

Language as a means and object of area studies

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The meaningful relationship between language and Area Studies is accepted a truth. As another disciplines, language is one of objects of Area Studies. Moreover, not only object, but language is a helpful means in this discipline. This paper deals with the role of language in Area Studies during its developing history, from the beginning with Orientalism of European Scholars to present.

The paper consists of two parts:

1. Language as a mean of Area Studies
2. Language as a object of Area Studies

Each part is divided into two periods: Orientalism of European Scholars and Area Studies after the Second World War with the summarizing evidences about the role of language as a mean of Area Studies, as well as summarizing subjects of language studied in Area Studies.

The relationship and interdependence between language and area studies seem to be obvious. Researchers of area studies and language all accept this meaningful relationship. Like other subjects such as literature, history, politics, economics and so on, language is one of the objects of area studies. However, unlike the above subjects, language is not only the object but also an important means of area studies. In this article, the author does not attempt put forward a new interpretation about the relationship between language and area studies, but only wants to examine area studies systematically from the historical angle.

1. Language as a means of area studies

1.1. *Orientalism of Europeans*

Many evidences have proved that at the start of area studies on Europeans' Orientalism, language was considered as the first important means of helping researchers be aware of and discover a new land.

1.1.1. Teaching Oriental languages became an important policy in churches and missionary schools

This originated from the idea of penetrating the Orient in order to carry out missionary work by the languages of Oriental people. Many scholars think that Orientalism was considered to come into the world officially in 1312 with the event that Austria Council of Churches made a decision to found more

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departments for teaching Arabic, Greek, Judaic, Syriac in Paris, Oxford, Bologna, etc. Article 11 in this decision stipulated that it was necessary to establish the departments for teaching, Judaic, Greek, and Arabic in main universities. The acceptance of this article of the Austria Council of Churches showed that together with the Westerners' idea of carrying missionary work in the East, there was the idea of penetrating new lands by local languages. This has significant effect on the history of the development of Area studies in terms of methodology. The time Orientalism came into the world is a matter that hasn't been united and it is not dealt with here. The author only cites this event to show that the decision to teach and learn Oriental languages was considered as an event to mark the foundation of a scientific discipline called Orientalism at that time. In addition, many missionaries and culture researchers considered "the learning of Arabic as the best tool to convert Arabians..." (Raymond Lull). Thus, in the early time, the Western authorities of the Christianity were aware of the role of language as a means of penetrating new lands and governing them as well as widening their own restrictions.

112. *Studying local languages is Orientalists' first step to enter their career in studying Orientalism*

When Orientalism as a discipline was initially affirmed in the 18th century, Orientalists started their career by learning and studying Oriental languages. Anquetil's journey to Asia (1736 - 1805) which resulted in the translations from Avesta into French, "dug a canal to link the two hemispheres of human genius... and introduced into our schools (France) knowledge about civilizations which existed for a long time". His translations first

made Europeans see the importance of Asia intellectually and historically, and helped them understand more about the legends and spaces of Asia. These values affirmed the role of language as a tool to understand a region.

Other Orientalists of the first generation such as William Jones, Sylvestre de Sacy learnt to become influent in Oriental languages when they started their careers. Before leaving England for India, Jones had been proficient in Arabic, Judaic and Persian. Therefore, he could collect, restrict and turn the East into a research field of Europeans quickly and effectively. Sylvestre de Sacy, the first and only professor at that time taught Oriental languages at school, so did professors of most Orientalists in Europe. He said, "*Arabic is the most effective tool for me to discover the East*" [1]. Maybe, Sylvestre fell into the absolutization of the role of Arabic in Orient Studies, but this originated from unilateral awareness of the Orient scope of Orientalism in Europe at the early time. The East at that time was equivalent to Middle East, some scholars added India to this scope. However, we can't help accepting the role of language and the effectiveness of language knowledge in Sacy's career. He became the only one who translated the announcements of Napoleon Expeditionary Armed Forces into Arabic, became the author of a series of Arabic grammatical and phonetic works, other works related to studies on epitaph, cast coins, and the formation of Arabian family names. In Sacy's career, language played the role in the effectiveness, usefulness and its power in Orientalism in particular and Area studies in general.

Not only for European but also for American Orientalists after the Second World War, language became a means to set their foot on new lands. Before replacing France

and Britain in the central position of the world's learning (and of course in the political position), Americans' experience in the East is still limited. In terms of genealogy, modern Orientalism of Americans originated from knowledge taught at Oriental language teaching schools for American Army, which were founded during and after the war. In American social sciences, learning and studying language as a foreign language is only a means to achieve a higher goal. However, the Americans are always aware of the role of language in their Area studies. In 1958, a report on the research situation of Middle East Research Institute had a main point as follows: *"Russian universities are training people to speak Arabic fluently. Russia is aware of the importance of attracting human beings through their mind by using their own languages. The United State of America needs to develop its foreign language learning programs soon"*[1]. Therefore, learning foreign languages became part of tender penetration into native residents and a means for Americans to be aware of an area called the East, which they were still strange to at that time.

1.2. Language as a means of modern area studies after the Second World War

1.2.1. Proficiency in native language is the target for students of area studies

This is the most important target in area training and studies after the Second World War in American and European universities. The training programs in a series of area studies training establishments such as the University of California at Berkeley, Harvard University, Stanford University, Yale University, and Howard University in America, Oxford University and Cambridge

in England Kyoto University, Tokyo University and Osaka University in Japan all reflect this [2-8]. In deed, when studying one society or one culture without being proficient in the language of that society, it is really difficult for researchers. Conversely, when studying a language without being closely connected with the society or the communities using that language, the learning values will decrease. This must be strictly complied with because of approaches and research methods of modern Area studies - field works or field research. All the trends of modern area studies after the Second World War were built on the basis of field research [7]. This requires language as the first means and it is integral.

The above target is mentioned even in higher education. To introduce the learning standards of area studies of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in Britain, language ability is mentioned as a standard in Area studies education. According to this standard system, area studies training programs are the places to create the best opportunity to reach the proficiency in native languages at different levels and it is an important tool for Area researchers [9]. This is a remarkable thing because in the area studies education at high level, not all places attach special importance to language. In our opinion, in Vietnam this shortage is considerable in area studies training establishments at higher education. In reality, no training establishment at higher education in Vietnam continues maintaining the teaching of native languages or holds activities that help students improve their native languages. This leads to the fact that after two or three years at higher education, learners' ability to use native language

gradually falls into oblivion. The materials of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in Britain show that this country has 106 area studies training and research establishments in universities and in research institutes. Apart from 19 American Studies establishments which don't teach native language, 87 establishments teach native languages for a considerable period of time [10].

1.2.2. Native language as an important means of Area studies for researchers

David L. Szanton [8] affirmed the role of language as the object and means of the discipline when he mentioned general features of the concept of "area studies". From his point of view, "area studies" should be understood as a concept that describes a group including fields and learning activities with the general features as follows: 1) deep studies on languages, 2) field research in local languages, 3) careful studies on history, points of view, documents and explanations of the localities, 4) examining, discussing, criticizing or developing fundamental theories based on specific observation, 5) multi-discipline discussions related to many social sciences and humanity. This is a meaningful and reasonable summation, the consequence of this country in area studies for a half of century full of difficulties after the Second World War. This summation is widely accepted not only in America but also in many other area studies research establishments all over the world. Of course, they can discuss some matters such as how to arrange features related to approaching methods, objects and contents of research in terms of scope. Or should the prior order of mentioned features such as deep studies on language be arranged? But in general, the

existence and content of every feature do not need discussing?

Tansman, A. [11] mentioned indirectly the role of language in a different way. He thought that area studies is a form of translation. The work aims at reaching the interpretation, analysis and explanation of foreign country cultures through a prism of multi-disciplines. In other words, "the interpretation, analysis and explanation" of another culture is translation. Basically, it is an effort to aim at making suppositions, meanings, structures and driving forces of a culture or a society become easy for the people belonging to that culture or society. In his opinion, the right translation of any documents - even a poem, a speech or a social event - all requires serious efforts to understand structure, meaning and driving force of that document. That document should be put in its own language and history, in the relation with previous documents and modern situation. His point of view contains many senses. It not only heightens the strength of native language proficiency in Area studies, but also implies the limitations of American area studies in particular and American social sciences in general. That is the imposition of concepts, theories and models which used to come into the world in Western situation on the rest of the world. This is the mistake which area studies at a start - Orientalism of Europeans - used to make.

Area studies in Japan also mentions the learning of native languages as the first content in preparation for area studies with the method of field research [12]. According to Kataoka, to use and exploit documents, it is necessary to have the language ability to read

and interpret these documents. The processes of carrying out field research in localities need a series of manipulation such as designing research, reading documents, recording survey results, interviewing local residents and so on. Therefore, learning native languages is the first requirement.

2. Language as the object of area studies

2.1. Language studies in area studies at the start

An important achievement which Orientalism of Europeans in the 19th century has left for the linguistics of man kind is the coming into being of the historical comparative method in linguistics. At the start of Orientalism, with the ambition of understanding more about India than any European countries, William Jones first implemented his research career with the construction of a list of research objects during his stay in India. The list shows that there was the presence of philosophy in poetry and rhetoric. Jones as well as other Orientalists only had the purpose of comparing grammars to facilitate Europeans' understanding of Oriental languages when he started language studies. Through comparing Sanskrit with Western languages systematically with a method which was later called historical comparative method, he had conclusions related to the restoration of the origin of European languages. His work showed that modern Orientalism at first had profound philosophy and methodology, had deep effect on the methodology of modern linguistics in particular and modern area studies in general. That is the comparison research method. Its first purpose is to affirm

that the origin of Orientalism was the basis of European languages at that time. He wrote, "No matter how old it was, Sanskrit had a miraculous structure, it is more fully-done than Greek, more plentiful than Latin and more precise than the two above languages, it is closer to the two mentioned languages, both in roots of verbs and grammatical form. This closeness is so much that every writer believes that they share the same origin when examining three above languages [1].

Following closely William Jones was Ernest Renan with the studies on Semitic languages completed in 1847 and was first published in 1855. Until now a few people have known this works, but it was considered as the first comprehensive research on Orientalism by scholars at that time. "Studies on Semitic languages" was considered as the significant contribution to the development of Indian-European linguistics family. Prior to that time, they had found the existence of language idea was granted by God. After the language studies of Jones and especially of Renan, this thought gave way for the scientific thought which was summarized on the basis of comparison and the scientific restoration of language origin. For linguists in Orientalism studies in the 19th century, it was impossible to describe language as the result of sacred and supernatural strength. The notion of "primitive language" or "original language" created by human beings at that time was a logical result of research for years. Since it came into the world, this notion has never existed as a controversial theme. At that time, people accepted the so-called "original language" which couldn't be reproduced and only could be reproduced through "processes of philosophy". Although the political purposes were represented in

this way or another in works, scholars still considered that "for Renan, the research on Semitic languages was the symbol of Europeans' and Renan's domination in the East". Examining it from scientific aspects, he was considered to be a talented linguist and make great contribution. That contribution not only was represented in language discoveries but also in the creation of new scientific awareness based on the Oriental language importance in Europe.

It is possible that great linguistic discoveries in comparison grammar of Sylvestre de Sacy, William Jones, and Ernest Renan were due to ancient biographies which were brought to Paris and London from the East. It was not baseless when E. W. Said thought that most of Orientalists started their career by studying philosophy and the consequence of this philosophy revolution gave birth to Sacy, Jones, Renan, etc. and their students. Linguistics in European Orientalism is really a comparison subject based on the theoretical premise that each language belongs to a linguistics family of Indian-European and Semitic language families.

In the mid-1800s, European Orientalism became a great learning treasure. One of the famous products in this treasure is two books by Jules Monl – the secretary of the Asian Association in Paris - with the title "Twenty seven year history of Orient studies". For these 27 years, all the work of European scholars on Asia was written in "Oriental studies" by Monl. His note-taking was related to a great amount of publications on the East, especially researches on such languages as Arabic, some languages in India, Judaic, Assyrian, Babylon, Mongolian, Chinese, Myanmar, Java. According to Monl, the list of researches for these 27 years could not be

counted [1]. This shows that the position language out of the objects which Orientalism and area studies used to study at a start and this position was more affirmed in the period when researchers were always aware that by and through languages, they could understand and discover more profound knowledge (such as culture, society, human races, etc.) in each region.

In terms of methodology, language researches in European Orientalism mainly used comparative method on the basis of document studies. We will realize clearly that this is one feature of the language research method in Orientalism when it is put in the contrast with the language research method in modern area studies - the period of time after the Second World War.

2.2. *Language studies in modern area studies*

The object is language which linguists considered from two angles: (1) studies on the features of a language in order to facilitate the teaching of native languages in area studies training programs; (2) studies on the language of a region (local language or families of languages) in social language research programs.

From the former angle, modern Area studies continued to follow its primitive studies with the analysis and recognition of phonetic, lexical features, especially grammar system of a language in order to find out the rules and principles in a language system to help learners study most effectively. In the later period, when the demand for training and studies on different areas in the world developed rapidly, researches on language from this angle bloomed. The research view point of Szanton, D. L as mentioned in 1.2

also showed that language not only was the normal object of Area studies, but also the object that needs "studying deeply". Only from the examples of language research achievements in Departments of International studies and Area studies in California Berkeley University (America) and Cambridge University (Britain), we can see that the number of publications on language studies at least is dozens of books, a number of theses at different educational levels, articles and researches on language amounts to hundreds [13].

In terms of content, introductory works and researches on native grammar account for a considerable amount. For example, for a few years, the centre for South Asia studies in California at Berkeley released a series of researches on grammar of native languages in Southern Asia such as "An Introduction to Hindi Grammar" by Usha Jain, published in 1995; "An introduction to Sanskrit Language" by Robert P. Goldman and Sally J. Sutherland Goldman, the third edition in 1999; "Intermediate Hindi Reader" by Usha Jain, published in 1999, and so on. Some British Area studies such as "A Grammar of Tariana, from Northwest Amazon" by Latin American researcher - Arnold J. Bauer; "Grammar of Somalia by Nicole Kruspe, which drew much attention were all published in Cambridge University Press. In addition, the researches which aim at facilitating the acquisition of native languages at the conferences on improving the quality of training and area studies in all countries are various and can't be counted.

Language in area studies in the past and from the former angle are mainly researched in texts, but now scholars publish more and more researches in the direction of

sociolinguistics, pragmatic and semantic analyses, conversational and cultural analysis among regions and researches on speech community. The work requires that language be put in its social context. This is the later angle when examining language as the object of area studies programs. When only mentioning "Survey of English Dialects" of Cambridge University for 10 years from 1962 to 1971, we can see the attention of the area studies for native languages in regions are considerable. This survey program is present in most of English native languages in different areas such as North America, Canada, New Zealand, Iceland, and Southeast Asia with dozens of publications which record the result of the survey in each area [14]. These surveys focus on a series of issues such as situation, language policy, language planning, especially bilingual, multilingual situations, and language/native language contact, both geographical native language and social native language. In different Area studies establishments, studies on language/ regional native language in this direction haven't become a system, but they have had certain achievements. Another example is that the researches on Chinese native languages in Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Shanghai, etc. by American scholars come from the Centre for Chinese Studies at California University such as Bauer Robert with native language Guangdong, Ball J Dyer with native language of Macau, Matisoff Jame with native language of Lahu, Mc Coy John with native Cantonese in Hong Kong [15].

Language as the object seen from the second angle is present in a general research on the scenery of an area. The researched area in this program is usually smaller than a nation, it may be a territory, a district, a

commune or even a village and language variants in the area are examined in the situation of that area and in the relation with the variants in the neighborhoods and the national language of that area. This is the scope to which attention has been paid to by modern area studies in recent decades and is becoming a main research trend.

In terms of methodology, language studies in modern area studies is not only represented in written documents which are ancient bibliographies and any kind of documents (language research), but also mainly based on sources of living materials-speech (speech research). This originates from the research trend of both sides: 1) The trend of linguistics research in the post-structural era is the speech research and language is put in context; 2) the trend of modern area studies is to give up the research method of "politicians in armchairs" in order to carry out field research. In comparison with the language studies in the previous period, it is possible to call this a feature in this period and also an advance. These methods do not exclude one another, but can exist together for their joint purpose.

3. Conclusion

Language in area studies is only a relative clarity from two angles as mentioned in this article. Dialectically and flexibly, it is necessary to understand that it is impossible to make clear two kinds of language: one is a means and the other is the object of area studies because of the mutual relation and the ability of exchangeability between them. In the development history of area studies, although not too long, but not too short,

language always expresses its role that cannot be replaced. This role is always affirmed and becomes a methodology requirement which areas studies in any era, any institution and with any purpose always complies with as a protection for its existence.

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