

## “My Unfathomable Joy of Doing Roundabout Translation Works.”

—The delightful detour of the Translation—

### 翻訳の楽しい回り道

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名訳中の名(迷)訳？

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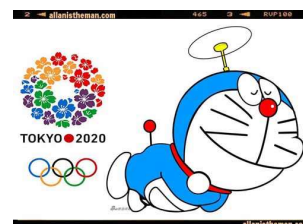
東京都おもてなし観光ボランティア活動報告

Improvement of instrument will be unavoidable.

翻訳機が進歩しても器械はやはり器械

You will have many chances.!

英語の世界はますます広がる！



**“My Unfathomable Joy of Doing Roundabout Translation Works.”**

(The delightful detour of the Translation)

Good afternoon everyone. Thank you for giving me a chance to share my experience. In the first place, let me refer to the title of my speech.

“My Unfathomable Joy of Doing Roundabout Translation Works.”

First, I used the word “translation” as if I am a professional translator. Honestly, I have never translated professionally. I am unable to translate complicated and deep meaning Japanese into English.

However, I pride myself to have visited the setting of many world noted literature works. I have written reports and essays about these literature works. I did translate these report into English in order to share them with my English-speaking friends. I have a website. I mentioned these essays on it. Also, last year, I had a presentation here, titled” My visit to the setting of the novels in the world”.

I think it is acceptable even though there are some grammatical errors in our conversation in English with our friends. But when the writings are released to public or when we talk to people at a big meeting, correct English is required. So, the native check becomes necessary.

On the other hand, in case of translating into Japanese from English, we have no problem. Because we are native speakers of Japanese.

When I was asked to give a talk this time, I came up with an idea, to utilize my essay that had been uploaded on my website this February with a title “Hon-yaku no tanoshii mawarimichi”. I thought this would be interesting and useful for the attendants, who are studying English or are engaged in jobs related to English.

But soon after, I was asked to provide an English title, too. I pondered over listing up many translations. But none of them, seemed to me, was to the point. It was very difficult to translate the abstract word “Mawarimichi”. At that time, Mr. Usugi gave me a helpful email. The title he suggested was “My Unfathomable Joy of Doing Roundabout Translation Works.”

There are two words that are probably not familiar to us.

“unfathomable” means immense or immeasurable

“roundabout” means detour or a lot of twists.

So, the title expresses, in another word “There is immeasurable pleasure in the translation work while going a roundabout way.”

The title in small letters below the title is the shortened one by me.

Now, let me enter main subject.

Last year, in November, I gave a lecture about Shakespeare and Cervantes at the general meeting of Tomonkai of Akishima city (meeting of alumni of Waseda university)

It marked the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Shakespeare and Cervantes. Also, last year was 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Soseki Natsume. It has been said that Shakespeare is the beginning of English literature and Cervantes is the beginning of Spanish literature. Strangely, the two passed away in the same year of 1616, just 400 years ago.

7 years ago, in the early part of June 2010, I visited the setting of the novel, Hamlet, best known work of Shakespeare.

I rode on a train at the Central Station of Copenhagen, capital city of Denmark, toward Helsingør, northern city. It took about 50 minutes. From the both side of train's window, I could appreciate a beautiful scenery of the countryside.

The rape blossoms were yellow and wheat field were green. They spread to both side of the car window. It seemed that the agricultural situation in rich Denmark was reflected by 60 % of the land of the country.

I think, most of you know the story of Hamlet. But let's review it briefly to confirm.

The Danish king dies suddenly. Younger brother of the king, Krogh Diaz, marries an empress and takes the seat of the Danish king. The prince Hamlet is pensive with the death of the father king and early remarriage of his mother.

Soon he began to hear a rumor that a wraith of his father appears night after night in the Kronborg Castle. He could meet the wraith and is told that his father was killed by Krogh Diaz with the poison.

*(A picture of the Kronborg Castle is on the summary page. The Crown Prince of Japan visited the castle just a week ago.)*

Hamlet seeks revenge by pretending to be insane. The king and the empress worry about the change of Hamlet. But the prime minister Polonias guesses that this is because Hamlet cannot handle well his love to Ophelia, his daughter. Ophelia tries to find out the secret of Hamlet. But Hamlet handles her bluntly.

The king who sensed the danger of the survival of Hamlet tries to kill him secretly inviting him to the swordplay game with Laertes, son of Polonias. The evil King prepared a poisoned sword and a cup of poisoned wine.

In the middle of the match, however, the empress drank the wine without knowing that it is poisoned and dies. Hamlet, wounded by the poisoned sword, finally killed the king and achieves his revenge and dies also.

I think that Hamlet, hero of this novel, has been one of the most attractive persons

who were most argued in the long history of literature.

Above all, the word, "To be or not to be, that is the question" which comes out to the 3<sup>rd</sup> act, 1<sup>st</sup> place, has been discussed for many years, as how to translate this into Japanese.

At first glance, it is not so difficult sentence for those who studied English. However, the literature work is worldly noted profound one. From the Meiji Era, so many Japanese have puzzled over how to translate the first part of the phrase.

The phrase has been translated in many ways. But it seems that the translation most widely accepted is 「生きるべきか、死ぬべきか（あるいは、「生か、死か」）それが問題だ」. "Should I live or should I die. It should live or it should die. that is a problem!"

Though I don't have such an ability as to translate medieval literature, I dared to translate this phrase after reading the story again and after visited the setting of the novel in Denmark. It is as follows.

**"What is true and what is not true? It is the most important subject to discover the ultimate truth."**

「何が真実なのか、何が真実でないのか、それを究めるのが最重要課題である」

This is a shout from the life of Hamlet. He swore to revenge against his uncle and agonizes over it. He searched justice and truth. And it seems to me that these heavy profound words are also asking us who live in this era, "What is the correct way of life? What is the authentic justice?" He is throwing us a fundamental question and problem of life.

**Then, some of the most excellent (absurd) translation existed?**

Meanwhile I have endeavored diligently in the translation, I checked the pages of website to get some reference and information. Then I happened to find a translation that seemed the best among the best translations. It is by Osaka dialect (accent).

**"To be or not to be, that is the question!"**

— やったるか〜、あかんか〜、ほな〜、どないしょ〜。 —

This is an obvious excellent translation. The feeling of the deep distress of Hamlet to avenge a father king can be well expressed. "May I do this revenge or the killing being bad? "Then what should I do? "I'm at a loss what to do."

Specifically, "that is the question", has been translated literally, "this is the question" or "It is a problem" in the other Japanese translation. However, in Osaka accent, the phrase is translated into "I'm at a loss what to do."

Frankly speaking, this is an excellent translation. It expresses very well the profound sorrow, agony and suffering of Hamlet.

I wonder how would you translate this line?

It's probable that a superb translation often goes over the original work. In my high school days, I learned "Pippa's Song" by Robert Browning that appeared in the Japanese Text. The original poem is certainly very wonderful. The poem has been engraved in my heart, however, owing to its superb translation by Bin Ueda.

Pippa's Song

春の朝

Robert Browning

上田敏

The year's at the spring

時は春、

And day's at the morn;

日は朝(あした)、

Morning's at seven;

朝(あした)は七時、

The hill-side's dew-pearled;

片岡(かたをか)に露みちて、

The lark's on the wing;

揚雲雀(あげひばり)なのりいで、

The snail's on the thorn;

蝸牛(かたつむり)枝に這(は)ひ、

God's in his heaven —

神、そらに知ろしめす。

All's right with the world!

すべて世は事も無し。

I hope you would appreciate the insightfulness, sharpness, cheerfulness, freshness and stability. Your heart will be filled with satisfaction and calmness. You will feel refreshing when you recite it.

Well then, let's challenge to translate an easy sentence which I think anyone seems able to do. It is a very familiar sentence expressing love. That is "I love you." How do you translate this phrase?

「私はあなたを愛しています」 -- It is a correct answer for the entrance examination, isn't it? It is totally correct grammatically. However, it is not entertaining. It is trivial. Nowadays, even between young lovers, they won't use such stiff words. It is more for literary work, isn't it?

Come up following expressions;

「愛してるわ(の)」 「好きよ」 「好きなの」 「あなたに首ったけよ」 「私はあなたのものよ」 「もうどうなってもいいわ」

..... these words are used by women. There are much more phrases like these.

As for men I have these, though they might have become classic;

「僕のパンツ洗ってくれますか？」 Can you wash my underpants? 「キミを食べてしまいたい」 How I wish to eat you up!

I wonder what kind of word did you use when you were with your girl(boy)friend?

According to a book I read, Turgenev in Russia translated this phrase “I can die for you.” (*Talking about Russia, a picture is on the summary’s page. It was taken at the forest in front of Moscow University.*)

And Soseki Natsume who studied abroad in London, translated this phrase from a man’s perspective. “The moon is beautiful. Isn’t it?”

As for this phrase, some interpreted as “You are beautiful just like the moon.” Or “The moon which I appreciate with you is beautiful.” And so on.

This phrase was used in the NHK morning TV drama, “Toto-Neechan” that culminated several months ago. I now remember one scene.

A university student who had romantic feeling toward Tsuneko, heroin of the drama, said this phrase 「月がきれいですね」 to transmit his love to her. Then, Mariko, her younger sister, who was fond of literature, hearing this phrase said to Tsuneko, “I would like to tell you, the phrase he said means I love you.”

Now, I would like to ask all of you in this room. What would be your Japanese translation of “I love you.”? Let’s make this your homework.

Now, the subject changes. This concerns an episode about a native check of my translated English.

About 10 years ago, I started my website. Then, a few of my friends from overseas asked me to open an English and a Spanish page.

In response, I began translating my writings to each linguistic area and culture. However, I didn’t have confidence in my translation. I needed the check by an outsider. I have many foreign friends in Japan but most of them were too busy to do proofreading for me.

To my great pleasure, while I was trying to find capable checkers in Japan, my friends living overseas offered me their support.

For English, I have Mr. K who lives in the United States. For Spanish, Mr. N who lives in Panama, volunteered.

Mr. K was a pediatrician and a Lieutenant Colonel at Yokota Air Base and Mr. N, whom I met when I was a correspondent of a newspaper in Panama, was a veterinarian and is now participating in editing the newsletters of the Buddhist organization in Panama. I am very grateful to them for their cordial supports.

When we think about this issue again, however, we notice that almost 100% of the people in English speaking country would possibly become native checker.

Thus, if I send my translated manuscript from Japan to the US or to Panama in the

evening, I would receive a proofread copy as early as the next morning. The time difference between Japan and these countries gives me this advantage. In another word, the task is done while I am sleeping!

The book, “The world is becoming flat” written by Thomas Freedman has become a best seller. In this book, he cites an example in our information age as follows.

“Within seconds, a message originated from a personal computer in the US can be sent to India via Internet, then from India to England, and from England to the US, leaping through the different time zones of the globe.”

In short, a task relayed through the Internet is continuously being attended by someone else from another country around the clock, even though the people who started the task may be sleeping.

At the time when I was dispatched to Panama as a correspondent of a newspaper some 40 years ago, E-mail did not exist. Even facsimile didn't exist. We proceeded with correspondences by telex, frantically typing Japanese in Romaji. We could never imagine the time like now would come. It's unbelievable that we are enjoying these tremendous present-day conveniences. Don't you think so?

This means, “While I am sleeping I have magicians working in my pillow! “

We are utilizing the time difference of the globe. This is one of the examples of most advanced information technology of nowadays.

This text of my speech was checked by Mr. K in the US. I'm very grateful to him for his continued support.

Now, let's imagine the case that a foreigner tries to translate his language into Japanese.

I was once asked by Mr. K to check a draft that was translated from English to Japanese. It was comparatively easy and short. So, there were not so many points to be corrected. At that occasion, however, I noticed the difficulty that a foreigner might face in translation.

As you know, the Japanese has three kinds of letters. They are Hiragana, Katakana and Kanji.

Both Hiragana and Katakana has 50 letters. But when it comes to Kanji, a foreigner needs to know about 2000 Kanji characters so that he/she can live smoothly in Japan. He needs a great deal of effort and time to master these Kanji.

In addition to this, when a foreigner writes some letters or talk to his boss, it is indispensable for him/her to choose correct Japanese expression; that is to say, one needs to find most appropriate expression in the occasion, analyzing the situation and his/her trading partner's position. Because in the society of Japan the expression of the

humble humility is required.

For example, there are about 10 expressions to express oneself. 私(わたくし、わたし、あたし)、僕、俺、我、ウチ、手前、小生、等々。

Watakushi is a polite and fine quality expression.

Watashi is comparatively polite way of speaking and is used at most occasion.

Atashi is mostly used in the field of stage and song.

Boku, Ore, Ware are used by men. Boku is most colloquial expression. Ore is missing politeness. Ware is old fashioned word. Uchi is used by both genders. Temae is also a humbled expression. Shousei is also used in letters or in writings as humbled expression.

It seems such a nuisance to repeat, but the most important attitude in Japan is this spirit of humility. If you don't take this into consideration, you will most likely be criticized, being called "That guy is arrogant", "The head is high" or "He doesn't know the society".

In English, the word to express oneself is only one word. That is "I". It is same in Spanish. That is "Yo" only.

Of course, we have learned the way to say something in polite way by using verb or auxiliary verb also in English. But I think it is not so difficult compared with Japanese.

One more point is the complexity of counting numbers.

1冊の本 a book, one book、2本の鉛筆 two pencils、3個の椅子 three chairs、4台のテレビ four TV or four television set、5枚の写真 five photos、five pictures 6頭の牛 six cattle, cows, oxen, bulls、7羽の鶏 seven chickens, seven hens、8匹の犬 eight dogs、9名の人 nine people

Attached "s" is different from the case of Japanese. Isn't it? In English, we need to add "s" to plural noun. But I think it is not so complicated as Japanese.

I would like to say, "**Translating a sentence is same as translating a culture.**" This is one of the most important points in translation.

### **Tokyo Omotenashi Volunteer Guide**

I make 76 this year. Now I have entered so called *the latter stage of elderly people*, but happily very stimulating and interesting activities started this April.

It is the activity of the Tokyo Omotenashi volunteer guide in the neighborhood of Shinjuku Station. So, as my last topic, let me transmit to you what I have experienced in these three months.



In my case, I have reported to the volunteer's control office that every Friday is available for activities. But owing to the increase of the number of volunteer staff from this year, the marching order to me is only once a month for now.

Initially, our office was in the building of Tokyo Metropolitan Government. But the office was moved to the small room on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of Bus Terminal, newly constructed at the South gate of JR Shinjuku Station.

At the counter next to our room, about 5 Japanese ladies dressed in Kimono were attending visiting foreigners as staff of Tokyo Tourist Center.

This time, my partner was a lady who has already three years' experience. We received a kit, many kinds of map in many languages, iPad, utensils, cellphone, etc. and we put on a same uniform and a hat. Our "working hour" was three hours from 0:30 to 3:30 in the afternoon including rest.

The assigned spot was the South exit of Shinjuku Station, just in front of Bus Terminal.

Standing there, I was very surprised with the increase of visiting foreigners.

It probably depends on the day and time. Now, at around 2 o'clock on Friday afternoon, it seemed that 20 or 30 percent of the people walking in front of us were visiting foreigners. Shinjuku has probably been known to all over the world by internet and many kinds of social media.

My partner, Ms. Y was skilled at attending foreigners. She went to wherever when she found some foreigners who looked like lost. When she was asked the location of some building that is not in the paper map, she utilized the iPad skillfully and taught the way to the place. I just helped her as assistant. (Because I'm still a trainee.)

Foreigners we attended this afternoon were from, the U.S., Australia, Italy, Indonesia, Thailand, China, Taiwan, and Denmark. We received 9 couples and 20 foreigners, and 2 couples of Japanese.

I asked an old couple, "Where are you from?" Then the old lady said, "We are from Israel." Her husband with white hair added, "We have just arrived in Japan. We have plan to visit many places in 20 days. First, we go to Hiroshima, then to Kyoto, Nara and Nagoya.....any way, thank you for your kind attention".

The accommodation of them was an apartment hotel near Kabukicho which we couldn't find in the paper map.

On paper map, we find many three-stars hotel, four-stars hotel, five-stars hotel near Shinjuku station. But recent visiting foreigners to Japan check the cheaper hotels beforehand by internet and make reservation. Then, our iPad plays an important role to search these hotels.

A visitor from Germany asked us, "Where can I practice table tennis in Shinjuku?"

We hear that about 3.5 million passengers get on and get off at Shinjuku Station daily. It's No.1 in Japan. In addition to that, the city has changed year by year with new buildings and new facilities. Under these circumstances, I thought on each working day, I need to gain many experiences to entertain visiting foreigners smoothly and precisely.

Talking about iPad, the development of translation software is also enormous. At another occasion, when I talked to a translation software in Japanese that a visitor possessed, a phrase was translated almost simultaneously into another language and the phrase the foreigner talked was also translated into Japanese almost at the same time. It seems like a tool indispensable to travel abroad.

Then, is it not necessary or is it useless to study English or any other foreign language?

I don't think so. The ministry of Education is working hard to level up students' English. Demand to employ human resources capable in foreign language is increasing more and more.

Even though the translation software develops, the software has its limit. Several months ago, I bought a translation software by internet and used it. To my discouragement, there were a lot of errors in translation. I tried to translate this draft from Japanese into English by translation software. But the translation came out was far worse than I had expected. So, I translated this phrase by phrase, word by word consulting dictionary.

I think there is a limit. The translation software will never surpass the translation by human hands in its correctness. The instrument improves will be unavoidable.

The languages of the foreigners we attended were diverse. They are French, Spanish, Germany, Arabic, Tagalog, Korean, Chinese and so on. But most of the foreigners tried to speak English, believing that they can communicate in English in Japan even though it is impossible to communicate with his/her native language.

Thinking about the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics, it is indispensable to increase the Japanese who can manage English. Demand for capable human resources who can manage English has been and will be increasing. So, you will have many chances.!" I would like to appeal to all who tackles English at this meeting place, please work hard, having a dream.

My talk went roundabout from translation to volunteer activities' report. I hope this could be of any help to you in your study in English.

Thank you for the long attention.