「中不不英」

藝術語言和寫讀能力

編者：我們並非語言學家，至少我們並不是語言的「用家」。語言決定我們的思維邏輯，主宰了意識形態。可是，對於自己的語言文化，我們並未有太多的尊重和關懷。這反映了我們對自己的文化傳統的誤解和偏見，對本土文化的欠缺認識。究其原因，在學校裡，在主 流教育中，我們強調的只是文字「寫讀能力」（literacy）。基本上就是把一個口不諳丁的文盲，變成有寫讀能力的人。普遍的想法是，能 冊能看能寫字就等於有「文化」。有趣的是，我們生活在一個圖像世界，特別在二十一世 紀的今天，圖像信息充斥我們的視覺和感官，形成無形的影像信息，我們沒有對視覺語言的認知和掌握。可是，培養學生、市民的「視覺語言寫讀能力」（visual literacy）這種工作，卻常被忽視。

藝術之作品，正在於此。藝術家就好比文化、生活的觀察家，他們會透過作品去親近、 與觀眾一起作公共性思考。藝術家使用的是視覺語言，營造語言，這種語言的特性是建立 在同化和異化、複雜和簡單、具象和抽象、具象和抽象的基礎上。畫家、詩人的解釋、觸 摸到生活裡更深層的東西。

文字語言與視覺語言的較量，視覺語言對文字 語言的挑戰，挑揀，是一場動人深省、極其精 彩的思想搏擊。當代重要的中國藝術家以語言文字創作著名的有徐冰和谷文達等。徐冰作有 挑戰傳統的個體漢字「天書」(插圖1)；反思文化 碰撞、融合的方塊字「新英文書法」（插圖2）； 以及他最新思考國際語言文化問題的「地書」 (插圖3)等。谷文達則有對全球化發展思考的 「聯合國——中國紀念碑」（插圖4）；另從 語言探索文化觀點問題的「玻璃——虛無後場」 (插圖5)等。他們通透完全、語言、對中國文 化、對世界文明作出批判、思考和質問。他們 的作品大大地提升瞭觀者對個人、對世界的認知。
香 港演藝業利用語言文字創作的，六、七十年代的各種智慧（圖6）、情懷（圖7）等，他們以中國文字作為工具語言，融合西化和語言文化，探討香港演藝業的現代精神。八、九十年代的通俗文化，讓人看到「生活就是藝術，藝術就是生活」的摩登文化（圖8）。他們的作品和語言文字創作的新應用是生活的一個層面，任何在社會現象出現的東西，都是他們的創作材料；例如喜歡用中國文字構思作曲，融合作曲和理論的歐仁（仁慈之語等）。新一代的演藝業人有天王、石破天驚等。王天仁喜歡在廣東話歌曲中的語言文字和語言文脈的編輯（圖10），用後來的木材作畫追求新的可能。石家豪則愛在大眾文化如流行歌曲中用語言文字和語言文脈（圖11），在反映新一代演藝業流行文化語言的關係。

黃鉦琍的兩件作品，同時反映以特區為創作，用最當代的視覺語言思考自身和創作的問題。黃善威在不同的藝術語言，概念與新媒體上，作品「中華長卷」糅合中國傳統文化和西方藝術，視覺化地顯示出香港人的歷史記憶，另一作品「龍 agua」把水墨精神和現代科技結合，將水墨、龍、紙、藤等傳統的水墨傳統入創作，加入現代的元素，讓觀眾欣賞。黃以國際語言為傳統藝術創作。在藝術創作的探尋中，正如大米、石破天驚的藝術創造力一樣，他並不是從工具、方法、概念上的東西，創作當代藝人的藝術創作，結果是可以多元互補的。1

李素娜的作品，是香港雙語教育的代表作。她的兩部作品把專門的「英語語言文字」中的「少」女、女僕話本。她 的「少」與「女」字中，把主角的態度、觀點和語言文字。她的作品具人性，對小市民平凡的生活作出尊重，對被忽視的市民生活的尊重，她把作品中的聲音和文字，分配到各個角色，她的語言就像電腦病毒一樣打亂藝術家的個性，向社會發出刺痛。

相比於李素娜，黃善威的作品對語言文化是否有別於其它作品的更廣泛的影響。他的作品重點是在於語言文字的“處理”。他很早開始使用台灣的“粗口文化”，他發現流行文化的方言，他設計的視覺語言藝術是跟社會文化是相融的。他發現即使是在高級的語言文字，也是在講故事，是用語言文字來勾勒出一個角色。

如果說黃善威的「粗口」作品，是為長期被受壓慣的本土文化作出嘔吐，同樣對本土言語樂隊消亡有

營而發的朋友成，則是自由對於作品對本土文化進行積極影響。正如很多地方一樣，本土在香港一直

備受尊重。香港演藝業雖然開始進行母語語言，但在國際化的趨勢下，語言始終有無性的地位。有見

及此，應特別將他認為未受本土語言及語言文字的國家學習語言文字成，他的作品嘗試以語言文字的方式，

繼續拓上海的、弱勢的語言文化發展下去。

黃鉦琍的兩件作品是有關香港演藝業的，其創作顯示了當代藝術的特點。黃善威的作品是用不同的

語言文字創作的，用當代的視覺語言思考自身和創作的問題。黃善威在不同的藝術語言，概念與新媒

體上，作品「中華長卷」糅合中國傳統文化和西方藝術，視覺化地顯示出香港人的歷史記憶，另一作

品「龍 agua」把水墨精神和現代科技結合，將水墨、龍、紙、藤等傳統的水墨傳統入創作，加入現代的

元素，讓觀眾欣賞。黃以國際語言為傳統藝術創作。在藝術創作的探尋中，正如大米、石破天驚的藝術

創造力一樣，他並不是從工具、方法、概念上的東西，創作當代藝人的藝術創作，結果是可以多元互

補的。1

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“Chinglish”

If Cantonese were about to disappear, which one word or phrase would you wish to preserve? In Hong Kong, people speak a mixture of Chinese and English thus “Chinglish”, so to speak, perhaps analysing the collective memory of Hong Kong’s language. Like its art and culture, the language of a place is a shared organic entity. It reflects the vitality and charisma of its region and its people. In this regard, language is a kind of “public culture”, a sort of “public heritage”, a type of “public space”. However, who, as a Hongkongese, ever feels proud of their hybrid tongue? Looking back to school days, speaking “Chinglish” was forbidden. Only one or other “pure” language is considered acceptable for any kind of public speaking or interview. How then can we consider this “underground” language a distinctive cultural asset?

Because of her colonial history Hong Kong, a place of mixed identities, has developed a kind of composite language which grows daily. With bilingual education, the people of Hong Kong have been caught between “The East” and “The West” since childhood. In the post-colonial global era, Hongkongese are burdened with yet another language – Putonghua. As people of “Asia’s world city”, they need “an international language” to gain entry to the world stage. Consequently the people of Hong Kong keep adjusting themselves, shifting the boundaries of language and identity. The indigenous tongue, expressing our unique thoughts and feelings and being the accumulation of generations of wisdom, is however constantly being subjugated to all kinds of “official language”, “mother language” or “international language”. Hongkongese lose their identity in the mainstream narrative as a result of looking at themselves through the eyes of others.

Visual language and visual literacy

Although we are not linguistic experts, all of us are language users. Our entire capacity to think and reason rests on language. Language determines our mode of thought and defines our collective imagination. Without realizing its importance, we pay little attention, not to say respect, to our own language culture. Our negligence reflects our lack of understanding and this lack could be explained by the fact that, in schools, the kind of “literacy” that formal education emphasizes, is basically text-based. In this system the general idea is to transform an illiterate person to one who can read and write, the so-called “literate”. This narrow understanding of “literacy” has resulted in a “visually illiterate” generation who are poorly equipped to decode a world that is mostly made up of visual codes. This is especially true of the 21st century as we enter an era of exceptionally intensive visual information. We often understand so little of the world we see and can be so confused that we do not even know we are confused.

Art is important as it offers a medium for alternative readings of the world. It allows us to expand our horizons and see life afresh. Artists are the interpreters of culture who provide translation of life experience. The visual languages they evoke go beyond conventional visual and textual syntax. Hence, their art frees us from conventional textual constraints and arouses public thinking.

The confrontation of the two types of languages – visual and textual – is a fascinating ideological combat. In the contemporary art world, many important Chinese artists enter this unusual battlefield. The most internationally renowned artists include XU Bing, GU Wenda and others. XU Bing has produced a number of works relating to language in the past 20 years. Among these, in the Museum collection, is the famous “A Book from the Sky” (fig.1) in which he created hundreds and thousands of “pseudo-Chinese characters”, challenging traditional and cultural values. In his “New English Calligraphy” (fig.2), he invented a new Chinese writing system for non-Chinese-speaking people in search of cultural conglomerator. In his latest work, “Book of Earth” (fig.3) he develops a new kind of “universal language” from pictograms collected in airports and airplanes. GU Wenda’s language-based works include the “United Nations Series – China Monument: Temple of Heaven” (fig.4), also in the Museum collection. This comprises pseudo-languages of Chinese, English, Arabic, etc, made from human hair, in pursuit of a “global language” with an inquisitive mind. Another interesting work is his “Forest of Stone Steles: Retranslation and Rewriting of Tang Poetry” (fig.5), which is a profound meditation on the issue of cultural translation. Works of these artists provide much food for thought at both individual and universal levels.

Hong Kong Versions

In Hong Kong, lots of artists work on similar ground. Back in the 1960s and 1970s, there were artists like HON Chi-fun (fig.6), CHEUNG Yee (fig.7) who used language as a Chinese symbol and as abstract visual elements in the pursuit of a new modernity. In the 1980s and 1990s, there were artists like KWOK Ming-ho (fig.8) who believed “life is art, art is life” and who incorporated everyday language and banal materials into his installations in defiance of conventional boundaries. There is also CHOI Kai-
Culture of “co-existence”

In preparation for this exhibition, I accidentally came across an interesting article on the topic by Larry Feign. Feign observed that the common attitude towards “Chinglish” is: either taking it lightly as a “joke”, or as something to be remedied, like hay fever or a skin rash.

To Feign, instead of being “bad translation” or “mishap” of English, “Chinglishisms” consist of “beautifully clever bilingual slang constructions”. It is not a language that needs to be “corrected” for it is neither “random mistakes” nor “signs of lazy learning”. “Chinglish” is “a distinct language” that does not conform to “conservative linguistic criteria”. In merging the two “mega-languages”, Chinese and English, the two languages that are most widely spoken or used in the world, Chinglish is “the most powerful language in human history, uniting billions of speakers in mutual comprehension.” Feign ends by saying “And we here in Hong Kong will be at the vanguard, the Vatican of Chinglish, the New World Language.” Feign’s remarks may serve as a meaningful perspective to evaluate “Chinglish” in visual arts.

After all, the identity of Hong Kong culture should not be reduced to the simple denominators of “The East” and/or “The West”. Neither should Hong Kong’s arts and culture be valued only for her “cultural mix”. To me, the beauty of Hong Kong arts and culture is her “live-and-let-live” character. Her laissez-faire attitude, her willingness to embrace any cultures and her cultures to achieve a grand synthesis of all as an integral part of her own where all cultures find creative co-existence is emblematic of the Hong Kong spirit. It is my sincere hope that the “Chinglish” exhibition will nurture alternative narratives of Hong Kong cultural identity. I also hope that the exhibition could arouse more thoughts on the way to globalization, and above all, more awareness of the significance of visual literacy in a world that does not speak in words but in images.

Larry Feign, “Chinglish: The New World Language”, Culture Hongkong, no. 29, Jan/Feb 2007, pp. 4-9. Larry Feign is in a former student of Applied Linguistics and a cartoonist born in America who is currently staying in Hong Kong.