

Beijing Forum 2019

Language, Culture and Identity in Inter-Civilization Interaction (I)

On the morning of November 2, 2019, the first session of the sub-forum of Beijing Forum (2019) “Language, Culture and Identity in Inter-Civilization Interaction” was held in Room 501, School of Foreign Languages, Peking University. Professor Wu Jiewei from Peking University chaired this session. Four scholars from China, South Korea and Germany respectively shared their latest research and perspectives on the theme of the sub-forum.

The first speaker was Hu Zhuanglin, Senior Professor of Peking University. He spoke on the topic of “National Language Strategy in Inter-Civilization Interaction”. Professor Hu believed discussion on such topics should start from clarifying the relationship between language and civilization, culture and identity. Language as a core factor playing a significant role in connecting these concepts deserves more in-depth research. While we are promoting the Belt and Road initiative and the ideology of building a community of shared future, language serves not only as the communication tool for economic and trade conversation but also as the important bridge for cultural exchange and mutual learning. Then he addressed the difficulties we might encounter in extending “languages becoming homogenised through globalization, including Chinese” and proposed how to cope with relevant problems. Finally, Professor Hu mentioned that we should observe the new features and functions of language in the current era of information, technology and science, so as to apply the advanced technology to better promote communication and language teaching.

Professor Hyunsik Min from Seoul National University delivered his presentation entitled “The Creation of Hangeul Civilization and Sustainable Development Challenges”. He first reviewed the historical origin and development of Hangeul civilization, and then talked about the worldwide popularity of Korean culture. He believed that Hangeul civilization was developed by embracing the continental civilization and combining this with overseas civilizations, such as the United States and Japan. South Korea today is now facing challenges and crises in the wake of the fourth industrial revolution. Then, professor Hyunsik Min pointed out four major issues.

First of all, it is the challenge of enhancing literacy. The enhancement of Hangeul, Hanja and media literacy requires close attention and in-depth discussion. Then comes the challenge of developing a new identity. Korean language education has contributed to the identity formation of the people of Korea, and in the future, the government should help strengthen education for multicultural identity. The third challenge is that of developing new humanities. A culture of humanities should be fostered through extensive reading on a variety of subjects including language, literature, history, philosophy, and religion. The last one is the challenge of developing a new morality. Korean language education should address linguistic ethics, together with moral ethics from various disciplines, as well as the strengthening of dialogue, persuasion and discussion education, and empathy through listening.

Then, Professor Herta Däubler-Gmelin from Free University of Berlin spoke on the topic of “The Global Renaissance of the Political Theory of Carl Schmitt and its Influence on International Relationship”.

Firstly, she proposed that under the current global situation, common and harmonious development is the direction and goal in line with the trend of international community, on which Carl Schmidt's political theory has wide implications. Then she briefly reviewed Carl's life experience and theoretical opinions. Carl was born in Germany in 1888, whose work has been a major influence on subsequent political theory, legal theory, continental philosophy and political theology. His political thoughts have attracted the attention of numerous scholars not only in Europe, but also in America and Central Asia. At the end of her talk, Proferssor Herta Däubler-Gmelin argued that we should be more cautious and critical when applying his theory into practice, so that it can better serve the need of current development.

The last speaker is Professor Wen Qiufang from Beijing Foreign Studies University. In her talk entitled “Rethinking of the relationship between language and culture in the context of teaching English as a lingua franca”, she offered a new interpretation of the relationship between language and culture. Professor Wen classified cultures into two types: languature which is mediated by language and non-languature which does not necessarily involve the use of language. From the perspective of “process”, she believed language production called for four dimensions of languature: topical, discorsal, situational and linguistic, which can be placed on the continuum of separability. Regarding the relationship between language and culture, she opposed the dichotomous view of

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either being separable or inseparable. At the end of her report, Professor Wen put forward three suggestions for resolving dilemmas in teaching cultures in English as a lingua franca.

After the speech of the four professors, the audience had a heated discussion on relevant topics with the chairing of Professor Wu Jiewei.