

Departmental Research Student Seminar

Conversational Network in the Chinese Buddhist Canon

Presented by

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Abstract

We will describe a method to analyze characters in a literary text by considering their verbal interactions. This method exploits techniques from computational linguistics to extract all direct speech from the text, and to build a conversational network that visualizes the speakers, listeners and their degree of interaction.

We have applied this method in a case study on the Chinese Buddhist Canon. We will first report the steps for building the conversational network. We trained a part-of-speech tagger and parser using a dependency treebank of Chinese Buddhist texts. Then we extracted all direct speech enclosed within pairs of quotation marks and identified the quotative verb that is used to report the speech by consulting the parse tree. Next, we attributed a speaker and a listener to each utterance. Last, we have visualized the utterances as a conversational network graph.

The network was analyzed by identifying those characters who spoke the most. Not surprisingly, Buddha occupies the top spot, accounting for 44% of the utterances. Buddha also has the higher out-degree among the nodes in the network, talking to 95 of the top 100 characters, far exceeding the median of 15 in the Buddhist network.

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 palaeography; Chinese dialectology; Historical phonology; Phonetics; Grammatology.

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