CONCEPT

Standard languages are in most cases based on culturally significant textual traditions. By virtue of representing the cultural heritage, standard written languages often differ from the contemporary spoken varieties. In cases of a strict functional differentiation between the written language and the spoken language, we encounter diglossia (in accordance with Fergusson’s definition). Although such functional differentiations may persist over centuries, many cases of dissolution of diglossia have been attested over the past centuries. The exact nature of these processes forms the topic of our coming conference on July 1-2, 2011 at the University of Heidelberg.

The main focus of investigation of the research project “Language and cultural translation” within the Cluster of Excellence “Asia and Europe in a global context: Shifting asymmetries in cultural flows” at the University of Heidelberg, has been on linguistic, cultural, and social changes associated with the dissolution of the diglossic situation in Japan in the 19th century in comparison with other cultures of Asia and Europe, particularly Eastern Europe. Towards the end of the 19th century, the Japanese culture opened up to European influences and literary translation introduced new literary models which led to a new awareness of the functional possibilities of the spoken language. This was the background of the genbun itchi movement in Japan, a language reform which promoted the spoken language to the status of the literary language. There were similar processes in Russia one century earlier.

This conference aims at comparing these processes of Japanese with similar developments in other Asian and in European languages. Specialists from Asia, Europe and the U.S. have been invited to report on their research which focuses on the dissolution of diglossic situations in different language communities.

For further information to this conference or the Cluster of Excellency visit: www.asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de.
PROGRAM

Friday, 1. July 2011

10:00  
Judit Árokay (Heidelberg, Germany)
Welcoming address

10:15  
Jadranka Gvozdanovic (Heidelberg)
„Understanding the Essence of Diglossia“

11:05  
Neil Bermel (Sheffield, U.K.)
„Czech Diglossia: Dismantling or Dissolution?“

11:55  
Massimilano Tomasi (Bellingham, USA)
„'Genbun itchi' and 'La Questione Della Lingua': Theoretical Parallels and Divergences in the Search for a New Written Language in Meiji Japan and Renaissance Italy“

LUNCH

14:30  
Yeounsuk Lee (Tōkyō, Japan)
„Homogenization or Hierarchization? A Problem of Written Language in the Public Sphere of Modern Japan“

15:20  
Elisabeth Kaske (Pittsburgh, USA)
„Diglossia and its Discontent: The Linguistics of National Crisis in Early Twentieth Century China“

COFFEE BREAK

16:45  
Chris Wen-chao Li (San Francisco, USA)
„Seismic Shifts in the Diglossic Makeup of Chinese: How Global and Regional Superlanguages are Driving Local Dialects to Extinction“

17:35  
Jinzhi Su (Beijing, China)
„Diglossia in China: Past and Present“
Saturday, 2. July 2011

9:00  
Olga Yokoyama (Los Angeles, USA)  
„Towards a Discourse-pragmatic Theory of Translation“

9:50  
Judit Árokay (Heidelberg, Germany)  
„Discourses on Poetic Language in Early Modern Japan and the Awareness of Linguistic Change“

COFFEE BREAK

11:10  
Katharina Kunz (Heidelberg, Germany)  
„Language Awareness in Russia in the 19th century“

12:00  
Michiaki Kawato (Tōkyō, Japan)  
„Diglossia and Literary Translation in Later 19th Century Japan“

LUNCH

14:20  
Jeffrey Angles (Kalamazoo, USA)  
„How to Turn a Lilac into a Peony: The Territory of Translation In Late-Nineteenth Century Japan“

15:10  
Noriyo Hoozawa-Arkenau (Heidelberg, Germany)  
„Translations in a Diglossic Language Situation in Japan“

COFFEE BREAK

16:30  
Darja Miyajima (Heidelberg, Germany)  
„Inspiration for Modernization: Translations of Literary Works in China at the Beginning of the 20th century“

17:20  
Final Discussion
ABSTRACTS

Jadranka Gvozdanovic

Understanding the essence of diglossia

Ferguson (1959) defined diglossia as a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards'), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation. Ever since, diglossia has been used as an analytic tool for a wide range of phenomena, including such as standard-with-dialects, by Ferguson treated as diglossic only in the special case defined above. The present paper examines critically the definition proposed by Ferguson and the use of this term by other authors. It shows that the definition proposed by Ferguson aims at being general, but in fact it applies to a specific subset of diglossic phenomena with reference to canonized written genres, and even these allow for some variation. In line with Bermel's (2001) analysis of Czech standard vs. (colloquial and) common usages which exhibit degrees of officiality vs. unofficiality, I shall argue for a more flexible, strictly functional understanding of diglossia by which the choice of the available varieties is conditioned by strictly functional considerations (developing further the notion of polysystem used by Even-Zohar 1979, 1990 with reference to communicative dynamics of usually heterogeneous, mostly hierarchically structured sets of systems which coexist for a speech community). Essentially similar functional patterns of variation are found across time and space (e.g. code-switching between roots and desinences in medieval Slavic and in genbun-itchi Japanese) as well as in various types of co-existing varieties with a functional differentiation, from stylistic differentiation (in the sense of Auer 2007) to differentiation between standard and colloquial or even between languages used by the same speech community. We shall analyse patterns of choice in prototypical diglossic settings such as pre-modern Russian vs. Old Church Slavic (the latter as the high variety) and Japanese during the Meiji period (with a variation between kōgo and bungo), and compare these with patterns of choice between Croatian and Serbo-Croatian in the process of quasi-diglossia dissolution after the end of former Yugoslavia. Next to functional analysis, the presentation will pay attention to socio-cultural and political aspects, and view diglossia as a cover term for culturally based functional differentiation.

Further reading:
Czech Diglossia: Dismantling or Dissolution?

Ever since the emergence, in the mid-nineteenth century, of a de facto national standard based on an archaic variant of the written language, Czech has served as the Slavonic world's best-known example of a diglossic language situation, and most contemporary descriptions start from this assumption (see e.g. Kim 2008, Janda 2005, Short 2001, Janda & Townsend 2000, Grygar-Rechziegl 1990, Micklesen 1978), even if some then go on to question it (e.g. Giger 2003, Dickins 1995, Eckert 1993, Daneš 1988).

The belief in Czech diglossia is rooted in the pervasive and noticeable differences between H and L varieties of the language on the phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical levels. In Bohemia, where two-thirds of the country’s population resides, the H variant, Literary Czech, is learned at school and serves as the medium for official and formal communication, both spoken and written, while the L variant, Common Czech, fulfils all other language functions. The absence of Common Czech in the eastern third of the country, where various local dialects and interdialects occupy the L position, has supposedly helped maintain the prestige and functionality of Literary Czech, which is said to have a ‘superdialectal’ range that makes it the only truly national code.

In this talk, I will look at two trends in the evolution of Czech diglossia over the past hundred years, which can roughly be described as ‘dismantling’ and ‘dissolution’ of the diglossic language situation. Dismantling concerns official attempts to reach a ‘rapprochement’ between H and L through modifying the prescribed description of H to incorporate elements from L. Dissolution concerns unofficial changes resulting from societal upheaval and technological advances, which have caused a blurring between public and private space and between the formal and informal spheres.

Despite the proclaimed advantages of Literary Czech, its retreat is now obvious enough that we can question the extent to which Ferguson’s classic definitions still apply in the Czech lands. Official changes have attempted to maintain the functionality and prestige of H, but frequently have merely increased the range of features available in H by enriching it with previously proscribed features of L. Unofficial changes have seen L gradually find its way into the domains that were previously the exclusive preserve of H. Interestingly enough, in the current situation, attitudes characteristic of diglossic language situations continue to obtain (see e.g. Bayerová-Nerlichová 2002), while the actual functional uses of the two varieties has already departed substantially from a diglossic language situation – prompting me to suggest that diglossia, dismantled or not, is already fundamentally in dissolution.
The development of the *genbun itchi* movement was a major trait of modern Japan's intellectual discourse. The written language of early Meiji (1868-1912) carried the legacy of centuries of literary practice but was considerably different from the vernacular actually spoken by the people. Tradition had however reinforced the primacy of classical language to such an extent that the vernacular was widely regarded as unsuitable for written communication. The Meiji literary world itself remained divided in regard to the prerequisites of a modern written language, with some supporting the partial “vernacularization” of the written style (*gazoku setchû*), and others insisting on the supremacy of the classical medium. Very few even conceived the idea of a literary language completely devoid of classical elements.

In Italy the debate on the so called *questione della lingua* drew largely from Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia* (ca. 1305) and its argument in defense of the vernacular, or “volgare,” against the supremacy of Latin. The debate gained momentum during the Renaissance when scholar Pietro Bembo published his *Prose della volgar lingua* (1525), in which he argued the feasibility of a literary form of expression based on the language of fourteenth century literary giants, Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio. Some supported Bembo's theory — the ultimate winner — others like Baldassarre Castiglione advocated the use of a “lingua cortigiana” — the language used at the courts of Italy — and yet others like Niccolo' Machiavelli called for the adoption of the contemporary Florentine dialect.

While *genbun itchi* advocates did not have an existing literary model that could support their arguments, the proponents of Bembo's theory did; and while the *genbun itchi* debate was for the most part a controversy on whether the vernacular could replace classical language, the *questione della lingua* was essentially a debate on which form of vernacular would be the most appropriate to replace Latin. Finally, it is well known that in his defense of the vernacular Dante actually used Latin, this being a contradiction in terms that can however also be found among some *genbun itchi* supporters, who argued in favor of the colloquial using a mode of expression that was pseudo-classical at best.

This study analyzes these and other aspects of the theoretical process that accompanied the creation of a new written language in Japan and Italy, unveiling the existence of meaningful theoretical intersections in the unfolding of these debates.
Lee Yeounsuk

Homogenization or Hierarchization?: A Problem of Written Language in the Public Sphere of Modern Japan

The problem of language in modern Japan was resolved in a way that eliminated the written language/spoken language diglossic situation. In the literary sphere, the unification of the written and spoken languages (genbun itchi) began with Futabatei Shimei’s *Ukigumo* (1887), and colloquial novels were well established by the end of the 19th century. The linguistic style of newspapers, which were the form of media that reached the general public, largely transitioned to colloquial language in the Taisho Period. However, with regard to genbun itchi, the types of problems mentioned below have often been overlooked. In this paper, I would like to deal with these problems.

1. Did the elimination of diglossia not bring about linguistic homogenization by way of the “national language” (kokugo) and contribute to centralization of linguistic authority? In particular, for speakers of regional dialects and speakers of different languages, genbun itchi was a means of accelerating the transition to standard Japanese language.

2. Even within the “written language,” various genres and categories existed. The literary style that became dominant in the Meiji Period was certainly not the traditional classical Chinese (kanbun) style, but a new written language formed during the Meiji Period – the term used at that time was “ordinary language” (futsū bun). Therefore, the conflict between the written language and the spoken language cannot be taken simply as a conflict between tradition and the modern era.

3. Throughout the period before the Pacific/East Asia War, a style that mixed Chinese characters (kanji) and phonetic characters (katakana) was employed in the written word in the public sphere, such as laws and official documents. The Constitution of Japan promulgated after the war was written in the colloquial language (colloquialization of the Constitution). Documents such as imperial edicts and rescripts from the emperor to his subjects were renamed “okotoba” after the war and came to use colloquial language. On the other hand, the law was not completely colloquialized until the 21st century (the colloquialization of civil law took place in 2005). In order to understand the diglossic situation in modern Japan, it is necessary to consider these problems of the written word in the public sphere.
Elisabeth Kaske
**Diglossia and its Discontent: The Linguistics of National Crisis in Early Twentieth Century China**

Chinese language debates during the first two decades of the twentieth century were part of a discourse of national crisis when Chinese culture seemed unfit for competition in the modern world, and the time-honored state of diglossia began to appear as “shizoglossia” (Haugen) to proponents of reform and universal education. Being under the strong influence of Japan’s *genbun itchi* movement, Chinese efforts to promote “the unity of speech and writing” showed some remarkable similarities with Japan, but also many differences given the peculiar linguistic situation and political circumstances. The paper develops a new model for reassessing the state of diglossia and examines how various reform proposals and their critics understood the linguistics and social consequences of diglossia and its abolition.

Chris Wen-chao Li
**Seismic Shifts in the Diglossic Makeup of Chinese: How Global and Regional Superlanguages are Driving Local Dialects to Extinction**

Chinese society has always been diglossic, but in the past two hundred years or so, the paradigm under which Chinese diglossia operates has shifted dramatically, from one in which Classical Chinese reigned as the sole written medium and regional dialects served oral communication purposes to one in which Mandarin (in its many varieties) replaces both Classical Chinese and regional dialects in both written and oral modes. This paper charts the development from the age of writing in the classical language to the rise of Mandarin as the standard medium for communication, and shows how increased literacy and widespread education in Mandarin (and English, in some instances) has accelerated the demise of the Chinese regional dialects – many of which are going from mainstream to obsolete in the course of a generation, especially in the younger segment of the urban population, in locales once known as bastions of local Chinese speech varieties -- a trend that has resulted in backlash (e.g., anti-Mandarin demonstrations in Guanzhou) and attempts at preservation through instruction (e.g., Taiwan’s indigenous language education movement). In weighing the balance of power between Mandarin and dialect in Guangzhou, Taiwan, Shanghai, and Singapore, it will be argued that without a counterbalance of prestige or economic utility, no post-factum measures will suffice to reverse the trend of Mandarin domination, although the local dialects being replaced will leave their mark in the lexicon and syntax of the standard language, contributing to the creation of new prestige varieties of Mandarin.
Jinzhi Su  
*Diglossia in China: Past and Present*

This study will give an outline of the formation, development and dissolution of diglossia in Chinese situation at past, and an outline of the new Chinese diglossic situation at present.

According to Ferguson’s theory of diglossia (1959), there are two varieties of a language, High variety (H) and Low variety (L), coexisted in a diglossic situation. In the same article, Ferguson says that Chinese probably represents diglossia on the largest scale of any attested instance (1959:146). The wen-li (Classical Chinese) corresponds to H, while Mandarin colloquial (Vernacular Written Chinese) is a standard L; there are also regional L varieties. Vernacular Written Chinese refers to forms of written Chinese based on spoken Chinese, in contrast to Classical Chinese, the former written standard used since the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 B.C.). Vernacular Written Chinese was used in novels in the Tang (618-907) and Song (960-1127) dynasties, and later refined by intellectuals associated with the May Fourth Movement (1919). Since the early 1920s, this modern vernacular form has been the standard style of writing for speakers of all varieties of Chinese throughout mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau. As the written counterpart of Modern Standard Chinese, it is commonly called Standard Written Chinese or Modern Written Chinese to avoid the ambiguity of the word “vernacular” in the modern context.

With the development of Chinese education and modernization, Vernacular Written Chinese has been developed into a H variety against regional L varieties, from a L variety, and Classical Chinese has no longer been as a H variety against Vernacular Written Chinese as a Low variety. Some suggestions for the revival of Classical Chinese have been proposed by fans of Classical Chinese culture, but it seems not to be able to change the present diglossic situation due to the modernization of education and culture in China.

Fishman (1967, 1970, 1980, and 1989) has revised the classic definition of diglossia. The author uses this theory to analyze Chinese diglossic situation at present. Modern Written Chinese corresponds to H variety and Hong Kong Written Chinese (Su, 2008), Taiwan Written Chinese and Macau Written Chinese correspond to L varieties. There are also regional L varieties such as Cantonese, Min dialect and Wu dialect. Standard Putonghua as a spoken form is a H variety and Putonghua with dialectal accents is a L variety. Great changes of this new Chinese diglossic situation will not be taken place in the near future.

It concludes that different diglossia emerges, rises and falls in different social situation, and that one H variety may coexist with more than one L varieties in the same level, and that there may be a multi-level diglossic system in the speech community of some languages.
I propose to reorient translation theory towards the discourse-pragmatic aspects of translation, taking as the quintessential translation activity not that involving written texts (much less literary texts), but rather that which can be called “language brokering”. This perspective shifts weight away from the product of linguistic activity (text) toward the participants of the three-way mediated discourse activity. Rather than exploring the traditional notions of translatability or “equivalence” of meaning (the traditional linguistics-driven focus) vis-à-vis the more recent claims of the primacy of ideology or culture (as in post-structural or post-colonial translation theories), this approach will emphasize the universality of mediated spontaneous discourse activity, which after all predates the emergence of written texts. This kind of activity is carried out, in private and public bilingual contexts, by mediators (translators/interpreters) who do not strive for perfect equivalence, often using their best judgment to provide helpful comments or to omit culturally inappropriate information (e.g. obscenities). Using my own Transactional Discourse Model as a heuristic device for the analysis, I will show that it is precisely everyday natural “language brokering” that constitutes the prototypical translation activity. The mechanisms of mediated discourse thus established should serve to illuminate all translation activity, including that involving written texts.

Judit Árokay

Discourses on Poetic Language in Early Modern Japan and the Awareness of Linguistic Change

In pre-modern Japan we encounter a linguistically complex situation where Written Chinese (kanbun 漢文) dominates administrative, scholarly, religious, and literary texts, Written Japanese (bungo 文語) is used for literary, in some cases scholarly texts, and for private writing, and many spoken variants exist that hardly pop up in written texts. We suppose that the Written Japanese style dominating in poetry and narrative literature corresponds to the language that had been spoken at the Heian court in Classical Japan (9th to 12th century) and that this unity of spoken and written language split up with language change during the Middle Ages. The classical written language was conserved in prose literature and poetry and held in high esteem until the end of the 19th century when the call for the unity of written and spoken language (genbun itchi 言文一致) was voiced. Language change did of course not go unnoticed during the centuries but older forms conserved in writing were definitely valued higher than the heterogeneous and ever changing vernacular. It was in the Early Modern, from around 1700, that spoken language began to be integrated into written texts: partly in prose, to some extent in drama, and in haiku poetry. However, these genres were intended for popular entertainment and considered low and vulgar (zoku), while classical written language and its genres represented elegance (ga). This discourse dominates linguistic explorations that we encounter in poetic treatises: reverence for the past and contempt for the contemporaneous. From around 1800, however, some poets and writers put forward the argument that contemporary spoken language was the only effective means for transmitting emotions authentically. A century before the genbun itchi movement, they pleaded for the use of the contemporary vernacular in elegant poetry in the first line, as they were convinced that poetry cannot be restricted to elite groups of society and it is only the vernacular that enables humans to communicate their emotions directly.

In my presentation this rather unknown strand of argumentation in Early Modern Japan and some of its representatives will be introduced in order to give a glimpse on indigenous discourse that paved the way for the so called “unification of spoken and written language”.
Katharina Kunz

**Language Awareness in Russia in the 19th century**

There are a lot of essays describing the Russian language history at the beginning of the 19th century. The most of them are concentrated on the language of Puškin or other great authors of the Russian classical literature. The emergence of the standard language is traditionally being analyzed on the basis of the literary material, because it was the literature that showed various ways to combine different elements (Church Slavonic, colloquial Russian, borrowings from western languages etc.) into one organic whole.

At the same time a significant philosophical dispute between the Westernizers and Slavophiles dominated the social life during the 1830’s and 1840’s. These two mutually exclusive ideological positions embodied two different models of Russian thought.

In this contribution the language situation in Russia of that time will be examined against a background of the Slavophile-Westenizer controversy. The actualization of the national awareness and the ambivalence of Russian thought affected also the language awareness of this epoch. In this context an important question about the interaction of the heterogenic elements (e.g. own and foreign elements, colloquial Russian vs. Church Slavonic features etc.) in the standard language from the point of view of the Slavophiles and Westenizers will be discussed. In principle these are the same elements which were involved in the linguistic dispute and the dynamic of the language situation in the 18th century’s Russia.
Michiaki Kawato

Diglossia and Literary Translations in Later 19th Century Japan

The written Japanese language was developed under the influence of the Chinese classics which were the main channels to introduce Chinese culture into Japan. To read these classics more efficiently, people developed the unique method to read Chinese passages according to Japanese grammar and order, which influenced heavily on the written Japanese language. Meanwhile, as for daily conversation, people used the vernacular and with the passage of time, they saw an outstanding gap between written and spoken language. Still, while they relied on Chinese classics for their knowledge and learning, they accepted it without feeling much inconvenience. However, the situation completely altered in the later 19th century when Japan gave up its 200-year-long isolation policy and opened its door again to Western countries. Once the door was open, Western books and products poured into Japan like floodwater; at the same time, the old problem with the Japanese language became conspicuous. Japanese, especially written Japanese was developed so as to be useful to read Chinese classics but it was of little use to read Western books. They had to convert it from a Chinese-compatible to a Western-language-compatible version, otherwise they could not acquire new knowledge indispensable to build up a new Western-style state.

For this reason, the so-called “Genbun-Icchi” movement was launched by a cluster of literary pioneers. Though it literally meant a movement for unifying the written and spoken styles of Japanese, the real meaning behind it was to create a new written style of Japanese based on European languages, without which they believed, they could not create their new novels. Therefore most of the advocates of the movement turned to copying or translating literally European novels. In spite of this fact, those who have studied the movement so far tend to view the whole process of the shaping of a new style based on their original works and not on their translations. As a result, they sometimes fail to grasp some of the essential points of the movement.

For example, among the most notable results of the movement is the word “de-aru” which is essential to sentences in the new written style. A peculiarity of the word is that, very common as it is in sentences, it is hardly used in daily conversation. Why was such a word introduced into the new written style of Japanese? To find an answer to this, we have to go back to the time when the word was first introduced by the advocates of the “Genbun-Icchi” movement. As they translated European novels, they noticed a vital fact that there was no Japanese equivalent for the verb “be” in English. While they relied on the old language they had the word “nari” for its equivalent. However, they gave up the old language and they could not use it any more. Then they set an eye on the word “de-aru” which was largely used in the word-for-word translations of European language textbooks. In their attempts to introduce the word into their translations and then into their original works, they made every effort to make it merge with the new written style that they attempted to create. Thanks to their strenuous efforts, the word was gradually accepted among the general public and in due course it was seen in newspapers, magazines and even in elementary school Japanese reading textbooks. This is the outline of how the word “de-aru” came into the new style and this is also the outline of how the “Genbun-Icchi” movement developed. We can not grasp the whole process without paying attention to the literary translations of those days.

In my report, I try to trace the process of how this new written style of Japanese was formed mainly by focusing on the word “de-aru” which is one of the main fruits of efforts by the advocates of the “Genbun-Icchi” movement.
Jeffrey Angles
“How to Turn a Lilac into a Peony”: The Territory of Translation in Late-Nineteenth Century Japan

In many ways, modern Japan is a nation of translation. Nowhere is this any more true than the Meiji period (1868-1912), the era during which Japan undertook an ambitious and radically transformative project of modernization, in every field including literature. This presentation will discuss the ways that Japanese writers dealt with the foreignness of Western texts when creating the earliest modern renditions of Western literature into Japanese.

This presentation demonstrates that Meiji writers were working within a broad “territory of translation”—a broad field of literary rewriting that encompasses what would now be considered “translation” (hon'yaku) as well as “adaptation” (hon'an), although in early Meiji Japan, there was not a firm delineation between the two. After examining some of the early renditions and showing the extents of the Meiji-period “territory of translation,” this presentation will discuss the ways that this territory changed over time as translators developed new attitudes and techniques to represent the world of the source text.

Noriyo Hoozawa-Arkenau
Translations in a diglossic language situation in Japan

The Japanese language society has been in the diglossic condition until the beginning of the Meiji period (1868). It dissolved in the Meiji period under influences from Western languages and thoughts. Among those foreign languages Russian was the most important language because the new writing variant, which based upon the spoken language, was developed in translations from Russian – the author that wrote the first novel in the L-variant (the spoken variant in a diglossia) was a translator from Russian as well, and he established the new writing variant in Japanese in contact with Russian.

In this presentation the process will be followed in that the traditional writing system (bungo) was replaced by the ‘spoken’ writing variant (kōgo) and the notion of translation changed in translations from Russian.

After the most important translations from Russian were examined it will be discussed which linguistic factors played a role for the dissolution of diglossia and the stylistic development of the new writing system.
Inspiration for modernization: translations of literary works in China at the beginning of the 20th century

After the First Sino-Japanese War had made China painfully aware of the fact that its technological development wasn't enough to compete with rivals and repel attacks, the necessity of learning from the Western powers became obvious. Thus, in the beginning of the 20th century there were many attempts to modernize the country. While the most of the efforts were made in the field of technology and science, the men of letters pointed out that the technological progress and political reforms were not enough to let everything turn to good account. In fact, it were the souls of the country's men that needed to be reformed, since a new modern shell wouldn't be of much use covering the brittle traditional core of the Chinese society. These thoughts and further historical developments brought the New Culture Movement and the May Fourth Movement to life. Their representatives sought to reach the hearts and to change the way of thinking of the common people, so they came to the conclusion that a new kind of literature – available and understandable for everybody - was necessary. In order to modernize literature and start creating, the Chinese intellectuals translated and analyzed literary works from Japan and the Western countries. In the course of this process they had to examine and find ways to improve various 'flaws' that the Chinese language has been accused of (e.g. being too blurry and imprecise). They also needed to solve controversies such as how many colloquial and literary elements the new written language should contain and what exactly the translations of foreign works should teach. An active exchange of ideas took place among the literati like Lu Xun, Liang Shiqiu, Fu Sinian and Qu Qiubai who discussed the outline of translation principles drawn by Yan Fu (faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance), the advantages and disadvantages of literal and free translation, the adoption of European grammar structures and the adaptation of expression and content to the Chinese reality. The results of those debates have been reflected in their creative work and have influenced the written language a great deal.

Nowadays, various scholars in and outside of China are still occupied with analyzing those influences and developments. They try for example to trace the degree of Europeanization in literary texts throughout the 20th century up to the present state of the Chinese language and try to evaluate structural borrowings with regard to the language's nature. Their statements make it possible to draw a comparison of the attitudes towards the Europeanization of the Chinese language now and during the May Fourth era.