conceive of their market in terms of inside and outside of the national language. More often than not the development of the national language publishing market has been viewed as essential in the project of nation-building.

Yet, what I have observed in recent years is the rapid transformation of academic publishing, particularly in East Asia and Western Europe.

Traditionally there have been some exceptions to this nationalist presumption prevalent in the publishing world. Many countries I have visited have been old empires whose national languages were also used in their colonies. French and Japanese are such cases, but today the most important exception is the English language. It is no doubt that, to a great extent, our project of *Traces* has become possible thanks to the global use of the English language. Increasingly English is used outside the territories of the English speaking-nations, Britain, the United States, Australia, and so forth. Not surprisingly, what is often referred to as English language imperialism was the first major problem that the project of *Traces* had to confront.

In the 1990's a growing sense of crisis could be found in much of academia across the globe. It is not only that the number of American Ph. D's acquiring high positions at government offices and large corporations in countries like Taiwan, South Korea and China was steadily rising, and but also that, in the not-too-distant future, many important academic positions were expected to be occupied by returnees from the graduate schools at American universities. Today that projection of ten years ago is readily confirmed.

Furthermore one can observe a new trend away from the nationalist premises of academia. In the last few years an increasing number of universities in East Asia have begun to offer courses in English, and fluency in the English language has already been established as a universal marker of social class mobility. The use of the English language in what they perceived to be 'globalization' has played a decisive role symbolically as well as institutionally. In due course, this sense of crisis prompted a widespread refusal and denunciation of the English language in many parts of the world

during the 1990's. While the use of English was regarded as the most distinctive symbol of one's cultural capital, at the same time it gave rise to a nationalist defense. In the name of the defense of national or ethnic language, it was denounced as English language imperialism. Undeniably there is a certain truth to this assessment of global capitalism. But, too often the use of English was judged in terms of misleading disjunctives: international or national, global or local, universal or particular. Moreover, the nationalist denunciation of English language imperialism reinforced, rather than became a hindrance to, the global domination of English, since it would only encourage those refusing to speak English to retreat into a national or ethnic language.

The project of Traces was born as a consequence of a collaboration among intellectuals concerned with the global domination of the English language on the one hand, and the emergence of nationalist exclusionism on the other. Our solution to this dilemma was the idea of translation. We wanted to create a social space, which is opened up through translation.

From this perspective, I would like to mention two issues that are perhaps relevant to the topics discussed by this panel.

The first one is the problem of modern intellectual history, particularly in the countries and societies of the so-called non-West. What constitutes modernity in intellectual history in the non-West is the fact that invariably the question of thought has been posed primarily as one of translation. Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, an increasing number of intellectuals has encountered the problem of modernity as they were exposed to the dominant forces of the West. For them, modernity began as they were forced to translate European languages into their local languages. In turn, their modern national languages

such as Japanese and Chinese were created through the collective endeavor of translation in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. And, it is equally important to stress that the West is far from being a trans-historical tradition; it was created as the very distinction of the West and the non-West was drawn. Of course, the sense of the West was closely associated with the translation of the classical languages, ancient Greek in particular.

The second issue is an extension of the first. It concerns the project being organized by my colleague, Brett de Bary; this involves Tokyo University and Leipzig University, on transnational digital archive in three languages, English, German, and Japanese. It is an attempt to reorganize the archive hitherto prearranged according to the disciplinary rules of national history. Interestingly enough, such a project is now possible thanks to the availability of digital technology and the English language. This should imply that the use of the English language does not necessarily lead to the elimination of heterogeneity. In fact, through the reconceptualization of translation and the deployment of trans-national tactics, we can take advantage of the global use of the English language to create and sustain an intellectual community of translation and call into question the very distinction of the West and the non-West.

Finally let me point out a very interesting development in East Asia. Twenty years ago, many intellectuals did not interact across national borders among China, South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan. In order to talk with intellectuals of other East Asian countries, they had to come to the United States; they could communicate only through their bilateral channels with the American academy. Today intellectual exchanges are proliferating rapidly among these countries. They no longer need to rely exclusively upon bilateral channels with the United States. In their own contexts, many multilateral

channels are now available. Of course, we can think of a number of reasons for this historic transformation. But, there is one condition that we definitely cannot overlook today. It is the use of the English language among Asian intellectuals, many of whom received their education at American universities.