



## **The Protagonist or the Antagonist in the World of Translation? – The Influence of Semantic Transliteration on the Sinitic Languages**

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A complete equivalence when translating one language to another is always hard to achieve. Especially when it comes to the encounter between Western cultures and Chinese culture, with different types of morphology and syntactic structures between Chinese and Western languages, word-for-word translation is barely possible. According to Masini (1993), the alleged logical sequence between phonemic and semantic loans was attributed to a lack of linguistic competence on the part of the speaker, who was not familiar with the exact meaning of the original word and therefore reproduced the model on the basis of its phonemic shape rather than semantic content. The transliteration of words in Buddhism sutras accomplished by Buddhist monks and the transliteration of words in Western science done by the Christian missionaries were the testaments to this kind of gradual progress. In the early stage of the translation of Buddhist sutras, because the existing Chinese characters used in the philosophical terms could not match the meanings for the sutras, Buddhist monks started from the transliteration with rarely used Chinese characters to transcribe the Sanskrit. Later, the transliteration was advanced to the semantic transliteration with the combination of Sanskrit and Chinese in the lexicons. For example, the lexicon 禪定 combined one phoneme from Dhyāna 禪那 in Sanskrit and the Chinese character 定, which was translated from the meaning of Samatha. The use of Mandarin topolects was also taken into consideration for which character could be transcribed. Christian missionaries also employed semantic transliteration when accomplishing translations in Jiangnan Arsenal in the late Qing Dynasty. In spite of different results, the semantic transliteration done by Buddhist monks and missionaries indeed had a lasting and profound influence on the word use of Sinitic languages and some of the transliterated words are gradually internalized into Chinese. In the modern times of Taiwan, due to the complicated political and historical background, with the mixing interchange and inter-influence of Japanese and Taiwanese, the use of Taiwan Mandarin is also influenced by the semantic transliteration. For example, the terms, such as 涮涮鍋 (しゃぶしゃぶ), 安打 (あんだ) and 養樂多 (ヨーグルト) in Japanese and 抓狂 (liáh- kông, getting crazy and unstable) and 英英美代子 (īng īng bô tsi-tsi, one has nothing to do) in Taiwanese are a few among the good examples of semantic transliteration and these transcribed words from Japanese and Taiwanese has changed the use of Taiwan Mandarin and formed a new sub-culture. This paper aims to study the tradition of semantic transliteration from a historical perspective and to analyze the impact of the semantic transliteration of Japanese and Taiwanese on the word use of Taiwan Mandarin. Words of semantic transliteration will be collected from different media, such as press, novels, or online bulletin boards for further analysis. Moreover, this paper attempts to explore the trend and the shift in the word use of Taiwan Mandarin influenced by the semantic transliteration of Japanese and Taiwanese and how the political factor influenced the semantic transliteration. The new face of Taiwan Mandarin will thus be disclosed.