

Graduate School of International
Culture and Communication Studies
Examination Report on the Doctoral Dissertation

Applicant	
Name	ZHOU, Wenxin (Last Name / (Middle Name) / First Name)

Dissertation Title · Subtitle : (English)	Risk in Political Interpreting: A Case Study of Interpreters during the First Opium War between Britain and China (1839–1842)
Dissertation Title · Subtitle : (Japanese)	政治通訳におけるリスク: 英国と中国の間の第一次アヘン戦争(1839–1842)中の通訳者 の事例研究

*Even if the dissertation is written in English, a Japanese language translation of the title and subtitle must also be submitted.

2023/01/13
YYYY/MM/DD

To Dean of Graduate School of International
Culture and Communication Studies,

Examination Committee

Chief Examiner MORIZUMI, Fumi 印 Signature

(Affiliation・Title: Seikei University/Professor)

Sub-Examiner SATO, Azusa 印 Signature

(Affiliation・Title: FIRE/Associate Professor)

Sub-Examiner SHU, Min 印 Signature

(Affiliation・Title: FIRE/Associate Professor)

The Examination Committee members report the results of the dissertation examination and the oral defense below.

1. Degree: Doctor of Philosophy (in International Culture and Communication Studies)

2. Curriculum Doctorate (*Katei Hakase*)

*Please delete either one.

3. Examination period

Dissertation examination: From 2022/11/11 To 2022/12/19
YYYY/MM/DD YYYY/MM/DD

Oral defense: 2022/12/19
YYYY/MM/DD

4. The results of the dissertation examination and the oral defense

*Please write down Pass or Fail in both categories.

Dissertation examination : **Pass**

Oral defense : **Pass**

5. Summary of the Dissertation

As per attached sheet

6. Table of Contents

As per attached sheet

7. The results of the dissertation examination and the oral defense

(About 3,000 characters in Japanese or 1,000 words in English)

(1) Evaluation and summary of the dissertation examination

(Including Summary of the Dissertation)

From the beginning to the end, Ms. Zhou's dissertation was coherent in its theme while it dealt with a variety of topics and issues ranging from risk analysis and a historical event to archival studies and modern-day war zone interpreting. She managed to tie them all together to present her own case about how interpreters, although usually not recognized as players, were playing important roles in such significant historical events as the First Opium War and the Treaty of Nanking, and what kinds of risks their actions involved.

Ms. Zhou's choice of topic was very interesting to start with. Many accounts relating to the First Opium War and the Treaty of Nanking are available, but there is very little presence of interpreters in those documents. This should be considered strange when we think about fact that no significant talks between courtiers whose languages are different can be held without an interpreter. She made us look at the historical events from a different perspective. Once she successfully piqued our interest, she presented clear research objectives and research questions corresponding them.

Ms. Zhou's research methodology was unique because it had to be, due to the nature of her topic: There are no audio-visual recordings of the real interpreting actions that took place in the 19th century and there is no chance of interviewing the interpreters who were present back then. It meant that she would have to adopt a mixed approach of historical/archival study examining the documents written mostly by the concerned parties and case studies illustrating each one of the major interpreters involved, and analyzing the translation works by the interpreters. Different approaches disclosed different aspects of the roles interpreters played and their identities, as well

as their language skills.

Towards the end of the dissertation, Ms. Zhou addressed the issue more relevant to today's interpreters: their ethics, affiliations, and loyalties of war/conflict-zone interpreters, which is a welcoming addition to her work after her Intermediate Review. While her focus was on the interpreters and their roles and identities back in the middle of the nineteenth century, discussing the difficulties and risks some modern-day interpreters face made her research theme relevant to today's world.

While the three examiners were all happy to give the dissertation a pass, questions and comments from them also suggested two points of improvement. First, while Ms. Zhou's suggestions for future research included use of audio-visual data, its feasibility was questioned, due to the sensitive nature of interpreting contexts such as wars and conflicts as well as diplomatic negotiations. Second, it would be desirable if Ms. Zhou could highlight the fact that, while the risks that the nineteenth-century interpreters faced are applicable to discuss some interpreters (such as those acting as local interpreters in Afghanistan for American troops), they may not be relevant to most conference interpreters who are professionally trained and treated as professionals in more civilized contexts. These points were raised in the oral defense and Ms. Zhou agreed to make necessary changes.

All in all, the three examiners are highly satisfied with Ms. Zhou's dissertation in its originality and the way it ties multiple elements together to make it coherent.

(2) Summary of the oral defense (including Comments and Questions)

The oral defense started with 30 minutes of Ms. Zhou's presentation, followed by another 30 minutes of a questions and answers session, after which the three examiners deliberated for 25 minutes. They were all satisfied to give the oral defense, as well as the dissertation, a pass grade.

Ms. Zhou presented a summary of her doctoral dissertation, focusing on the research objectives and methodology, as well as her own findings from the case studies and archival studies. She illustrated the historical context in which the interpreters in her dissertation lived and performed, that is, the First Opium War and the Treaty of Nanking, and described how each one of the interpreters played their roles, either from their own accounts or from other historical documents. She then brought the discussion to present-day contexts where the work of interpreters has been professionalized. She also presented a different context where, in places like Afghanistan, interpreters are locally-hired help and are still facing the similar risks that the nineteenth-century interpreters were. She finished her presentation with the significance of her study and suggestions for future research.

Ms. Zhou's presentation was followed by questions and comments from the examiners, all of which were answered by Ms. Zhou with clarity.

One aspect that came into question was whether the interpreters involved in the negotiation between Britain and China were as competent as they should have been. For example, one British interpreter addressed the emperor of China as 'great emperor', which could be interpreted as an intentional 'risk' because it would not have been approved by the British authority, but it could also be a sign of his lack of language skills. Ms. Zhou answered that, various documents inform us that the British interpreters grew very aware of the linguistic and cultural significance of certain terms and therefore it had to be intentional. The ability of the Chinese interpreters was also questioned. Could the absence of China's own interpreters be simply explained by the poor quality of their language skills? Ms. Zhou explained that, while the British side was aware of the importance of establishing a relationship with China and therefore had sent to Macau, China was not interested in getting to know Britain. As a result, while the British side had some of their own people living in China and studying the language, society and culture, the Chinese side had no counterparts. In addition to such lack of language talents on the Chinese side, Ms. Zhou continued, there was a cultural element. The Chinese side did not want to disclose the humiliating treaty to the rest of the nation in order to save their face, and thus limited the people who had the information to the minimum.

This led to the next question of whether the China's and Britain's prior experience of using interpreters in diplomatic contexts may have influenced the way they used and/or trusted their interpreters. Ms. Zhou said that, in fact, China was likely to be the first nation to have administrative ranks of interpreters in the world. Those interpreters performed in negotiations with China's neighboring countries but the Opium War was the first incident that made it necessary for China to talk to Britain. As a result, they were not prepared.

Finally, the examiners raised two points of improvement for her dissertation, as explained above in the evaluation of the dissertation, to which Ms. Zhou agreed to respond in her revision.

To conclude, Ms. Zhou's presentation was to the point, and she answered the questions and comments smoothly. She was well prepared for the oral defense, she had a good grasp of the details of her work, and her confidence in her research was apparent.