

Zelei Lian research proposal

PG1

by Zelei Lian

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PG1 - FULL RESEARCH PROPOSAL

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Student Details

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Start Date	1 st Oct, 2023	End Date	30 th Sep, 2026

PhD by Research	PhD Practice Based	PhD by Published Works	Professional Doctorate (including DBA, DProf, Ed D)	MPhil by Research	MPhil Practice Based
☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐
MA by Research	MSc by Research	MRes			
☐	☐	☐			

Proposed Research

Current Proposed Title (20 / 30 words):
Trends and Changes in the Evolving English Translations of Early China Texts: The Case of <i>Mozi</i>
Background & Context (approx. 500 words)
Early China texts (texts produced from the earliest times to the end of the Han Dynasty in 220 CE that are of canonical and foundational significance), encapsulating the intellectual richness of ancient Chinese literature and philosophy, have become essential reservoirs of knowledge for global audiences. As these texts traverse linguistic boundaries through English translations, it is imperative to scrutinize how they have been interpreted and represented over time. This proposed research endeavours to conduct an in-depth mixed-method and interdisciplinary research into the trends and changes in the English translations of Early China texts, with a specialized focus on the seminal work of <i>Mozi</i>. Background reading

The Mozi, with 71 chapters, has been largely neglected in the course of China's long history, especially after its main rivals the Confucians gain state approval and sanction after early Han dynasty in the 2nd century CE. Interest in *The Mozi* was revived during the Qing dynasty, when scholars such as Bi Yuan (1730-1797), Yu Yue (1821-1907) and Sun Yirang (1848-1908) began their philologically informed textual restoration. Western academic research and translation began with missionaries such as James Legge, who translated Mozi's writings on "universal love" in his monumental *The Chinese Classics*. The revival of western academic interest in *The Mozi* is confirmed by the increasingly larger output of books, book chapters, translations and papers devoted to it, especially in recent decades. As for translation, there have been a total of 12 partial translations, and two complete translations by Wang Rongpei (2006) and Ian Johnson (2010). Unfortunately, discussions and debates about *The Mozi* in English translations are largely confined in a small academic circle, and do not sufficiently respond to new paradigms and methodologies from the field of translation studies. This research attempts to salvage the study of English translations of *The Mozi* from the deep sea of Sinological niche, and apply an interdisciplinary and mixed-method approach to examine it against the background of trends and changes in the evolving English translations of Early China texts.

The advances in the field of theoretical translation studies can provide useful paradigms to work with Sinological translations of Early China Texts. Take as an example of the concept of 'faithfulness' in translation. When it comes to judging and reviewing Sinological translations, a most common traditional formula is to praise the effort but point out several places that are not "faithful", "errors" that translators misread or misinterpret. In this way, comparing different versions of the same translated work is to ascertain the best one or find fault with all. This formula is increasingly taken to task by both translation theorists and Sinologist-reviewers (Li, 2015, p. 110). The traditional formula betrays an instrumental perception that there is a right and perfect way to render the source text. Increasingly more scholars believe that comparing translations cannot be a means to determine the best translation, because the concepts of faithfulness are multiple in meaning rather than singularly defined (Nylan, 2020). Rather than measuring translations from the perspective of fidelity, a more insightful practice would be to discover the insights of what different translations have to offer regarding the relationship between the original and translated texts, as well as questioning the construction of texts as original source texts through translation by recognizing the potential fluidity and multiplicity of the source text itself.

Analytical discussion

To briefly summarize, much has changed but not much has been seriously studied in the field of Sinological translation of Early China: the progress of the field of Sinology, the increasing globalized comparative humanities, the evolving criteria for judging translations, the advancement of digital humanities due to technological progress, the rising relevance of Chinese culture on the world stage. Therefore, generalizing statements about THE Sinological Translation should make way for the possibility of different voices in traditions and for more specific traditions about evolutions or tensions within the field.

By employing multiple methodologies and integrating a diverse array of sources, this study aims to elucidate the evolving interpretations and representations of this foundational text in English translations, which in turn can inform and enrich our understanding of Early China texts on a globalised stage.

Aims and Objectives (approx.. 250 – 500 words)

There are five main research questions that this research attempts to address:

1. Is the English translation of an Early China text different from other genres of texts in translation linguistically, culturally and stylistically? How can we measure and make sense of the differences?
2. From a diachronic point of view, can we identify major changes and trends of the English translations of Early China texts? If so, what are these and why do they exist?
3. From the translator's point of view, how does one rendition of Early China text differ significantly from another's? What factors and strategies should be taken into consideration?
4. From the methodological point of view, how can a mixed method of both quantitative and qualitative research help us map a comprehensive and nuanced view?
5. What implications can we draw from the case study of the English translations of *The Mozi*? How can it fill in the gap in research, enrich our understanding of Early China texts in translation, and impact future translation projects?

By answering these questions, the researcher aims to, with varying degrees of focus,

1. **conduct** an expansive and in-depth analysis of the historical development of English translations of *Mozi*, contextualizing it within the broader landscape of Early China texts.
2. **identify** key trends, shifts, and methodologies employed in the translation process of *Mozi*, discerning distinctive features and approaches employed by translators across different historical periods.
3. **assess** the profound impact of cultural and linguistic considerations on the interpretation of *Mozi* in English, evaluating how these factors have influenced the translational choices made by scholars.
4. **evaluate** the enduring implications of evolving translations on the contemporary understanding and reception of *Mozi* within the global academic community, considering the enduring legacy and relevance of this ancient text.
5. **draw** implications for the English translations of Early China texts in the future



Proposed plan of work including timetable

Proposed plan of work

In this section you will need to complete a proposed plan of your work explaining the timeline for key elements of the thesis. This can be set out as a table like below or as a gantt chart (for example)

This plan should indicate that the research will be completed by the end of the fee paying period (the minimum period of candidature).

Planned Development (e.g. submission of form, completion of chapter, submission of thesis)	Target Date
Literature Review	1 st Jun – 1 st Aug, 2024
Research Design	1 st Aug – 30 th Aug, 2024
Corpus Design	1 st Sep 1 st – 30 th Sep, 2024
Data Collection	1 st Oct 1 st – 30 th Nov, 2024
Data Analysis	1 st Dec 1 st – 31 st Dec, 2024
Workshop, Seminar and Conference	1 st Jan – 1 st Apr 1, 2025
Writing	2 nd Apr – 30 th Nov, 2025
Revision	1 st Dec – 30 th Apr, 2025-2026
Submission	1 st May – 1 st Aug, 2026

Proposed methodology (approx. 500 words):

In this section you will need to explain how you will achieve your aims and objectives:

1. Textual Analysis:

a. Corpus Selection:

According to Munday (2022, p. 139), Kruger (2021, p. 15) and Saldanha & O'Brian (2014, p. 21), a corpus-based textual analysis approach makes possible the analysis of researcher-constructed parallel corpora, for example an English–Chinese pair or series of pairs of *The Mozi* in electronic format. This approach enables both quantitative analysis (comparing English and Chinese statistics for key term frequency, repetition, distribution etc.) and qualitative analysis (close analysis of individual instances where significant deviance occur). It would also allow triangulation by comparing results with other standard corpora of English language use in translations.



Through the use of established software such as the Sketch Engine and China Text Engine (Sturgeon, 2021), a meticulously-curated bilingual corpus of English translations of *Mozi* will be compiled, encompassing works from diverse historical periods and translators. The main purpose

is to identify meaningful forms of equivalence. This selection will include seminal translations by eminent scholars such as John Knoblock (2013), Wang (2006) and Ian Johnston (2010), allowing for a comprehensive comparative analysis. 

b. Comparative Analysis:

To enable comparative analysis across historical periods and styles, a Multidimensional Analysis Program will also be run using the software MAT, which uses Douglas Biber's linguistic taggers and can "generate a grammatically annotated version of the corpus and provides visualizing the Dimensions features of the input text" (Nini, 2019, p. 68). Moreover, each translation of *Mozi* will be subjected to a granular examination, focusing on linguistic variations, interpretative approaches, and shifts in translation strategies. This comparative analysis will provide a nuanced understanding of the evolving interpretations and representations of *Mozi* in English.

2. Historical Contextualization:

a. Historical Periodization:

The scholar Yu Shiyi (2008) has suggested a historical period system to consider translations in historical context. The research will employ a sophisticated but adapted periodization approach, categorizing translations into three distinct historical epochs: missionary translation (16th-20th century), sinological translation (1900s-1970s), and contemporary globalized translation (1980s-present). This framework will facilitate a systematic analysis of translation trends, enabling a deeper understanding of the evolving methodologies employed by translators.

 Background reading

b. Examination of Translators' Biographies:

Alexander Bubb (2023) has demonstrated the benefits of scrutinizing translators' biographies, especially in how they can enrich our understanding of the works translators produce. An in-depth exploration of the backgrounds, training, intellectual and ideological influences of prominent translators of *Mozi* will be undertaken. This biographical approach will illuminate the contextual factors that may have shaped their translation choices, providing valuable insights into their translational strategies. 

3. Reception Studies:

a. Reader Response Analysis:

Drawing on reader response theories (Munday, 2022), the research will assess how different translations of *Mozi* have been received by English-speaking audiences over time. This analysis will encompass a diverse array of sources, including book reviews, commentaries, scholarly discussions, sales figure and library holding, offering a multi-faceted perspective on the reception of *Mozi* translations. 

b. Influence on Scholarship and Culture:

Kern (2020) and Defoort (2013) have observed how *The Mozi* shapes and informs discussions of Chinese philosophy through gradual translation and reception. The research will delve deeper into how specific translations of *Mozi* have contributed to shaping and influencing scholarly discourse on early Chinese philosophy. By considering the enduring impact of these translations, the study will provide a comprehensive assessment of their significance within the broader academic landscape. It will also delve into the intricate web of cultural challenges and considerations faced by translators in conveying the philosophical nuances of *Mozi* to an English-speaking audience. This analysis will shed light on the translational decisions made in relation to cultural context, providing a deeper understanding of the complexities inherent in the translation process. 

Introductory bibliography:

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Alter, R. (2008) *The Five Books of Moses: a translation with commentary*. New York: W. W. Norton.
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- Shaughnessy, E. (2020) 'Three thoughts on translating classical Chinese philosophical texts.' *APA Newsletter on Asian and Asian-American Philosophers and Philosophies*, 19, pp. 13-25.
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- Yu, S. (2008) 'Sinological translation, its methods, and globalization: how do sinological translators communicate with their potential readers?' *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology*, 16(1), pp. 39-48.
- Zhang, M. and Pan, L. (2009) 'Introducing a Chinese perspective on translation shifts: a comparative study of shift models by Loh and Vinay & Darbelnet', *The Translator*, 15(2), pp. 351-74.

Facilities and resources available for the investigation: please indicate if you expect to need any special resources

To carry out the research, the research mainly needs access to public libraries and archives. They include Roderic Bowen Library and Archives, which is readily accessible; Archives & Records Association UK and Ireland Online, Special Collections at SOAS, University of London, Chinese Collections at Cambridge University Library, National Library of China, all of which the researcher

has already obtained permission to use. The use of these facilities and resources will be throughout the research journey, spanning two or three years. All trips to and fro, and costs of printing and photocopying will be self-financed.

The University of Leuven (Belgium) has held workshops and seminars on various aspects of *Mozi*, including translation issues, for over a decade. It is the wish of the researcher to attend at least one workshop there, ideally in the summer of 2024 or 2025, but at this stage is waiting for confirmation on their arrangements. It would in normal circumstances last one to two weeks. This trip will be self-financed.



Intellectual Property IP

It is anticipated that Intellectual Property (IP) will be produced as a result of this research.

Tick /

	YES	NO
Is the IP already subject to a separate agreement with a third party (e.g. employer, sponsor or external funder)? If so please provide details below	☐	☒
Is the research dependent upon background IP owned by: If so, please provide details below	UWTSd ☒	A third party ☐
Text box will expand		

Tick /

I understand that:	YES	NO
If any party other than the student is likely to be involved in the development of IP a separate IP agreement will be needed and it may be necessary for the student to assign the IP rights to the University.	☒	☐
If there are no third parties involved in the creation of the IP the student is deemed to own the IP, however should the student wish to commercially exploit their IP and require the assistance of the University to do so, they will be required to assign their IP to the University. https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/iiced/protecting-innovation-and-creativity---intellectual-property/	☒	☐

Student Signature

Signature or Print Name:	Zelei Lian	Date: 12 th Dec, 2023
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Supervisory Team

Has the student proposed a viable research project that is appropriate for this programme that should be supported by the Institute?

Supported: ☐

Not Supported: ☐

Authorisation

Director of Studies	Signature or Print Name:	Date:
Institute Manager of Research Degrees	Signature or Print Name:	Date:

Once complete, submit this form via the **MyTSD Doctoral College Portal** at
(<https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk>).

Zelei Lian research proposal PG1

GRADEMARK REPORT

FINAL GRADE

80 / 100

GENERAL COMMENTS

Your research proposal displays comprehensive knowledge and detailed understanding of the subject area. Extensive background study. · Highly focused answer and well structured, drawing on a range of appropriate literature · Logically presented and defended arguments · No factual/computational errors · Original interpretation · New links between topics are developed · New approach to a problem · Excellent presentation of ideas with very accurate communication.

Exceeds expectations for most primary criteria · Complete command of subject and other relevant areas · Ideas/arguments are highly original · Exceeds expectations for some primary criteria · Complete command of subject · Ideas/arguments are highly original.

The overall impact is outstanding.

PAGE 1



Background reading

Evidence of wide reading

PAGE 2



Comment 1

alternative - labarinth/webs/metier

Strikethrough.



Analytical discussion

Useful analytical comment, critical evaluation and independent discussion.



Comment 3

Exceptionally well presented and illustrated.



Comment 4

Beware of asking linked questions. Each research question should be labelled separately e.g RQ1, RQ2 etc.



Comment 5

methodological



Comment 6

In-depth critical thinking evident in your choice of research questions.

PAGE 3



Comment 7

Precisely focused study plan.



Comment 8

Comprehensive, concisely balanced research approach.

PAGE 4



Comment 9

Excellent.



Background reading

Evidence of wide reading



Comment 10

Your own ideas are very well linked to concepts and theory.



Comment 11

Excellent.



Comment 12

Very interesting.



Comment 13

You may also want to consider Lee, Tong King 2015 Experimental Chinese literature : Translation, Technology ad Lnaguage Ideology Palgrave. Let's see what the second marker thinks :)



Comment 14

Refer to UWTSD Ethics:

<https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/media/uwtsd-website/content-assets/documents/research/REICoP-July-2022.pdf>