

Departmental Research Student Seminar

Vernacularization in Mediæval Chinese: A Quantitative Study on Classifiers, Demonstratives and Copulae in the Chinese Buddhist Canon

Presented by

Mr. WONG Tak Sum

**PhD Candidate, Department of Linguistics & Translation
City University of Hong Kong**

Date: 26 January 2018 (Friday)

Time: 11:30 am - 12:30 pm

Venue: B7603 (Blue Zone), 7/F, Academic 1, City University of Hong Kong

Abstract

While studies on diachronic Chinese syntax have identified a number of linguistic changes in Mediæval Chinese, they have mostly been underpinned by qualitative analyses. In the most large-scale quantitative analysis to-date, this research investigates changes in the use of classifiers, demonstratives, and copulae. Our analysis, based on the Chinese Buddhist Canon, examines over 40 million characters in texts spanning a millennium. Results suggest that from the late Eastern Han period (circa 150 A.D.) onwards, the vernacular style became increasingly widespread, at the expense of the literary style, as reflected by changes in the use of classifiers and demonstratives, and in the construction of nominal sentences. However, the vernacular style became less frequently used in the Northern Sung period (960 – 1127 A.D.). This reversal may shed light on the work of the Stylists, editors appointed by the Sung court to polish Buddhist texts with more literary elements.

Speaker

Mr. Wong Tak Sum is currently a PhD candidate in the Department of Linguistics and Translation. His research interests include Corpus linguistics, Computer-assisted language learning, Computational linguistics, Chinese linguistics; Chinese historical phonology; Cantonese linguistics; Chinese palæography; Chinese dialectology; Historical phonology; Phonetics; Grammatology.

~ LT Staff and Research Degree Students only ~

Enquiry: 3442 8705

<http://lt.cityu.edu.hk>