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**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON  
FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES  
School of Humanities**

**Diplomatic Interpreters in Post-World War II Japan:  
Voices of the Invisible Presence in Foreign Relations**

**by**

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**Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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**ABSTRACT**

**FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES**

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**DIPLOMATIC INTERPRETERS IN POST-WORLD WAR II JAPAN:**

**VOICES OF THE INVISIBLE PRESENCE IN FOREIGN RELATIONS**

**By Kumiko Machida Torikai**

Interpreters have been indispensable from antiquity to the present in almost every sector of human society, especially in the borderless world today, where diverse languages and cultures interact. Nonetheless, interpreters have remained mostly invisible.

The present study examines the role of such interpreters, who have hitherto been treated as virtually non-existent in official history. While in recent times, there has been a shift in the perception of the interpreters' role, primarily in community settings, the focus of the present study is placed on interpreting in Japanese diplomacy, an area which has been accorded only limited attention.

The primary research questions the study addresses are (1) What kind of people became interpreters in post-WWII Japan? (2) How did they perceive their role as interpreters? (3) What kind of role did they actually play in foreign relations?

In search of answers to these questions, the living memories of five pioneer interpreters in Japan have been collected, in the form of life-story interviews, which were then categorized and introduced in three distinct parts based on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of '*habitus*,' 'field' and 'practice.' The experiences of the five interpreters are presented as case studies and examined in the light of Erving Goffman's 'participation framework.' Then, based on the pioneers' narratives, interpreting practice is studied from four different aspects: comparison of oral interpreting with written translation; illuminating the salient features of orality in interpreting; the issue of 'culture' for interpreters; and finally, the role of interpreters explored based on Claudia Angelelli's study, leading to the final discussion on future perspectives of the study of interpreting and interpreters.

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## Chapter 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Invisible and soundless voices

Interpreters are invisible. They are not meant to be seen. Igor Korchilov, a top Russian interpreter at the United Nations and in diplomacy, introduced in his memoir the previously unwritten rule: ‘The interpreter is supposed to be heard, not seen’ (1997, p.19). And yet, in actuality, what the interpreters say is what somebody else has said, and their own voices remain inaudible. Their voices are not meant to be heard. They exist, and yet they do not exist, as is aptly described in a recent press comment:

Eisenhower and Khrushchev. Carter and Brezhnev. Reagan and Gorbachev. In almost every photograph there is a slim, dark-haired man standing in the middle, anonymous but indispensable. He has the respectful mien of a manservant and the concentration of a game-show player, and his head is often tilted slightly to one side, close to the ear of one of his neighbors. [...] Sukhodrev was present but not present, emptying himself of ego, slipping into the skin of the man who was speaking, feeling his feelings, saying his words. (Mydans, *International Herald Tribune*, Oct.1-2, 2005)

This is a comment about Viktor Sukhodrev, aged 72, widely considered the king of interpreters, ‘who in a career of nearly 30 years was present at more superpower summitry, more deal-making, more brinkmanship than any of the men who flanked him.’ If you substitute the names of presidents, the description would fit any diplomatic interpreter in Japan. Just as with Sukhodrev in Russia, interpreters in general are ‘present but not present,’ ‘indispensable but anonymous.’ They are the ‘man in the middle’ (Anderson, 1976, as cited in Pöchhacker & Shlesinger, 2002,

p.211). In the Japanese newspapers, when presenting a photograph of dignitaries, the interpreter in the middle is always described as ‘skip one person, and the next is....’ Called ‘skip one person,’ the interpreter is in a sense a ‘non-person’ (Goffman, 1981, p.135), using the first person ‘I’ when speaking the words of whoever happens to be speaking, which requires them to empty their ego.

Psychologist Eric Erikson likened the negative identity of minority youth to African-American writers and wrote: ‘And so we have in our American Negro writers the almost ritualized affirmation of “inaudibility,” “invisibility,” “namelessness,” “facelessness—a void of faceless faces, of soundless voices lying outside history” as Ralph Ellison puts it’ (Erikson, 1968, p.25). Exactly the same descriptions can be applied to interpreters, perhaps more so.

This is exemplified in two books, published simultaneously in Japan and in U.S., designed to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the San Francisco Peace Treaty (Hosoya, 2001). They contain papers by experts in various fields of U.S.-Japan relations, from politics, economics and military affairs to cultural exchanges, and yet there is no mention of interpreters, not even a page or a line of reference to the role they played during those 50 years.

This by no means is an exception. The non-existence of interpreters is apparent not only in the media but in minutes and records of diplomatic conferences. The official records of bilateral negotiations between Japan and the United States, for example, are usually prepared in the form of joint statements, with the English version treated officially as the original, and the Japanese translation provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Hosoya et al., 1999, xi). While the names of participants from both sides are recorded, interpreters are peculiarly missing in most cases, with a rare exception of the mention of ‘James Wickel, L.S.<sup>1</sup>, Interpreter,’ for the Memorandum of

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<sup>1</sup> Office of Language Services, U.S. Department of State. David Sawyer, currently

Conversation between Prime Minister Ikeda and Secretary of State Dean Rusk, on November 26, 1963, without any mention of an interpreter on the Japanese side<sup>2</sup> (p.582). When Prime Minister Ikeda had a meeting with President Kennedy on June 21, 1961, on the Potomac in what was called a ‘yacht meeting,’ it is recorded by the U.S. Government that the only people present on the presidential boat were President Kennedy, Prime Minister Ikeda, Senator Miyazawa and ‘an interpreter for the American side’ (p.525) — indispensable, but anonymous.

In Japan, interpreters are commonly depicted as ‘*kurogo*,’ or ‘*kuroko*’ in colloquial language, literally meaning black (*kuro*) attire (*go*). In *kabuki*, one of Japan’s traditional theater forms, a *kurogo*, a ‘person in black,’ is a figure who appears on stage dressed all in black with a black hood. His role is to help the actors on stage in various ways, as well as to remove props that are no longer used or bring them out when needed. Although he is visible and indispensable in *kabuki*, ‘the theater convention is to disregard him, and hence he remains a shadow figure’ (Kodama, 2000, p.49). The tacit agreement is that *kurogo* is an invisible presence on stage, not meant to be seen by the audience. Interpreters are expected to play more or less the same role as *kurogo*. They are there with principal players on stage, doing significant work. Nevertheless, they are not supposed to be seen and are expected to be transparent. Interpreters in negotiations sit between the two parties bridging the linguistic barriers, and yet their own voices are not heard, and their presence is usually not acknowledged in history. The official documents or the minutes of meetings generally record

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working for the Office of Language Services as Senior Diplomatic Interpreter, confirms that the interpreter is not mentioned in U.S. official documents and the reference to James Wickel is an exception, adding there is mention of interpretation in speeches published on the White House and State Department websites, and if the interpretation is transcribed, it is stated in parentheses before the corresponding passage (personal communication, July 7, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> It is likely that Counselor Akatani Genichi of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs acted as interpreter for Prime Minister Ikeda Hayato and Foreign Minister Masayoshi Ohira.



speeches and verbal exchanges created by official speakers, or ‘authors’ or ‘principals’ to use Goffman’s (1981) term, and even in rare cases when their interpretation is recorded and used, interpreters usually remain anonymous. The interpreting practice at diplomatic meetings and conferences indeed is ephemeral, evanescent and the interpreters’ voices evaporate like bubbles in the air.

Ironically, the only time the presence of interpreters is highlighted is when they are held responsible for their alleged mistranslations. Korchilov (1997) notes that when the interpreters are ‘doing their work well, they receive no notice. Only when they make a mistake do they find themselves in the spotlight’ (p.19), adding ‘Someone once said that “good interpretation is like air—no one notices it until it is polluted.” Nobody notices the interpreter as long as he is doing all right, but the moment he makes a slip, he becomes the focus of attention’ (p.261). Even in such situations, interpreters remain silent and never venture to explain, let alone defend themselves, because of the constraints imposed on them by professional ethics of interpreters not to disclose the content of what they interpreted.

## **1.2 The development of interpreting**

Delisle and Woodsworth (1995), published under the auspices of the International Federation of Translators (FIT), cover translation history from ancient times up to present, but the history of interpreting appears only in the last chapter, and the other chapters are devoted solely to translation. This does not mean FIT is an association for translators only. In English, the word ‘translator’ can be a generic term covering both translation for written texts as well as interpretation for oral discourse. As such, FIT has interpreters from all over the world as its members. By the same token, the fact that there is only one chapter on interpretation, appearing at the end of the book, does not mean that interpreting started recently and only covers a small portion in recent

years in the long history of translation. As a matter of fact, interpreting is not simply as old as written translation—it started much earlier because human communication started with orality. Then why is interpretation less talked about and less studied than translation, almost as if it did not exist? The explanation is actually given in the beginning of Chapter 9 of the same book: ‘The spoken word is evanescent. Our knowledge of the past performance of interpreters tends to be derived from such sources as letters, diaries, memoirs and biographies of interpreters themselves, along with a variety of other documents, many of which were only marginally or incidentally concerned with interpreting [...].’

Research on the history of interpreting in different countries has begun only recently, and ‘because of the absence of ideal, reliable records, some blanks will probably never be filled in’ (Delisle & Woodsworth, 1995), although as early as 3000BC the Egyptians had a hieroglyphic signifying ‘interpreting.’ Despite the presence of interpreters in ancient times, they were mentioned only infrequently before the Renaissance (Roditi, 1982, as cited in Delisle & Woodsworth, 1995, p.246). A possible contributing factor, according to Delisle and Woodsworth (1995), was the primacy of the written text over the spoken word. It goes without saying that it is easier for translators to be recognized in history, working on written documents or texts as they do, than it is for interpreters working on oral communication. Delisle and Woodsworth (1995) also point out that ‘the social status of interpreters may also account for their position in the annals of history: ethnic and cultural hybrids, often women, slaves or members of a “subcaste”,’ concluding that ‘these go-betweens, notwithstanding their mediating between distant cultures, were not accorded the place they deserved in historical records’ (pp.245-246).

In spite of this non-existence in history, interpreters have played and do play significant roles in various communicative and cultural encounters, especially in diplomacy. As Anderson (1976) notes, ‘the role played by the interpreter is likely to

exert considerable influence on the evolution of group structure and on the outcome of the interaction. [...] International negotiations concerning trade agreements, peace treaties, and the like constitute another area of potential sociological interest in the role of the interpreter' (as cited in Pöchhacker & Shlesinger, 2002, pp.209-210). This is precisely what the present study aims to uncover, elucidate and examine.

Oral interpretation is said to originate in Biblical times, as illustrated by St. Paul's words in his first Letter to the Corinthians: 'If any man speak in an unknown tongue let it be by two, or at most by three...and let one interpret' (14:27).

Interpreting gained importance in foreign relations 'around 1920, after languages other than French were recognized as official diplomatic languages' (Gaiba, 1998, p.27), the need becoming urgent during the First World War, at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, and with the foundation of the League of Nations. Consecutive and whispering interpreting were the first techniques used, but both proved unsatisfactory, with whispered interpretation interfering with the voice of the speaker, and consecutive mode taking too much time, thereby delaying the sessions—hence the need for a more efficient method of translation at international conferences (ibid., pp.28-29). The first patent for simultaneous interpretation equipment was granted in 1926 to Gordon Finley at IBM for his device based on an idea of the founder of Boston's Filene's department store, Edward A. Filene (Gaiba, 1998, p.30; Visson, 2005, p.51). Visson informs us that simultaneous interpretation was first tried as early as 1928 at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in the former Soviet Union, then in 1933 booths were used at the plenum of the executive committee of the Communist International, and in 1935 at the Fifteenth International Physiology Congress in Leningrad, academician Pavlov's introductory speech was translated from Russian into French, English and German (2005, p.51). However, Gaiba (1998) points out that simultaneous interpretation in those early days was either 'simultaneous successive interpretation,' basically consecutive, or the 'simultaneous reading of pretranslated

texts' (pp.31-32). Simultaneous interpretation, as we know it today, emerged on the international scene at the War Crimes Trial of 1945-1946 at Nuremberg (Gaiba, 1998; Visson, 2005).

Many of the interpreters who worked at the Nuremberg Trial later became interpreters at the United Nations (Gaiba, 1998; Visson, 2005), contributing to the proliferation of simultaneous interpreting at international conferences. Korchilov (1997) reminisces that 'In the late 1940s and the early 1950s, when simultaneous interpretation was still a novelty at the U.N., visitors asked to see three things: Mrs. Roosevelt, the ranking Soviet delegate, and the simultaneous interpreters, not necessarily in that order' (p.21).

Although the focus of research in interpretation has long been primarily on simultaneous interpreting process at conferences, studied from such disciplines as psycholinguistics, cognitive psychology and information processing, as many countries becoming more multilingual with people moving across borders, we have been witnessing a growing interest in interpreting in community settings worldwide. Recent studies on community or dialogue interpreting, based on sociolinguistic and pragmatic analysis, reveal the reality of interpreter-mediated exchanges. Unlike simultaneous conference interpreting, which is basically monologic, face-to-face community interpreting calls for revisiting the role of interpreters (see 7.4).

This phenomenon can also be witnessed in diplomatic negotiations, where interpreters try to understand the intention (Benjamin, 1992), illocutionary force (Searle, 1969) and implicature (Grice, 1989) of the participant's utterances and convey the message based on their perception and understanding. In other words, the possibility exists that interpreters inadvertently play a key role as mediators bridging the gap between two different languages in diverse communicative events, whether at official meetings, informal gatherings, secret summit meetings, or lectures and press conferences.

Therefore, the presence of interpreters and their work should not be overlooked when we study the history of Japan. This would include official interpreters in Nagasaki dating back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In the present study, however, the focus is rather on contemporary Japan, after the Second World War, when Japan was busy rebuilding the nation from war-torn devastation to becoming a full-fledged member of the international society. Although there were interpreters whose services were indispensable, apart from some memoirs and anecdotes, their contributions have not been sufficiently recognized, because of their work being basically oral, which is by nature evanescent, and for professional constraints of confidentiality. As a result, much of what took place during the 50 years of Japan's foreign relations after WWII, in terms of language and communication, has been outside the interest of the media, general public, and certainly academia; hence, outside of official history.

### **1.3 Aim of the study**

The aim of the present study, therefore, is to collect the living memories of interpreters, who devoted themselves to mediating intercultural communication in the political and economic arena, through life-story interviews. Specifically, five pioneer simultaneous interpreters were interviewed, to listen to the voices of the invisible.

The primary questions the study addresses are:

- 1) What kind of people became interpreters in post-WWII Japan?  
Why and how did they become interpreters?
- 2) How did they perceive their role as interpreters?
- 3) What kind of role did they actually play in Japan's foreign relations?

By pursuing these questions, the study ultimately seeks to illuminate the role of

interpreters in intercultural communicative events. For this purpose, one has to first understand the interpreters as human beings within broader historical, social as well as cultural contexts. Secondly, the interpreting profession has to be studied closely to see what kind of work it entails and what kind of role is expected of them. Lastly, the interpreters' actual performances have to be analyzed in depth to fully grasp the reality of their practice. In order to achieve this, it seems appropriate to draw on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of '*habitus*,' 'field' and 'practice.'

The application of Bourdieu's social theory to translation studies, including the notion of *habitus*, has emerged recently, as exemplified in Simeoni's discussion in 1998 of the pivotal status of the translator's *habitus*, followed by other researchers as Gouanvic (2005) and Inghilleri (2003, 2005a, 2005b).

According to Bourdieu (1990):

The *habitus*, a product of history, produces individual and collective practices—more history—in accordance with the schemes generated by history. It ensures the active presence of past experiences, which deposited in each organism in the form of schemes of perception, thought and action, tend to guarantee the 'correctness' of practices and their constancy over time, more reliably than all formal rules and explicit norms. This system of dispositions—a present past that tends to perpetuate itself into the future by reactivation in similarly structured practices, an internal law through which the law of external necessities, irreducible to immediate constraints, is constantly exerted—is the principle of the continuity and regularity [...].  
(p.54, emphasis in original)

It is deemed legitimate to consider the *habitus* of each of the interpreters in the study to fully understand them, because as Bourdieu explains, 'the *habitus* is

an infinite capacity for generating products—thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions—whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production’ (p.5, emphasis in original).

Gouanvic (2005) understands *habitus* as the product of an individual history as well as the whole collective history of family and class (pp.158-159; Bourdieu, 1990, p.91), and as something closely linked to a certain field (p.158), ‘intrinsically woven together’ (p.148). Wondering what in the translators’ *habitus* pushes them towards particular authors, Gouanvic (2005) studied three French translators of American literature, illustrating how *habitus* led them to appreciate certain texts and authors (2005, pp.158-161). In this study, the question is to seek how *habitus* of the pioneer interpreters led them towards the field of interpreting.

Bourdieu (1990) likens the ‘field’ to the pitch or board on which a game is played, with ‘explicit and specific rules’ (p.67) and with a ‘feel for the game’ (p.66), adding, however, that ‘in the social fields, which are the products of a long, slow process of autonomization, [...] one does not embark on the game by a conscious act, one is born into the game, with the game’ (p.67). In reference to ‘the almost miraculous encounter between the *habitus* and a field’ (p.66), Bourdieu (1990) asserts that ‘the various fields provide themselves with agents equipped with the *habitus* needed to make them work’ and compares ‘vocation’ to the acquisition of the mother tongue, learning of a game to the learning of a foreign language (p.67). It will be of significance, then, to look into the relationship between the interpreters’ *habitus* and the field of interpreting.

The remaining question is practice, which according to Bourdieu (1990), ‘unfolds in time and it has all the correlative properties, such as irreversibility’ (p.81), and ‘its temporal structure, that is, its rhythm, its tempo, and above all its directionality, is constitutive of its meaning’ (p.81). Bourdieu juxtaposes this view of practice to science, which ‘tends to ignore time and so to detemporalize practice’ (p.81). What this study tries to unfold is the reality of the practice of interpreting, communicative events of

here and now, ‘inseparable from temporality’ (p.81).

In order to pursue these fundamental questions of interpreters’ *habitus*, field, and practice, oral history with particular emphasis on life-story interviews is considered to be a valid method, since as Daniel James (2000) notes, ‘oral testimony enable us to approach the issue of agency and subjectivity in history’ (p.124). Indeed, the quest of this study is none other than allowing interpreters to emerge from being invisible presence to being ‘fuller human beings’ (Thompson, 2000, p.24), making explicit the agency and subjectivity, thus changing the focus of diplomatic history to open up new areas of inquiry (more on oral history as a method in Section 1.4).

The first part of the study is, thus, focused on the life of each of the five diplomatic interpreters. Asking about their upbringing, their family, and the educational and social background that fostered them, or the construction of their ‘*habitus*’ in Bourdieu’s (1977, 1990) term, the study seeks to understand interpreters as human beings living at one point in history, and to see what motivated them to become interpreters when the profession was not yet fully established. This is important, since as Bourdieu states, ‘the *habitus*, the product of history, produces individual and collective practices, and hence history, in accordance with the schemes engendered by history’ (1977, p.82). Additionally, by learning how the pioneers acquired linguistic, communicative and intercultural competence to become professional conference/diplomatic interpreters, it is hoped that we might gain some additional insights of relevance to language teaching as well as interpreter training.

The second part of the study is devoted to their various work experiences as pioneer simultaneous interpreters at conferences and in diplomatic negotiations. By analyzing their narratives, the study aims to explore their attitudes and perceptions about the role of interpreters, since these attitudes and perceptions may be presumed to have influenced their judgments in practice and their actual positioning in diplomatic interpreting.



Finally, based on the case studies of the five interpreters, attempts will be made to illuminate the role of interpreters, which is commonly described as ‘invisible,’ ‘transparent’ and depicted as *kurogo/kuroko* in Japan. The question of neutrality and invisibility is a complex issue, closely related to the never-ending debate on accuracy, and as such, continues to be an old and a new topic in Japan as well as in other countries. The present study, then, will explore this recurrent theme in a Japanese context, with a specific focus on diplomatic interpreting, in the hope of gaining some insight into the intricate issue of the role of interpreters.

While this study draws heavily on recent studies of dialogue interpreting, with all its implications in face-to-face interaction and interpersonal communication, it specifically focuses on interpreting in foreign relations, which has not been accorded sufficient attention. The subjects in this study are all pioneers in simultaneous interpreting between Japanese and English, their work encompassing conference, media and diplomatic interpreting.

The life-story interviews are categorized and introduced in three distinct parts based on Bourdieu’s concept of ‘*habitus*’ (Chapter 4), ‘field’ (Chapter 5) and ‘practice’ (Chapter 6). Particularly in Chapter 6, the experiences of each of the five diplomatic interpreters are presented as case studies and examined in the light of Erving Goffman’s ‘participation framework.’ Then in Chapter 7, the narratives of the pioneer interpreters are analyzed from four different aspects: (1) comparison of oral interpreting with written translation, with a focus on ‘interpretation’; (2) some thoughts on the salient features of orality in interpreting; (3) the issue of ‘culture’ for interpreters explored; and finally, (4) analysis of the role of interpreters, leading to the final discussion in Chapter 8.

The five pioneer interpreters in the present study were deeply involved in crucial moments of history during Japan’s reconstruction and subsequent growth into a major economic power, and as such, by casting a close look at their stories, the study

proposes to uncover the contribution they made in post-World War II Japan, hopefully gaining insight into a different facet of Japan's diplomacy, illuminating the place of interpreters in Japan's foreign relations, and ultimately serving to illustrate the significance of interpreting in the history of intercultural communication in Japan.

#### **1.4 Oral history as a method**

The present study is fundamentally based on oral history method, which uses as raw material 'the life experience of people' so that 'a new dimension is given to history' (Thompson, 1978/2000, p.6). Paul Thompson claims that 'oral history offers a challenge to the accepted myths of history, to the authoritarian judgment inherent in its tradition' (p.24), providing 'a means for transforming both the content and the purpose of history. It can be used to change the focus of history itself, and open up new areas of inquiry [...]' (p.3). The present study seeks to shift the focus of diplomatic history to explore its new dimension from the perspective of interpreting and interpreters.

Oral history is deemed appropriate as a method for this particular research because, in Thompson's words, it is a 'history built around people. It thrusts life into history itself and it widens its scope. It allows heroes not just from the leaders, but from the unknown majority of the people' (p.23).

##### **1.4.1 What is oral history?**

According to Thompson (2000), oral history is 'as old as history itself' (p.25), although the modern use of the term is new. In fact, it was 'the *first* kind of history' (p.25, emphasis in original), and it is only quite recently that oral history lost its eminence (p.26). Its revival came with post-war political change, as 'colonial Africa moved to independence needing a history of their own, combined with the working-class movement in Britain heightening an interest in labour history, by the

1960s broadening into social history' (p.72). This convergence of sociology and history, in Thompson's view, was encouraged in UK 'through the founding of the new universities of the 1960s with their interdisciplinary experiments, and the rapid expansion of a sociology which was showing an increasing concern with the historical dimension in social analysis' (pp.73-74).

Alessandro Portelli (1997) explains that oral history begins in the orality of the narrator but is directed towards (and concluded by) the written text of the historian:

Oral narrators are aware of this written destination, and bear it in mind as they shape their performance; on the other hand, the task of the oral historian is to write in such a way that readers are constantly reminded of the oral origins of the text they are reading. In the end, we might define oral history as the genre of discourse which orality and writing have developed jointly in order to speak to each other about the past. (1997, p.5)

The strength of oral history, in Thompson's summary, lies in giving a new dimension to history, with the life experience of people of all kinds used as its raw material, allowing the original multiplicity of standpoints to be recreated, resulting in more realistic reconstruction of the past (2000, pp.5-6).

As Evans (1975) acknowledges, 'whereas oral history can never be a "compartment" of history in its own right, it is a technique that could conceivably be used in any branch of the discipline' (p.24, as cited in Thompson, 2000, p.82). The method of oral history is based on oral evidence, which according to Thompson, by transforming the 'objects' of study into 'subjects,' makes for a history which is not just rich, more vivid, and heart-rending, but *truer* (2000, p.117).

Thompson categorizes oral history methods into four different modes:

- 1) the single life-story narrative of an informant with a rich memory, incorporating the experiences of others.
- 2) a collection of stories, allowing the stories to be used in constructing a broader historical interpretation, by grouping them around common themes, as a collection of whole lives, or stories about incidents, or as a thematic montage of extracts.
- 3) narrative analysis, focusing on the interview itself as an oral text, and what can be learnt from its language, its themes and repetitions, and its silences.
- 4) the reconstructive cross-analysis, treating the oral evidence as a quarry from which to construct an argument about patterns of behaviour or events in the past. (2000, pp.269-271)

Among the four approaches, three seem to be relevant to the present study. Each one of the individual informants in the study is endowed with a rich array of memory of experiences in post-WWII Japan, forming a single life-story in its own right. At the same time, this study can also be seen as a collection of five stories, enabling a broader historical interpretation around a common theme of the interpreters' role. And finally, the oral testimonies offered by the veteran interpreters provide invaluable evidence to construct valid discussion on the reality of interpreters at work vis-à-vis the preconceived notion of transparency and invisibility as inherent in the role of interpreters.

The only approach not feasible in this study would be the third one, that of treating the interview as an oral text. Narrative analysis, with its emphasis on the specific language used in the interview, focusing on 'discursive strategies—how the story is told' (Riessman, 1993, pp.30, 44), is not a realistic choice for this particular project, given that the interview transcripts are originally in Japanese, which are translated later

into English, involving inevitable linguistic and cultural shifts and transfer, or in Venuti's (2005) term, 'loss and gain in translation.' It is almost meaningless, for example, to look at whether the respondent used an active or passive form of a verb when talking about herself. Therefore, although this study partly draws on narrative approach, in the way of looking for key words or repeated phrases in search of hidden meanings, it will not be based on a rigorous analytical method such as proposed by Riessman. Rather, the study is based on a collection of individual stories told by interpreters, to portray in a sense the interpreters' community, focusing on the theme of interpreting in diplomacy. It will not be a collection of whole lives, but instead, it will be a thematic montage of extracts, interweaving five different stories, each unique in its own way.

#### **1.4.2 Narratives as evidence**

The oral evidence in this study is collected through life-story interviews, believing that a 'primary way individuals make sense of experience is by casting it in narrative form' (Riessman, 1993, p.4). The purpose of the interviews is, then, to elicit life stories in the form of narratives.

##### On the definition of narrative

The definition of narrative varies depending on the researcher, from a broad one in social and communication theory to a restrictive one in literary studies and linguistics (cf. Baker, 2006, pp.8-9). According to Riessman (1993), most scholars define it as 'discrete units, with clear beginnings and endings, as detachable from the surrounding discourse rather than as situated events' (p.17). Plummer (2001), on the other hand, admits that there is little agreement as to what exactly narratives are (p.185), and describes different approaches to the study of narrative, or narratology, to use a term coined by Todorov (Plummer, 2001, p.186). In literary theory, the study of narratives

is directed to formal and structural matters of genre, plot, character, and trope, while in linguistics it is directed to speech acts and conversation, often through analysis of the organization of speech in conversation analysis. In psychology, what is called 'narrative psychology' has been developed, drawing on cognitive and discourse analysis, to see 'how people make sense of their lives' (Edwards, 1997, p.268, as cited in Plummer, 2001, p.186), and philosophers have been concerned with narratives along with story, hermeneutics and texts. In sociology, rather than working on narrative *per se*, the attention has been more on its task to broaden the social context (Plummer, 2001, p.186). Plummer, combining these differing strands of thought, views life-story narratives as comprised of several key elements—story, plot, characters, themes, poetics, genres and points of view, with story being the most basic element (2001, p.187).

On the difference between a story and a narrative, Riessman defines a 'narrative' as an encompassing term of rhetoric, while a 'story' is a limited genre (1993, p.41). Plummer (2001) likewise states, 'Whilst narrative is a wide generic term (like discourse) for recounting and relating, the term story is but one version of narrative' (p.187). Plummer cites Kenyon and Randall, defining 'story' as 'someone telling someone about somebody doing something' (1997, p.65, as cited in Plummer, 2001), its importance being increasingly recognized as the guiding unit of a life story, because 'our life is essentially a set of stories we tell ourselves about our past, present and future' (p.2, as cited in Plummer, 2001, p.187).

In this study, the term 'narrative' is not used as understood in literary theory or in linguistics, but rather, narratives here are treated in the broad sense found in sociology, such as the five kinds of narratives suggested by Laurel Richardson (1990), namely, everyday life narratives, autobiographical narratives, biographical narratives, cultural narratives and collective stories (as cited in Plummer 2001, p.189). Within these five broad categories, the present study is directed toward collective stories of pioneer

interpreters with a particular focus on autobiographical narratives.

### On validity, reliability, and representativeness

Having thus defined narratives, however, does not in itself ensure the validity of life-story interviews and narratives as legitimate evidence for research purposes. There is, first of all, a fundamental and classic question that has been posed on life-story research—is the story true? How can you tell whether a story is true or not? Or when faced with different narratives on a single event or incident, the question arises as to how we can evaluate and tell which one of the narratives is correct. To this basic question, Plummer (2001) declares forthrightly that it may not in the end matter which one of the different narratives is right, for in his view, each account represents ‘a perspective, a point of view’ (p.239). To prove his claim, Plummer cites the Japanese movie *Rashomon* by Kurosawa Akira which ‘opens with a violent scene of a bandit attacking a nobleman in the forest—to be followed by four very different “stories” about the event. It is a classic literary device: to recognize that stories are told from different points of view which have their own truth at the time of telling’ (2001, p.239).

Notwithstanding, the ‘truth’ question in life stories remains necessarily and inevitably linked to other methodological issues, such as validity, reliability, and representativeness, affecting practical problems of interviewing, transcribing, editing, translating, and above all, the issue of interpreting the narrative and the question of the voice—how much the author’s self is permitted and whose voices are to be heard (Plummer 2001, pp.176-181). In essence, writing life stories can be fraught with problems, for as James (2000) suggests, ‘the relationship between personal narrative and history—as indeed between autobiography in general and history—is complex and problematic’ (p.124), involving a joint narrative produced by the interviewer and the interviewed, structured by both cultural and social conventions (pp.124-125). Although

it is beyond the scope of the present study to discuss all the problems envisaged, it is deemed necessary to address some questions, particularly the issue of ‘representativeness, validity and reliability.’

Robert Atkinson (1998) argues that ‘reliability and validity are not necessarily the appropriate evaluative standards for a life story interview’ (p.59, as cited in Plummer, 2001, p.153), and Plummer (2001) likewise admits that conventional modes of evaluation may not be suitable in many instances for life stories and that ‘different goals and different kinds of data require different modes of evaluation’ (p.153).

According to Plummer, attacks on life history research that it fails to provide representative cases, hurling the reader into the eccentric world of the atypical completely misunderstand ‘the nature of such research—where insights, understandings, appreciation, intimate familiarity are the goals and not “facts,” explanations or generalizations’ (2001, p.153).

Portelli (1997) sees oral history as ‘an art of the individual’ (pp.58-59), started ‘primarily because we wanted to listen to those who had gone unheard’ (p.58) and as such, contends that ‘oral history does not cultivate the average, but often perceives the exceptional and the unique to be more *representative*’ (p.58, emphasis in original), arguing that ‘one creative storyteller, brilliant verbal artist, is as rich a source of knowledge as any set of statistics’ (p.58).

Plummer (2001) presents a ‘*continuum of representativeness*’ (p.153) with two opposite poles, from studies with a clear idea of how typical the life stories are to studies totally disregarding generalization, and midway between these extremes is a possibility, such as Herbert Blumer’s contention, to seek out only a small number of key informants who have a profound grasping of a particular world, because individuals with such knowledge constitute a far better ‘representative sample’ than a thousand individuals who are not knowledgeable.

The number of subjects in the present study is quite small— five. However, they



are all gifted storytellers and ‘brilliant verbal artists,’ with profound knowledge and a rich source of experience. They may not be ‘average’ Japanese interpreters, and yet, their exceptional and unique narratives collectively present a valuable dimension in the whole picture of the society in post-war Japan, and their stories offer an insightful glimpse into the professional community of interpreters.

The other major problems concern reliability and validity, which Plummer describes as ‘two central issues of all research methods which have a curious relationship to each other’ (2001, p.154). Reliability, according to Plummer, is concerned with technique and consistency to ensure that ‘if the study was conducted by someone else, similar findings would be obtained’ (p.154). Validity is primarily concerned with whether ‘the technique is actually studying what it is supposed to’ (p.154).

Plummer (2001) notes that in ‘life history research these two issues have been rarely discussed,’ admitting ‘the problem of reliability is very hard to tap,’ and states that since ‘the virtue of life stories lies in the relatively free flowing babble of talk, to attempt standardization of questionnaires is to invite invalidity,’ although ‘without such standardization and cross-checking, attacks become very easy for the conventional methodologist to make’ (p.155). As Blumer comments, for example, many critics charge that the authors of personal accounts can ‘choose what they want to say, hold back what they do not want to say, slant what they wish, say only what they happen to recall at the moment, in short to engage in both deliberate and unwilling deception’ (1979, xxxiv, as cited in Plummer, 2001, p.155).

Plummer (2001) maintains, however, that the problem is being tackled from the wrong end, that ‘validity should come first, reliability second’ (p.155). If the subjective story is what the researcher is looking for, the life-story approach becomes the most valid method, because in Plummer’s view, it simply will not do ‘to classify, catalogue and standardize everything in advance, for this would be a distorted and hence invalid

story' (p.155).

Concerning the validity of personal narratives as 'true' evidence, The Personal Narratives Group (1989) has the following to offer:

When talking about their lives, people lie sometimes, forget a lot, exaggerate, become confused, and get things wrong. Yet they *are* revealing truths. These truths don't reveal the past 'as it actually was,' aspiring to a standard of objectivity. They give us instead the truths of our experiences [...]. Unlike the Truth of the scientific ideal, the truths of personal narratives are neither open to proof nor self-evident. We come to understand them only through interpretation, paying careful attention to the contexts that shape their creation and to the world views that inform them. (p.261, as cited in Riessman, 1993, p.22)

In social science research, according to Plummer (2001), three domains of bias are traditionally recognized; those arising from the subject being interviewed, from the researcher, and those arising from the subject-researcher interaction.

In the first domain, the *subject* may 'lie, cheat, present a false front or try to impress the interviewer' (Plummer, 2001, p.155), in particular, there is the possibility that s/he might attempt to create a 'consistent and coherent story for the interviewer's benefit' (p.155).

The second domain is concerned with the *interviewer*, who may hold prejudices and assumptions in structuring the questions. Plummer (2001) continues that the researcher may also bring biases 'by virtue of his or her age, class, gender and general background—not to mention pre-existing theoretical orientation' (p.156). Webb et al. claim that an interviewer may measure differently at different times—their skill may improve and they may be better able to establish rapport, hence there is always the risk

that the interviewer will be a variable filter (1966, p.22, as cited in Plummer, 2001, p.156).

The final domain is where bias may have some interplay in the very interactional encounter itself, such as the setting may be too formal to encourage intimacy or too informal to encourage an adequate response. In Plummer's view, all the interactional strategies discussed by writers such as Goffman (e.g. 1959) may well come into play, and sometimes the life-story interview may be seen as an elaborate dramaturgical presentation (2001, p.156).

Plummer (2001) concludes, after detailed charting of all possible biases, that to purge research of all these 'sources of bias' is to purge research of human life, treating researcher and informant as if they were mechanical robots:

It presumes a 'real' truth may be obtained once all these biases have been removed. Yet to do this, the ideal situation would involve a researcher without a face to give off feelings, a subject with clear and total knowledge unshaped by the situation, a neutral setting, and so forth. Any 'truth' found in such a disembodied, neutralized context would be a very odd one indeed. It is precisely through these 'sources of bias' that a 'truth' comes to be assembled. The task of the researcher, therefore, is not to nullify these variables, but to be aware of, describe, publicly and suggest how these have assembled a specific 'truth.' (pp.156-157)

Plummer (2001), however, does not argue for an 'anything goes' perspective (p.157), and offers some suggestions for validity checks, which include autocritiquing by the subjects or comparing a story with official records, although not always reliable (p.158).

In sum, Plummer (2001) emphasizes the need to know what the goals of the

research are, because the goal of the life history analysis will dramatically affect issues of validity. For example, the aim of the oral historian may be to gain information about the past, and the validity checks required are enormous. In contrast, the goal of sociological life history is to find insights into the workings of a culture, trying to explore how a person sees his/her life history at the moment of the interview. While in a psychological life story, the aim is to gain information about a person's development, in sociological life history, the linguistic constructs that people make about their lives at a given point in time are of interest in themselves, because they can throw light on wider issues of ideology, context and language (pp.158-159).

It is worth stating here that the present study does not aim at gaining factual information about Japanese diplomacy in the past, nor does it seek to gain knowledge about each subject's psychological development. It is closer to sociological life history in that the aim of the study is to find insights into the role of interpreters within the socio-cultural context of Japanese foreign relations. For this purpose, not aiming at generalizations but with a specific focus on pioneer interpreters in Japan, life-story interviews are considered to be a valid method for the present study.

As for the three domains of bias articulated by Plummer (2001), for the first one concerning the subjects, it may suffice here to say that whatever was related by the interviewees in this study was true for them at that moment. It captured that person's subjective reality, his/her definition of the situation, and it merits consideration as a legitimate part of sociological investigation, since 'the personal document is the best tool for getting at it' (Plummer, 2001, pp.158-159). The remaining two domains of bias, those of the interviewer and her interaction with her subjects, could be more problematic and call for some deliberation.

#### On the interviewer

The Personal Narratives Group cautions that 'sometimes the truths we see in

personal narratives jar us from our complacent security as interpreters “outside” the story and make us aware that our own place in the world plays a part in our interpretation and shapes the meanings we derive from them’ (1989, p.261, as cited in Riessman, 1993, p.22). It is crucial to note here, then, that the interviewer in the present project is not strictly ‘outside’ the story of the subjects. Despite Portelli’s claim that the life-story interviewer is ‘not usually a member of the speaker’s immediate circle’ (1997, p.24), the interviewer in this study used to be a member of the same professional community—a professional conference interpreter herself.

The researcher-interviewer of the present study is a Japanese female, born in Tokyo after WWII. She received simultaneous interpreter training and started to work as a conference interpreter in her second year in the Faculty of Foreign Studies at Sophia University. While still in college, she was interpreting not only at international conferences but on nationwide TV networks, including the Apollo moon landing in 1969, for which four of the subjects in the study worked as simultaneous interpreters. Around this time, a TV producer introduced the author to Kunihiro Masao, already a well established interpreter and an advisor to Foreign Minister Miki. It was then that Kunihiro predicted that the novice interpreter would eventually want to ‘sing her own song’ which, he later admitted in the interview, was really a reflection of his own feelings about himself at the time. Among the five subjects, Sohma Yukika is the only person the interviewer had never talked with in person, although she had seen her at a conference once, where Sohma’s daughter and the interviewer were present as interpreters. The researcher had read most, if not all, of the interviewees’ publications and newspaper/magazine articles. The five interviewees, for their part, most likely had been aware of her work, through books and articles.

The general background or *habitus* of the interviewer being such, while much younger than the interviewees and ‘outside’ the lives of each subject, our paths have crossed at some points in our lives, as friends, as acquaintances and most of all, as

members of the same professional community. When it comes to the experiences of interpreting, both the subjects and the interviewer share the same ground, their problems becoming the interviewer's problems, their struggles reflecting her own struggles. To answer Ken Plummer's fundamental question: why am I doing this study (2001, p.215), the researcher would have to admit that she shifted her career to university teaching after 20 years of interpreting practice, starting to sing her own song, as Kunihiro so rightly predicted, and therefore the search for the identity of interpreters and their role, which is the ultimate aim of the present project, is not only for the sake of interpreters in general, but the researcher's personal quest as well.

The resulting ambience would obviously affect the interviewees and the interviews, in both positive and negative ways.

On the positive side, the pioneer interpreters willingly accepted and cooperated with the research project because the interviewer is someone they knew well, at least by reputation. It would not have been easy for a complete outsider to obtain as much cooperation for the interviews. Also, the interviewer's full knowledge of the profession, having experienced it herself, with its problems and issues, enabled her to ask substantial questions, instead of spending time on preliminary explanations about the interpreting profession itself, making it less difficult to elicit candid and detailed answers from the subjects in a relatively short time. The insider knowledge also helped the interviewer understand and appreciate the responses given by the subjects with their hidden implications, although admittedly the problem of 'interpreting' the true meaning remains.

Another related benefit of having a former interpreter acting as interviewer was that it contributed to creating a rapport between the interviewer and the subjects, an essential factor for life-story interviews.

At the same time, however, the same elements can be seen as potentially negative factors. It is unavoidable that the interviewer might have possessed prior assumptions

and prejudices about the senior interpreters, perhaps taking for granted things which she should have pursued more deeply in her questions. In addition, it is not impossible to imagine that the interviewees might have answered in such a way as to help the younger interviewer, or withheld items which they did not feel inclined to let the interviewer, an insider, know about. Above all, there was the risk of interviews becoming too informal or too friendly, with the exception of that with Sohma, whom the interviewer had not known as well as the other four interpreters.

Notwithstanding, or perhaps because of, the close involvement of the interviewer in the subjects' world, the interviewer refrained from excessive intrusion in the interviews, and chose to 'let the interview run' (Evans, 1973, pp.62-63, as cited in Thompson, 2000, p.227), only occasionally steering them back to questions, never attempting to dominate the session, with 'plenty of time and plenty of tape and few questions' (p.227). Or as Bell did in her research interviews (1988), 'listen with a minimum of interruptions,' while at the same time trying to produce meaning through the interaction of two speakers (as cited in Riessman, 1993, p.34).

This turned out to be a challenge. On the one hand, an effort was made to co-construct an interview through interaction. On the other hand, however, the interviewer made a conscious effort not to interact excessively, trying to avoid having the research interview turn into a friendly chat between two insiders in the same profession. In a sense, the interviewer positioned herself as an ethnographer and an interpreting observer (Clifford, 1986, p.17, as cited in Riessman, 1993, p.66), although the mere presence of an interviewer who used to be an interpreter herself might have affected the responses in some intangible ways.

In Plummer's classification of a continuum of involvement, from the very passive 'Stranger Role,' through the 'Acquaintance Role' and to the most active 'Friendship Role' (2001, p.209), it was inevitable that the interviewer assumed the 'Friendship Role' from the beginning, which may not be an entirely negative element in this kind

of project, since as Plummer (2001) points out, ‘in life document research [...], more subjective view is stressed— and to gain this, intensive involvement between researcher and subject is a must’ (p.209). Plummer argues that a distanced, unattached, objective observer turning on a tape recorder for a subject to ‘tell their story,’ although providing a subjective tale, will lack ‘the depth and detail that could be gleaned if the researcher was immersed in the subject’s world for a long time and tried to build up an in-depth description from the inside’ (2001, p. 209). And this, hopefully, was what happened with an insider interviewing the pioneer interpreters.

#### On writing

In the actual writing of the life stories, particularly in dealing with the problem of editing and interpretation, Plummer’s model of ‘continuum of constructions’ (2001, p.179-180) has been helpful. Plummer (2001) introduces social acts of writing, in which writing is viewed as formative, shaping the knowledge including life narrative, as opposed to writing as a reflection of research; hence writing not only captures reality but helps construct it (p.171).

Based on this premise, Plummer presents three distinct approaches to interpretation and presentation of the oral document: leaving the voices unedited for the reader to ponder, framing the documents by the interpretation, or placing the interpretation ‘in a commentary at the end of the documents’ (pp.177-178). Placed on a ‘continuum of construction,’ the approaches range from researchers imposing their analytic devices on the subject, to the subject’s own world being presented ‘uncontaminated.’ In the middle of the continuum lies what Plummer terms ‘systematic thematic analysis,’ where ‘the subjects are allowed to speak for themselves but where their voices get organized around themes’ (2001, pp.179-180).

The present study basically adopts this ‘systematic thematic analysis’ approach with as little intervention as possible to keep the voices of the pioneers intact, while at



the same time intervening to organize their narratives around specific themes to allow for interpretation on the part of the interviewer/writer.

### 1.4.3 Life-story interviews

The life-story interviews in this study focus on the following three points:

- 1) What kind of people became diplomatic interpreters?

What kind of background did they have?

How did they acquire the linguistic, communicative and cultural competence needed for interpreting between Japanese and English?

- 2) What specific efforts were exerted in trying to bridge the gap between two different languages and cultures?

- 3) How did the interpreters perceive their roles?

Did they consider themselves as ‘transparent’ and ‘invisible conduits’?

Or did they position themselves as ‘cultural mediators’?

Specific questions were formulated in an effort to solicit answers to these questions, although the intention was to prepare a list of possible questions, close to interview guidelines. While they were not as comprehensive and elaborate as those suggested by Thompson (2000, pp309-323), they were prepared to guide the interviews to get the maximum outcome, without losing focus in the free-flowing interviews. Therefore, questions were worded and changed flexibly, to allow what Bourdieu calls ‘a reflex reflexivity’ (1996, as cited in Thompson, 2000, p.227).

The following are the guidelines for questions, originally in Japanese and translated into English here:

- 1) Acquiring interpreter competence

- (1) English proficiency and cultural literacy
- (2) When and why did you want to become an interpreter?
- (3) How old were you when you became an interpreter?
- (4) What kind of interpreter training did you receive?
- 2) Interpreting at diplomatic meetings and negotiations
  - (1) The first time you interpreted
 

Age, place, topic of the meeting, simultaneous or consecutive?
  - (2) The first diplomatic meeting you worked as an interpreter
 

Age, place, topic of the meeting, simultaneous or consecutive?
  - (3) The most difficult meeting or negotiation
  - (4) The most successful interpreting at a diplomatic meeting
  - (5) The most impressive meeting
  - (6) How did you try to infer and understand the speaker's intention and implication, and how did you actually translate it?
  - (7) How did you perceive the interpreter's positioning?
 

Transparent or cultural mediator?

Priority on the speaker or on the listeners?

The sample questions were sent to each subject in advance so that they would be able to prepare if they wished. As it turned out, all preferred to speak without notes.

The interviews were conducted individually on separate occasions. Nishiyama, Muramatsu and Kunihiro suggested that they should be interviewed at the International House of Japan.<sup>3</sup> Komatsu chose to come to the university where the interviewer teaches, and Sohma invited the interviewer to the Ozaki Yukio Memorial Foundation<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> A non-profit organization in Roppongi, Tokyo, dedicated to promoting international exchange and cooperation, established in 1952 by Matsumoto Shigeharu.

<sup>4</sup> Located in the Kensei Kaian, near the Diet. Sohma serves as its governor.

Each interview lasted approximately four to five hours. All of them were tape-recorded, transcribed, with some minor deletions at the request of the interviewees, and later translated into English to be used as primary material in this research.

In the process, the translation of narratives became a problem in itself. The task of translating life stories entails wide and extremely complicated issues of language and culture, affecting the interpretation of the narratives. As Plummer (2001) aptly notes, 'all life stories are embedded in particular cultures, and the act of translation is an attempt to "transplant" the language from one culture so it can make sense in another without losing its original meanings' (p.151). The problem was not only a matter of translating Japanese into English, although that itself was 'a task fraught with difficulties of interpretation' (p.151). It was also a matter of being sensitive to the language of the educated elderly professionals, of knowing the nuances of Japanese society before, during, and after World War II, and trying not to lose the feel of the life and the talk of the five pioneers.

While the five interpreters have publications of their own, including books, memoirs, anecdotes, essays, teaching materials and papers, the primary source used in the study remains 'oral evidence' from the life-story interviews. At the same time, however, validity checks were carried out comparing the stories with their own writing, as well as against documents written by other people about the pioneer interpreters. Official records were consulted when necessary, although their problem in this particular study was not the unreliability of official records as some researchers contend (see Plummer, 2001, p.158), but was mainly their absence in relation to diplomatic or conference interpreting.

In the interviews, all five interviewees seemed quite at ease in telling their stories, revealing remarkable memory and eloquence. Since the overall purpose of the interview was to elicit their life stories, the interviewer followed what Bourdieu (1993)

proposed in his life-story research, namely, a relationship of 'active and methodological listening' (as cited in Thompson, 2000, pp.226-227), and although retaining a semi-structured format, making sure the key questions were covered, the interviews became close to free-flowing, if not a non-interfering laissez-faire of the non-directive interview. Thompson explains that a free-flowing interview 'can be effective when the main purpose of the interview is less to seek information than to record a "narrative interview", a "subjective" record of how one man or woman looks back on their life as a whole, or part of it' (2000, p.227). Also, as Portelli (1997) warns of the 'fiction of non-interference' (pp.11-12), the actual interviews certainly were not simple 'questions and answers.' It was more of what Portelli describes 'a thick dialogue, questions arise dialectically from the answers' (p.11).

This somewhat complicated and ambivalent method of interviewing, in the end, helped to yield a productive outcome, in light of the specific purpose and the theme of the life-story interviews conducted, since despite occasional deviations from the prepared questions, with interviewees at times speaking at length on seemingly irrelevant topics and giving only brief answers to very important questions in the interviewer's mind, each of the interviews proved to be very much 'a learning experience' (Portelli, 1997, p.10).

The narratives of interpreters are used extensively in the study, although naturally not all were cited. The recorded interviews, with some minor deletions at the request of the interviewees, were transferred onto CD and submitted with the thesis for record. The transcripts in Japanese were translated into English and checked by the subjects, some requesting alterations. The final English version, in its entire form, authorized by the subjects, is compiled in a separate volume as an Appendix.

The subjects have been fully informed of the purpose of the research and gave their consent, in writing, to use the recorded interviews and the transcripts for the purpose of research, revealing their own names, instead of staying anonymous. They checked the

transcripts, both in Japanese and English, and agreed to their use in the present study, with a minimum of deletion. As Muramatsu commented at the end of the interview session, they were happy to ‘become part of history.’

#### 1.4.4 Profiles of five pioneer interpreters in Japan

Five diplomatic interpreters were interviewed for this study, their life stories tape-recorded, transcribed and analyzed. They are Nishiyama Sen, Sohma Yukika, Muramatsu Masumi, Kunihiro Masao and Komatsu Tatsuya<sup>5</sup>, all prominent figures as pioneer interpreters—the first generation of simultaneous interpreters in Japan.

**Nishiyama Sen** was born in 1911 in Utah, USA, to Japanese parents. He received schooling as a Japanese-American and earned a master’s degree in electrical engineering. He came back to Japan shortly before the war and started to work at Electrotechnical Laboratory, the Ministry of Communications, which eventually led him to work at the General Headquarters of the Allied Occupation Forces. He was ultimately employed at the U.S. Embassy, where he served as an official interpreter for U.S. ambassadors to Japan, among them Edwin O. Reischauer. When the 1969 Apollo moon landing was broadcast, he performed simultaneous interpretation on the NHK nationwide TV network, which made him a national figure. People still call him “the Apollo simultaneous interpreter.”

**Sohma Yukika** was born in January 1912, in Tokyo. Her father, Ozaki Gakudo Yukio, is regarded as the “father of constitutional government” in Japan. Her mother Theodora being half British, she was raised to be bilingual. This unique upbringing, with her familiarity with politics because of her father’s profession, led her to interpreting for various political leaders, including Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke.

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<sup>5</sup> In this paper, Japanese names are presented in the Japanese order, with family name first, followed by given name, as proposed by *Kokugo Shingikai* (the National Language Council of Japan) in 2000.

She has four children, and her eldest daughter Fujiko became a conference and diplomatic interpreter. Sohma is presently better known as president of the *Nan-min wo Tasukeru Kai* (AAR=Association for Aid and Relief, Japan), which she established in 1979 to help refugees in and outside of Japan.

**Muramatsu Masumi** was born in July 1930, in Tokyo. He became a typist at the General Headquarters of the Occupation Forces, before working for the U.S. Department of State as an escort interpreter for Japan's productivity missions. After working in the U.S. for over a decade, he came back to Japan and founded Simul International with his colleagues from the State Department. He was the chief interpreter for almost all the summit meetings, along with other conferences and diplomatic negotiations, and is widely known as "Mr. Simultaneous Interpreter." He established his own NPO, MM Cross-Cultural Forum, in 2001 and continued to be active lecturing on interpretation and humour, until he had a stroke in 2004.

**Kunihiro Masao**, dubbed the "God of Simultaneous Interpreting," was born in Tokyo, August 1930. He studied cultural anthropology at the University of Hawaii, taught at universities in Japan, and is distinguished visiting professor at the University of Edinburgh. He was Prime Minister Miki's official aide and advisor, and in 1989, was elected a member of the House of Councillors in the Diet. He continues to be a strong advocate of peace and Japan's Peace Constitution. He has published extensively, more than one hundred books on topics ranging from foreign relations to English language education, and has translated numerous books, from Edward Hall's *The Silent Language* to David Crystal's *English as a Global Language*.

**Komatsu Tatsuya** was born in 1934, in Nagoya. His initial attempt at interpreting was at annual Hiroshima Conferences against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs, when he was studying English at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. After working for the U.S. Department of State as an interpreter for productivity study teams, he came back to Japan to help establish Simul International. Later, he turned to teaching at Meikai

University. Drawing on his many years of experience as a conference and diplomatic interpreter, he teaches and writes actively on interpreting. In 2005, he established CAIS (Center for the Advancement of Interpreting Skills), an NPO for training and accrediting business interpreters, and became its founding director.

## 1.5 Conclusion

Surprisingly, or perhaps not so surprisingly, it seems as if interpreters are almost universally considered to be invisible. In Japan, as in many other countries, interpreters are deemed invisible, commonly depicted as *kurogo/kuroko*, an invisible figure dressed in black (*kuro*) attire (*go*) in *kabuki* theater.

The aim of the present study is to highlight this invisible presence, making them visible by collecting the living memories of diplomatic interpreters through life-story interviews. Specifically, five pioneer simultaneous interpreters were interviewed, to listen to the voices of the invisible. The primary questions the study addresses are to find out what kind of people became interpreters in Japan after WWII, why and how they became interpreters; to examine how they perceived their roles as interpreters; how they actually positioned themselves in diplomatic interpreting; and finally, to illuminate the role of interpreters with a specific focus on diplomatic interpreting in the Japanese context, in the hope of gaining some insight into the intricate issue of the role of interpreters.

The five pioneer interpreters in the present study were deeply involved in the vital moments of Japanese diplomatic history immediately after WWII and during the time of Japan's reconstruction. In order to uncover the contribution they made in post-World War II Japan, illuminating the place of interpreters in Japan's foreign relations, the present study adopts the oral history method, using as raw material 'the life experience of people' so that 'a new dimension is given to history' (Thompson,

2000, p.6).

Interviews were conducted to elicit life stories as ‘oral evidence’ in the form of narratives, specifically as (1) single life-story narratives, (2) collection of stories, and also for (3) reconstructive cross-analysis. The life-story interviews were semi-structured, allowing interviews to become non-directive and free-flowing, with active and methodological listening and minimum intrusion on the part of the interviewer, despite her involvement as an insider in the profession.

The central theme of the study, namely the issue of the role of interpreters, is an emerging area of interest within interpreting studies, which will be discussed more fully in the literature review in the next chapter.



## Chapter 2 Issues in Interpretation Studies

### 2.1 Translation and interpretation

The term 'translation' in English is a generic term to cover all forms of translation. Jeremy Munday (2001) explains that there are several meanings in the term, namely 'the general subject field, the product (the text that has been translated) or the process (the act of producing the translation, otherwise known as translating)' (pp.4-5). A person who translates is a 'translator,' again a generic term that covers both a translator who translates written text and an interpreter who conveys the meaning of an oral message in a different language, although Franz Pöchhacker (2004) explains that in many Indo-European languages, 'the concept of interpreting is expressed by words whose etymology is largely autonomous from that of (written) translation' (p.10). The English word 'interpreter' is derived from Latin *interpres*, meaning 'person explaining what is obscure' (Pöchhacker, 2004, p.10).

In Japanese, different words separate written translation (*hon-yaku*) and spoken translation (*tsû-yaku*), and while the same word *tsû-yaku* is used, or a somewhat derogatory *tsû-ben* in older times, to mean an interpreter, a translator is called *hon-yaku-ka*, implying similar status to *sakka*, a writer.

Seleskovitch (1968/1978) states that the difference between translation and interpreting is crucial because in translation, the thought which is rendered in the other language is contained in a permanent setting, the written text, and therefore 'is static, immutable in its form and fixed in time. And the translation, equally circumscribed within a written text, is intended, as was the original, for a public the translator does not know' (p.2). Interpreting, on the other hand, in Seleskovitch's words, is entirely different because the conference interpreter is there with both speaker and listener, dealing with fleeting words 'aimed at a listener whom he addresses directly and in

whom he seeks to elicit a reaction, and he does this at a speed which is about 30 times greater than that of the translator' (1978, p.2).

The distinction, as Seleskovitch argues, is important. Nevertheless, translation and interpretation share a significant element as well in that both translators and interpreters work on *parole*, rather than *langue*, in Saussure's terminology. Interpreters and translators, based on their knowledge of *langue*, understand and interpret the meaning of a message of the text, whether oral or written, and express the message in a different language, *parole*.

The term interpreting/interpretation is categorized in two different ways. One is to make a distinction based on the skills, either consecutive mode, requiring an interpreter to take notes and remember the content of a message for some minutes, or simultaneous mode, which is usually used at international conferences and news broadcasts, with interpreters working in booths and with headphones. Simultaneous interpreters are called conference interpreters, since conference venues are where they work mostly. In recent years, however, with people moving easily across borders, the importance of community interpreters has been highlighted. They interpret dialogues at such places as courts (court interpreters), immigration offices and police stations (legal interpreters), as well as hospitals and clinics (medical interpreters). At the same time, the emergence of sign language interpreting has called for a revision of the definition of interpreting, expanding it from 'oral' translation to include a 'visual' component.

In the present study, a distinction is made between a translator and an interpreter, based on the text they work on, a written text or an oral one, although admittedly the difference between the two is sometimes blurred as in the case of broadcast interpreting, where interpreters in some cases first translate the news before doing the actual interpretation on TV.

## 2.2 Translation studies

While the practice of translation is ‘as old as the tower of Babel’ (Gentzler 2001, p.1), translation theory as we know it today did not exist in classical antiquity (Venuti, 2004). Nonetheless, in ancient Rome, two opposing views of translation already existed: the ‘word-for-word’ faithful translation advocated by grammarians and the ‘sense-for-sense’ free, paraphrastic translation for rhetoric proposed by orators such as Cicero. It is interesting to note that in those days, grammarians were ‘interpreters,’ as when Cicero writes ‘I did not translate them as an interpreter [nec coverti ut interpre]’ (Cicero, 1949, as cited in Venuti, 2004, p.13).

Jacobson (1959/2004) labels three kinds of translation: (1) Intralingual translation or *rewording*, an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language; (2) Interlingual translation or *translation proper*, an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language; and (3) Intersemiotic translation or *transmutation*, an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems (p.113). It is the second kind of translation that the present study discusses: interlingual translation.

In 1972, James S. Holmes gave a paper, generally accepted as ‘the founding statement for the field’ (Gentzler, 2001, p.93), in which an overall framework for the field was set, delineating translation studies between ‘pure’ (theoretical and descriptive) and ‘applied’ such as translator training and translation criticism.

It was in 1983 that the study of translation was entered as a separate field in the *Modern Language Association International Bibliography*. Munday (2001) describes translation studies as the new academic discipline related to the study of the theory and phenomena of translation, claiming that ‘by its nature it is multilingual and also interdisciplinary, encompassing languages, linguistics, communication studies, philosophy and a range of types of cultural studies’ (p.1).

By the time the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* was published in 1998, topics such as ‘equivalence, shifts of translation, and translatability’ had become ‘traditional issues’ (Baker, 1998/2001, xiii), with a wide range of issues and theories emerging particularly in the last decade or two<sup>6</sup>. The array of literature in the field is too vast to cover in this paper, which is fundamentally a study of interpretation. For this reason, a limited number of topics in translation studies will be referred to when necessary.

### 2.3 Interpretation studies

Despite the long history of oral interpretation from ancient times to modern days (see Chapter 1), the study of interpretation is ‘a relatively new area of research that is all too often subsumed under the heading of translation’ (Phelan, 2001, p.xiii) because oftentimes there is no written record of the spoken word and the interpreter is not specifically named or mentioned in historical documents (p.1). Munday (2001) proposes that ‘in view of the very different requirements and activities associated with interpreting, it would probably be best to consider interpreting as a parallel field’ (p13).

Research efforts aimed at analyzing and explaining the phenomenon of interpreting date back to the 1950s in Europe (Pöchhacker, 1998, p.169), and Pöchhacker (2004) traces its emergence to *The Interpreter’s Handbook* in 1952 by Jean Herbert as the ‘earliest and probably best-known profession-building monograph on (conference) interpreting’ (p.32).

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<sup>6</sup> Particularly significant are studies with post-colonial perspectives in translation, such as the ones edited by Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi(1999) , Maria Tymoczko and Edwin Gentzler(2002), Sandra Berman and Michael Wood(2005), among others.

### 2.3.1 Study of the history of interpreting

Alfred Hermann's 'Interpreting in Antiquity' (1956) is introduced in Pöchhacker and Shlesinger (2002) as the pioneering publication on the topic of the early history of interpreting (pp.15-22), which turns out to be the only entry in the book on the history of interpreting. In Delisle and Woodsworth (1995), the history of interpreting occupies only one chapter and the last one with a section dedicated to diplomatic interpreters (see Chapter 1). Ruth A. Roland, a political scientist, in 1922 published an overview of interpreting history in diplomacy, because in her words, 'Translators and interpreters have been largely ignored by historians' (1999, p.8).

The noted Russian diplomatic interpreter Igor Korchilov (1997) published his memoir, in which he particularly described his experiences working for Mikhail Gorbachev, former president of the Soviet Union. There are other books that have been written about interpreting, most of them focusing on specific groups of interpreters at certain points in history, such as Frances Karttunen's (1994) biographical work on interpreters in the New World, and Francesca Gaiba (1998) on simultaneous interpretation at the Nuremberg Trial.

*Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (2001) devoted all of Part II to an overview of national histories of translation and interpreting in about thirty linguistic and cultural communities. Mona Baker, the editor, explains the rationale for including a historical section as that of stimulating interest in 'a seriously neglected area of translation studies' (p.xiv). Baker further notes that 'a reading of these histories can lead to interesting insights on such issues as the overall profile of translators and interpreters during different historical periods, the role of the translator and/or interpreter as it has been conceived by different communities' (p.xiv). In Baker's view, some potentially productive areas of research to emerge from historical studies of interpretation and translation are the profiles of translators and interpreters, their roles and status as well as their working contexts (p.xiv).

### 2.3.2 History of interpretation studies

Daniel Gile (1994) divides the history of interpretation in the West into four periods: (1) The fifties, (2) The experimental psychology period, (3) From the early seventies to the mid-eighties, and (4) The 'Renaissance' (pp.149-152).

The emergence of a new type of interpreting in simultaneous mode after World War II prompted pioneering work in the 1950s, such as an MA thesis by Eva Paneth<sup>7</sup>, a professional interpreter at conferences and with the British Foreign Office (Pöchhacker & Shlesinger 2002, p.30).

In the 1960s and early 1970s, experimental studies on simultaneous interpretation were carried out by psychologists and psycholinguists, such as a paper by Pierre Oléron and Hubert Nanpon<sup>8</sup>, Ph.D. theses by Henri C. Barik<sup>9</sup> and David Gerver<sup>10</sup>, as well as a paper by Frieda Goldman-Eisler.<sup>11</sup> Towards the end of the 1960s more professional interpreters were attracted to interpreting research, such as Ingrid Pinter Kurz, psychologist-conference interpreter who completed a Ph.D. thesis on interpretation at the University of Vienna in 1969.

By the 1970s, there were different strands in interpreting studies, namely '*traductologie*' (*science de l'interprétation et de la traduction*) by the so-called Paris School initiated by Danica Seleskovitch and the 'Leipzig School' of translation research, drawing on linguistics and communication theory, such as Kade. There was

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<sup>7</sup> "An Investigation into Conference Interpreting," submitted to the University of London in 1957.

<sup>8</sup> "Research into Simultaneous Translation" in 1965.

<sup>9</sup> On qualitative-linguistic as well as temporal and quantitative analysis of simultaneous interpretation, submitted in 1969 to University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<sup>10</sup> "Simultaneous Interpretation and Human Information Processing," submitted to Oxford University in 1971.

<sup>11</sup> "Segmentation of Input in Simultaneous Translation," in 1972 by Frieda Goldman-Eisler, the first UK scholar to hold the title of Professor of Psycholinguistics at University College, London.

also the Soviet School, drawing on psycholinguistics, led by Ghelley V. Chernov, an academic and Chief Interpreter of the Russian Section at the United Nations Interpretation Service from 1976 to 1982.

Gile considers 1986 a turning point, when ‘the prevailing dogma’ of ‘*théorie du sens*’ by the ESIT group was publicly challenged at a conference<sup>12</sup> (Gile, 1994, p.151). Gile explains why this conference marked the start of a new period, stating that there were more (1) attempts to use findings and ideas from studies on written translation and from the cognitive sciences, (2) calls for more empirical studies, (3) communication between interpretation researchers, (4) open-minded attitude on the part of ‘practiseachers’ (p.151).

### **2.3.3 *Théorie du sens* and conference interpreting**

The most influential pioneer in interpreting studies is Danica Seleskovitch, one of the founders of AIIC<sup>13</sup> (Association Internationale des Interprètes de Conférence) and its Executive Secretary for many years, who laid an academic foundation for the field with the École Supérieure d’Interprétation et de Traduction (ESIT) at the Sorbonne, which launched its doctoral program in 1974. As one of the first simultaneous interpreters at the Nuremberg Trial, Seleskovitch is widely cited for her concept of ‘deverbalization’ and the ‘*théorie du sens*’ declaring that oral interpretation is never carried out on a word-for-word basis (Pöchhacker & Shlesinger, 2002, p.120).

Seleskovitch (1968/1978) divides the interpreting process into three stages:

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<sup>12</sup> Conference on the theoretical and practical aspects of teaching interpretation, organized by the Scuola Superiore per Interpreti e Traduttori of the Università degli Studi di Trieste.

<sup>13</sup> Association Internationale des Interprètes de Conférence (AIIC) is a Geneva-based professional organization founded in 1953 with a current membership of over 2,700 conference interpreters worldwide.

- 1) Auditory perception of a linguistic utterance which carries meaning.
- 2) Apprehension of the language and comprehension of the message through a process of analysis and exegesis.
- 3) Immediate and deliberate discarding of the wording and retention of the mental representation of the message (concepts, ideas, etc.).
- 4) Production of a new utterance in the target language which must meet a dual requirement: it must express the original message in its entirety, and it must be geared to the recipient. (Seleskovitch, 1978, p.9)

Although a major driving force in the dominant Paris School, her 'théorie du sens' in later years came to be challenged by more empirically-oriented younger generation of researchers, such as Gile, who argued that 'cognitive scientists are working with more precision, logic and depth than practisearchers' (1994, p.156).

Empirical research, then, became prolific in interpretation studies in pursuing years, with a focus on analyzing interpreting processes drawing on other disciplines. Barbara Moser-Mercer applied psycholinguistics and cognitive psychology to her 'process models' of simultaneous interpretation, while at the same time assumed a leadership role with the launch in 1996 of *Interpreting*, the first international refereed journal devoted to the study of interpreting (Pöchhacker & Shlesinger 2002, p.148). Another prominent figure in the field is Daniel Gile, a conference and media interpreter, whose major theoretical contribution, among his numerous writings on research and methodology, is his conceptual model of cognitive processing efforts in interpreting, named 'Effort Models' (1985).

It can be well summarized that research endeavours in interpreting studies up to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century paid primary attention to the process of simultaneous interpreting at international conferences.



### 2.3.4 Dialogue interpreting in community settings

With globalization and the borderless society becoming a reality in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, community interpreting has come to assume particular significance in many multilingual societies. Interpreting in immigration offices, police stations, courts, and hospitals became crucial for people who do not speak the language of the host country. Phelan (2001) attributes this shift in importance from conference interpreting to community interpreting to two major elements: (1) the fact that English became the international language of business and science, resulting in more people using English in meetings, diminishing the need for interpreters; and (2) greater movement of people, including 'tourists, people living and working in foreign countries, illegal immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers' ( xiii-xiv).

The major differences between conference interpreting and community interpreting are twofold: first, the mode of speaker discourse, and second, the role of the interpreter.

The mode of speaker discourse distinctively differs between conference and community interpreting. While at conferences, it is mostly monologic speeches that have to be translated, in community interpreting, it is face-to-face dialogues that need to be interpreted (see 7.5). Hence, the focus of research gradually shifted from looking at interpreting as information processing at conferences in simultaneous mode to studying interpreting as communicative events between two people engaging in dialogues. Critical-Link, an international research body dedicated to the study of community interpreting, has contributed much in this field, and researchers such as Cecilia Wadensjö (1998) and Ian Mason (2001, 2005) have used interdisciplinary frameworks, such as Brown and Levinson's (1978/1987) politeness theory or Goffman's participation theory (1981).

Conference interpreting began in 1919 at the peace talks after the First World War,

because U.S. President Woodrow Wilson and UK Prime Minister Lloyd George did not speak French, then the international language of diplomacy, and consequently interpreting was provided, rendered mostly in consecutive mode with an interpreter visibly present. This continued until the development of simultaneous interpreting after the Second World War.

Phelan (2001) notices an initial change in the interpreter's role from 'visible, high profile position as consecutive interpreter to being a voice from a booth at the back of a venue' (p.2), when simultaneous interpreting was first provided at the Nuremberg Trial, from November 1945 to October 1946, with interpreters doing their work hidden in a booth, using earphones and microphones. Now in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with community interpreting fast becoming a vital area in communication within multilingual societies, interpreters are once again very much visible, and consequently, their role necessarily has to be revisited.

### **2.3.5 Revisiting the interpreter's role**

In interpretation studies, discussion has traditionally centered on such notions as 'errors,' 'omissions,' 'accuracy,' 'faithfulness,' 'fidelity,' and 'sense consistency with the original message' (Baker, 2001), and 'the problematic nature of the interpreter's role [...] was virtually unexplored, until R.Bruce W. Anderson's 1976 paper [...] laid the foundation for the study of interpreting as a social activity in cross-cultural interaction (Pöchhacker & Shlesinger, 2002, p.208).

According to Pöchhacker (2004), the role of interpreter, which bilinguals have assumed in various intermediary functions throughout history, became codified in more specific terms in the professionalization of interpreting in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, making the issue of role 'an integral part of professional code of ethics and practice' (p.147). The notion of 'role,' in his explanation, is a relational concept defined by sociologists as 'a set of more or less normative behavioral expectations associated with

a ‘social position’ (p.147) and as such he deems it ‘pivotal to the analysis of interpreters’ performance’ (p.147). Pöchhacker (2004) elaborates on how the notion of role is related to interpreters’ neutrality and invisibility, and states that “The more narrowly construed professional role generally prescribes accurate, complete, and faithful rendition and proscribes any discourse initiative on the part of the interpreter, who is conceptualized as a “non-person” in a neutral position between the interlocutors’ (p.147). This, he believes, accounts for the widespread assumption that the interpreter functions as a machine, engendering metaphors such as ‘faithful echo’, ‘channel’, ‘conduit’, ‘switching device’, ‘transmission belt’, ‘modem’ or ‘input-output robot’ to describe the nature of the interpreter’s role (p.147).

Pöchhacker (2004) notes that the view of the interpreter as an invisible translating machine has been inspired, not so much by simultaneous conference interpreting as popularly believed, but rather ‘is deeply rooted in the field of court interpreting, where the legal profession has traditionally denied court interpreters any latitude in dealing with meaning (i.e ‘interpreting’) and limited their role to verbatim translation’ (p.147). Consequently, with the emergence of interpreting in community settings, the issue of ‘role’ has become ‘one of the most prominent topics in interpreting studies’ (p.147).

Wadensjö (1998) explains the reason for writing about dialogue interpreters: ‘Interpreters are used to not being seen, and sometimes pride themselves on “disappearing” in the background. I would be happy if this book contributes to making them and their profession more visible’ (p.xi). Wadensjö’s study is significant in that she problematized conventional normative thinking on interpretation, and explored the reality of the interpreter-mediated conversation, which she termed a ‘communicative *pas de trois*.’ Drawing on Bakhtin (1986/2002), Wadensjö juxtaposed ‘talk as text’ based on a monological view of language use and interpretation against a dialogical view of ‘talk as activity,’ concluding that a combination of both approaches is needed in research on face-to-face interpreting (see Chapter 7).

David Katan (1999/2004) reveals that while the idea of a translator as a mediating agent is not new, the emphasis was primarily on linguistic mediation. According to Katan (2004), the term 'cultural mediator' was first introduced by Stephen Bochner in 1981, and the term 'cultural interpreter' has already been accepted in Ontario, Canada, as 'someone from a particular culture who assists a service provider and their client to understand each other'<sup>14</sup> (as cited in Katan, 2004, p.16).

Katan (2004) broadens the concept of 'cultural interpreter' to include translators, because in his view the cultural interpreter's role is 'the same as that of the cultural mediator' (p.16). After briefly addressing the endless debate between literal and communicative interpreting (p.18) and the issue of 'strategic intervention' (Roy, 1993, as cited in Katan 2004, p.19), Katan concludes that dialogue interpreters, talk show interpreters, and cultural interpreters 'consistently intervene proactively, to ensure that communication continues smoothly across the cultural divide' (Katan 2004, p.20).

Claudia V. Angelleli studied the social role of interpreters across settings, posing a fundamental question: why is it that interpreters, powerful individuals who have occupied center stage since the origins of cross-cultural communication, have traditionally been portrayed as mere language conduits, invisible parties in the communicative event, deprived of agency, yet capable of performing complex linguistic and information processing tasks? (2004b, p.1)

Angelleli (2004a) introduces a new wave of studies which challenges the notion of neutrality by studying the participation of interpreters during interactions in which interpreters are found to be co-participants who share responsibility in the talk. However, she points out that the conceptualization of the interpreter as a conduit or a ghost is still prevalent, especially in research on conference and court interpreters (p.14). Angelleli attributes this to the fact that interpreting studies have been concerned

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.kwmc.on.ca/services/cis.html>

primarily with the linguistic and information processing aspects of conference interpreting, the notion of interpreting as a socially situated practice being largely ignored, and by prescribing the invisible role, the profession ‘fails to see the interpreter’s role for what it really is—that of an individual who orchestrates language, culture, and social factors in a communicative event’ (pp.23-24; see Chapter 7).

Hyang-Ok Lim (2004) examined the codes of ethics of four major organizations representing the interpreting profession, namely AIIC<sup>15</sup>, RID<sup>16</sup>, AUSIT<sup>17</sup>, and NAJIT<sup>18</sup>, reporting that while all four of them list ‘confidentiality’ and ‘qualification/competence,’ the codes of ethics vary in their other elements. For instance, whereas both AUSIT and NAJIT mention ‘impartiality’ and ‘accuracy/faithfulness,’ the AIIC code of ethics does not (p.92).

The differences in the codes of ethics among various professional organizations support the claim made by Harris (1990) that ‘the norms are not the same everywhere,’ showing in a way the somewhat confused state of the profession. Of particular interest is the fact that AIIC remains silent on the norm of ‘impartiality,’ which is contrary to what is generally believed (see, for example, Angelelli, 2004a).

The issue of norms (e.g., Simeoni, 1998; Toury, 1995) and ethics (e.g., Berman, 1995; Chesterman, 2001; Pym, 2001) is closely related to the interpreter’s role and ultimately brings forth the question of ‘identity.’<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> AIIC’s Professional Code of Ethics stipulates integrity, professionalism and confidentiality, but not accuracy, faithfulness or impartiality (Retrieved March 21, 2006, from <http://www.aiic.net/>).

<sup>16</sup> The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf.

<sup>17</sup> The Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators

<sup>18</sup> The National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators, New York.

<sup>19</sup> It was the major topic at the IATIS (International Association for Translation and Intercultural Studies) Inaugural Conference held in Seoul, Korea, in 2004. The outcome of the conference was published in 2005, in which Ian Mason and Sandra Hale specifically addressed the issue of identity in connection with dialogue interpreting.

Mason (2005) discusses projected and perceived identities in face-to-face interpreter-mediated encounters, where the negotiation of identity is a constant activity of all participants in the interface between cultures and languages. Drawing on 'participation framework' (Goffman, 1981) and Wadensjö (1998), different interpreters' projected roles are presented as (1) a non-person, someone not contributing to or responsible for the substance of what is being talked about; (2) an involved translator (cf. Goffman's animator and author roles), committed to the translations s/he utters but generally not intervening on his/her own behalf; and (3) a fully ratified participant (cf. Goffman's animator, author and principal roles), intervening in the exchange on his/her own behalf (Mason, 2005, p.34). In Mason's view, the dynamic nature of communication and the negotiation necessarily entails such variables as power, distance, and roles, evolving co-construction of participants as the event unfolds, where the vital concept is 'the process of *positioning*, based on sets of assumptions participants make about each other' (p.32, emphasis in original).

Hale (2005) argues that community interpreting suffers from a professional identity crisis which hampers its development as a recognized professional discipline. Hale takes note of the competing demands interpreters face from three sphere— the institutional, the professional, and the interpersonal—resulting in their struggle to 'negotiate pathways among the different roles they are expected to assume' (2005, p.14). Authentic court data shows varied realities of triadic face-to-face interpreted interactions, from interference of the interpreter's self to conflicting and confusing role expectations causing identities to be compromised. In relation to the norm of impartiality, Hale proposes that the word 'client' should not be used when referring to the people interpreters are to interpret for in the context of community interpreting, because 'the legal meaning of client is one to whom duty of care and allegiance are owed' (p.23) and it conflicts with the impartiality norm for interpreters. It is important to note that, in response to the argument that the role prescribed by the professional

code of ethics is unrealistic, Hale argues that ‘When we look at the consequences of overstepping the brief to interpret accurately, we can clearly see that the only role that can possibly work is one that respects the speech rights and responsibilities of the authors of the utterances’ (2005, p.26).

In the discussion of role definition, Hale quickly adds that ‘accuracy’ does not necessarily mean a literal rendition. Rather, in her view, it equates to a ‘pragmatic reconstruction of the original’ (House, 1977), reproducing ‘an original intention, with the same illocutionary point and force, in another language’ (Hale, 2005, p.26).

Hale laments that currently the profession suffers from ‘an identity crisis’ due to a lack of a formal training requirement, a lack of recognition of the complexities and significance of the task of accurate interpreting and ‘a tendency to undermine the task reflected in the language used to describe it: “just interpreting”, “using the interpreter”, a “mere echo”’ (p.27) and concludes that all these issues have to be resolved before a secure professional identity can be achieved.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

As we have seen, the study of translation is a relatively new academic discipline, and the study of interpretation, in spite of its long practice from antiquity, is even younger, starting in the 1950s. During its formative years, interpretation research was mainly concerned with the study of simultaneous interpreting in conference settings, from the vantage point of psychology, psycholinguistics or information processing. It was well into the 1990s that the study of dialogue interpreting started to take hold, prompted by the ever increasing need for community interpreters in medical, legal and court settings within multilingual societies. Along with this new trend, revisiting the role of interpreters became prominent, drawing on a variety of disciplines including sociology, pragmatics and linguistic anthropology. The present study is part of this

endeavour in the field, attempting to revisit the role of interpreters, not in community settings but in diplomacy, which has not received sufficient academic attention. In order to achieve this goal, the oral history method is employed, in answer to what Baker (2001) calls the need to pursue the historical aspects of the discipline, specifically ‘the overall profile of translators and interpreters, their role and status as well as working contexts’ (p.xiv).

Although the distinction is made between written translation and oral interpretation in the usage of terms, the present study draws heavily on translation studies, for it is believed that such issues as equivalence, norms, ethics, accuracy, neutrality, and the role of translators are all relevant to the study of interpreting.

To conclude this chapter, it is necessary to note that the present research is based on the premise of perceiving interpreting as a socially-situated practice, positioning it within historical and socio-cultural contexts, linking the social to the historical, by looking into the social trajectories of interpreters (Hanna, 2005, pp.169, 188), ultimately in search of the specific impact of interpreters on interpreting activities, within complex networks surrounding them (Inghilleri, 2005, p.126).

In the following chapter, the focus will be on Japan, offering an overview of translation and interpretation history and its studies in the country where the five subjects have lived and practiced their profession. Since translation and interpretation have played a vital part in the history of Japan, it is of particular importance to present an overall map of the field in Japan, both historical and contemporary, in order to study the pioneer interpreters, placing them in the wider social, cultural, and historical context.



### Chapter 3 A Brief History of Interpreting/Translation in Japan

Translation and interpretation have played a crucial role in the history of Japan. In ancient times, Chinese culture was introduced to Japan through translation and interpretation, and even during *sakoku* when Japan was officially closed to the outside world<sup>20</sup>, interpreters in Nagasaki acted as mediators in the trade with the Netherlands, acting as a point of contact with Western culture. It would not have been feasible to modernize the country at the time of Meiji Restoration without translating a body of literature into Japanese, thus enabling the nation-builders to learn about Western civilization in a variety of fields, as well as enriching the Japanese vocabulary. In contemporary Japan, interpretation and translation is a prerequisite for various intercultural contacts, from diplomacy and business to international conferences and news broadcasts, as well as at immigration offices, courts, hospitals and schools.

This chapter presents a brief overview of the history of interpreting and translation in Japan to illustrate the context in which the pioneer interpreters in the study were nurtured and worked. Section 1 introduces Nagasaki *tsûji*, interpreters in Chinese, Portuguese and Dutch, followed by Section 2 on the role translation played in the modernization of Meiji Japan. Section 3 elaborates on recent trends in the interpreting field in Japan, starting with the introduction of simultaneous interpreting after World War II. Section 4 discusses interpreter training and its implication for foreign language education, and Section 5 offers a brief overview of interpretation studies in Japan. Finally Section 6 presents two prominent cases of mistranslation in Japanese diplomatic history—the translation of the Japanese government’s reply to the Potsdam Declaration and the interpretation of a politician’s rhetoric at the time of Prime Minister Sato’s meeting with President Nixon.

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<sup>20</sup> From 1639 to 1867.

### 3.1. Interpreters in Nagasaki

The history of interpreters in Japan started with the Chinese interpreters (*Toh-tsûji*), whose main work was to help with the interpretation and translation that was needed for trade with China. The major port for foreign trade in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries was Nagasaki in Kyushu, in southern Japan. The central Tokugawa government in Edo<sup>21</sup> placed it under their direct control, and along with this, in 1604 the government officially acknowledged the existence of interpreters, institutionalizing them into the bureaucratic system. When the government started to trade with Portugal, Portuguese interpreters came into existence, later switching to the Dutch language, as the Tokugawa government decided to close the entire country to contacts with Christianity and other foreign influences, except for Holland (called *Oranda* in Japanese).

The features of Nagasaki interpreters, or *Oranda tsûji* (Dutch language officers) as they came to be known, are threefold. Their work entailed not only interpreting and translating but also administrative work in connection with diplomacy, trade, or anything to do with foreign relations. Secondly, they were not freelancers as are most modern interpreters. They were local officials employed by the government, and as such, 'their loyalty was unquestionably to the government of Japan' (Semizu, 2000, p.132), demonstrating that the notion of neutrality is not a traditional one but is rather a modernistic concept. The final feature is, 'as most professions in feudal Japan, *Oranda tsûji* was hereditary and about twenty families from the educated officials' class held the position throughout the Edo era' (ibid, p.133). A male offspring of a *tsûji* family was destined to succeed the *tsûji* father, and when they were not blessed with a male child, they adopted a boy from some other family to inherit the position (Hayashi,

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<sup>21</sup> Now called Tokyo.

2000).

Hayashi Rokuro (2000) studied the life of his interpreter ancestor Lin Ko-en, born in 1598 in China, who came to Japan in 1623 starting a *Toh-tsûji* family, and describes the interpreting profession in feudal Japan, indicating that it had been a highly organized system from quite early on, with elaborate hierarchical ranking, training and testing, as well as detailed ‘codes of conduct’ with *O-tsûji*, chief interpreter, overseeing the entire profession. Also, Katagiri Kazuo (1995) depicts how an *Oranda tsûji* worked and contributed to intercultural contacts during the *sakoku* period. Yukino Semizu (2001) evaluates the role of *Oranda tsûji* by analyzing a historic meeting between Arai Hakuseki, a scholar advisor to the shogun as well as one of the greatest thinkers in Japan, and Giovanni Battista Sidotti, a missionary from Rome. As senior *Oranda tsûji*, Imamura Genuemon led the *tsûji* group in mediating the series of interviews with Sidotti, which is ‘widely regarded as a landmark in the intellectual history of Japan’ (Semizu, 2001, p.134).

Semizu regards the interpreted event as ‘a prototype of dialogue interpreting, the purpose of which was first and foremost to enable communication in an encounter of different cultures’ and concludes that studying interpreting in the historical context ‘can be one way to re-examine the assumptions and expectations made today about interpreters and interpreting’ (2001, p.144).

### **3.2 Translation and the modernization in Meiji Japan**

The earlier intercultural contacts for Japan can be traced from the Japanese language. It is said that around 60% of today’s Japanese vocabulary, at least found in dictionaries, is made up of loan words from other languages, around 6% of which is from Western languages, but the vast majority from Chinese (Backhouse, 1993, pp.74, 76, as cited in Gottlieb, 2005, p.11). Gottlieb further points out that ‘*Kango*,

Sino-Japanese words, reflect the long history of language and cultural contact between China and Japan since the fifth century' (2005, p.11). As Yanabu Akira (1998) explains, Chinese characters have been used for centuries to create new words to express new concepts (p.110), such as *shakai* (society) and *kojin* (individual), culminating in the Meiji period<sup>22</sup> (Yanabu, 1982).

Semizu states that 'the Japanese had been translating from Chinese over a century before the country's first constitution was written in 604' (2001, p.131). According to Judy Wakabayashi, while Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese belong to different linguistic families, these unrelated languages were linked by 'their shared use of the Chinese script and the shared literary tradition and community of scholarship mediated by Classical Chinese as the written (not spoken) language for much of their histories (2005, p.21). Wakabayashi notes, however, that despite the geographical proximity, 'the difficulties of travel and the suspension of diplomatic ties at certain times meant that Chinese cultural influence was often mediated indirectly through books, rather than through direct personal contacts or migration,' and that just as 'the Silk Road had acted as a link between India and China, the Korean peninsula often acted as an intermediary for the importation of Chinese culture into Japan' (p.21). In Wakabayashi's view, the geographical location of Japan, surrounded by sea, made it somewhat less susceptible to direct Chinese dominance, and Japan, never becoming a vassal state, was 'able to maintain Chinese characters as part of its traditional culture while using them in its own way' (p.21). Ohsawa Yoshihiro explains that in pre-modern Japan, male intellectuals devoted themselves to reading Classical Chinese literature and philosophy, while women wrote in a refined indigenous literary style (2005, p.136). According to Ohsawa (2005), as the syntax of Classical Chinese is entirely different from that of Japanese, a special method called *kambun kundoku*

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<sup>22</sup> From 1868 to 1912.

(Japanese reading of Classical Chinese) was devised in Japan, assigning Japanese readings (pronunciation) to Chinese characters, and 'indicating the Japanese order of reading by inserting numbers and other markers in Chinese texts, as well as reading aids in Japanese' (pp.135-136).

Ohsawa (2005) maintains that when Japan established diplomatic ties with the West in the 1850s and decided to introduce Western knowledge to modernize the nation, knowledge of Classical Chinese was the foundation for understanding the new horizons of modern sciences (p.136). Inami Ritsuko (2000) likewise found that from the earliest days in the Nara period to the Edo era, Japan has been digesting Chinese culture, not in unlimited acculturation but in a selective way, transforming Chinese culture when necessary. This intercultural experience contributed much when Japan was confronted with Western culture in the Meiji period (p.37).

Kato Shuichi, in the discussion of translation and modernization in Japan (Maruyama & Kato, 1998), points out that in 19<sup>th</sup> century Japan, while there was abundant information on China, without too many Chinese people actually coming, Western people suddenly started to appear, and yet not much was known about the West, which prompted Japan to quickly gather information (pp.5-6). This sense of crisis, Kato believes, led to the Meiji Restoration, after which the government sent more than 50 students abroad, along with the Iwakura Mission to inspect and study Western civilization (p.8). The unprecedented mission included approximately 50 government leaders and intellectuals, who toured the United States and Europe for one year and 10 months, studying wide ranging aspects of the West, not only its technology but also its history, religion and culture (Haga, 2000, pp.6-7).

Haga Toru (2000) sees these movements, immediately after the opening of the country, as an active quest on the part of Japanese intellectuals to learn from the West (pp.4-7). He cites Fukuzawa Yukichi as a good example (pp.5-6). Fukuzawa, at the age of 25, visited Yokohama one day and was shocked to find that the Dutch language he

laboured to learn for several years was of no use—he could not read the signs and he could not communicate with foreigners—they were all using English. Fukuzawa reminisces in his autobiography (1899/1980) that he was disappointed, but the next day, was already determined to start studying English. He first went to ask Nagasaki *tsûji* Moriyama to teach him English, but the interpreter was too busy with all his diplomatic work, and finally Fukuzawa decided to study English on his own, using two Dutch-English conversation books he had bought in Yokohama, and John Holtrop's English and Dutch dictionary which he obtained later, reading and translating day and night, totally absorbed in English (pp.99-102). Nine years later, he founded Keio University, where he himself taught English, becoming a pioneer in English studies in Japan (Saito, 2001). Fukuzawa traveled overseas three times in eight years, crossing the Pacific first on the *Kanrin-maru* in 1860. His second overseas trip was in 1862 as a member of the European mission sent by the government, and upon returning from a year-long stay in Europe, Fukuzawa wrote about his interpretation of Western civilization<sup>23</sup>, and translated *Political Economy* (1853) by John Hill Burton, a 19<sup>th</sup> century Scottish historian and economist. Both of these publications had a profound effect in Japan, shortening the cultural and psychological distance between Japan and the West (Haga, 2000, p.6).

Meiji intellectuals, including Fukuzawa, contributed to coining new words, using Chinese characters, in the social and natural sciences and the humanities, introducing new concepts such as society, individual, philosophy, science, company, bank and art, among others, into Japanese society (Yanabu, 1998, p.112). Maruyama Masao and Kato Shuuichi agree that the salient feature of the Meiji era in its efforts to modernize was its '*honyaku bunka* (translation culture)' or '*honyaku-shugi* (translationism)' (1998, pp.43-47), translating a tremendous amount of foreign literature, thereby

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<sup>23</sup> *Seiyo jijou* was published in 1866 and its second volume in 1868.

providing the Japanese people the opportunity to come in contact with Western history, science, art, literature, as well as Western thought and culture.

### 3.3 Simultaneous interpreting in Japan

While interpreters such as Moriyama Einosuke remained active around the time of the Meiji Restoration, Nagasaki *tsûji* soon vanished from the scene, and not much is known about interpreters in subsequent years. It was after World War II that interpreters' work was highlighted.

The first such scene was at the Tokyo War Crimes Trial (International Military Tribunal for the Far East), immediately after the Second World War, from May 3, 1946 to April 16, 1948. There were 28 war leaders who were tried, including Tojo Hideki. While in Europe, simultaneous interpreting was introduced at the multilingual Nuremberg Trial, involving German, French, Russian and English, at the Tokyo Tribunal, despite the first appearance of the interpreters' booth (IBM public address system) in Japan, interpreters read the translations of the documents, 'synchronizing the original,' and the direct, cross, and redirect examinations and other improvised testimonies or questions were interpreted consecutively in the booth (Watanabe, 1998, pp.104-113). According to Watanabe (1998), there were 27 English-Japanese interpreters, including a number of second generation Japanese-Americans, and a few interpreters of Chinese, French, Russian and Dutch. In addition, the Allied Powers assigned four Japanese-American officers from the U.S. military forces to serve as monitors to check and, if necessary, correct the interpretation.

Outside the courtroom, too, Japan's defeat in WWII brought about numerous contacts of varying degrees at different levels between Japan and the Occupation Forces, necessitating interpreting and translation. Muramatsu and Kunihiro both worked for the Allied Forces, Muramatsu as an interpreter and Kunihiro as a translator.

The older Nishiyama was by chance asked to offer interpreting service for the Occupation Forces, and devised his own way of simultaneous interpreting.

Japanese simultaneous interpreters emerged in different venues after WWII. The first was at an MRA (Moral Re-Armament) conference in 1950 in Caux, Switzerland, where Nishiyama and Sohma tried simultaneous interpreting in a booth. The other site was the Department of State in the United States, which recruited young eligible Japanese to be trained to accompany visiting productivity teams from Japan to reconstruct the war-torn nation. Muramatsu, Kunihiro and Komatsu are all offspring of this so-called 'productivity interpreter team.' The first time simultaneous interpreting was tried at government-level conferences was in the early 1960s for U.S.-Japan Ministerial Meeting on Trade and Economy, the first one in Hakone, with Nishiyama in charge of Japanese to English interpreting, and the second one in Washington DC, with Muramatsu, Kunihiro and Okamoto Yutaka as members of the interpreting team for the Japanese side. One last venue was at the annual Gensuikyo<sup>24</sup> World Conferences against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs, where many aspiring college students, including Komatsu, worked as volunteer interpreters, experiencing on-the-job training.

The interpreters for productivity missions eventually came back to Japan and started a congress organizing agency, providing interpreter service and training, which helped establish interpreting as a profession in Japan.

The general public came to know about simultaneous interpreting in 1969, when all TV stations broadcast the live coverage of the historic Apollo moon landing event, and simultaneous interpretation was provided of the communication between the astronauts and NASA being transmitted via satellite<sup>25</sup>. It was the first time people saw

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<sup>24</sup> The Japan Council against A & H Bombs was founded in 1955. Their student interpreters became known as "Gensuikyo interpreters."

<sup>25</sup> Nishiyama and Kunihiro worked on NHK public TV network, while Muramatsu,



interpreters at work, which had a tremendous impact on increasing their interest in simultaneous interpreting.

### 3.4 Interpretation studies in Japan

The study of interpretation is a rapidly emerging field in Japan. It was only a decade ago that some practising interpreters and interpreter-academics formed an informal interpreting research study group, which in September, 2000, became the Japan Association for Interpretation Studies (JAIS), the first academic society of its kind in Japan.

While literary translation has always been considered part of an academic discipline, sometimes in linguistics, but mostly in literature departments, oral interpretation is usually considered something practical, a skill to be trained, rather than one to be researched and studied as an academic field. As mentioned above, the proliferation of interpreting courses in tertiary education in Japan has for the most part been due to its practical benefit in terms of communicative language teaching. It is only recently that the theoretical study of interpretation has emerged in some universities.

On the national level, the 22<sup>nd</sup> Kokugo Shingikai<sup>26</sup> issued a proposal in 2000, breaking new ground in mentioning the importance of interpreting for the first time in its history. It stated that the presence of expert interpreters who are fully versed in the cultural and social background of the language is of paramount importance in points of contact between different languages and cultures (p.6). The proposal specifically mentioned the need for training and education of interpreters:

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Komatsu and the author were on commercial TV.

<sup>26</sup> The National Language Council of Japan.

Interpreting is a special profession which requires high-level ability in both the native and the foreign languages, as well as wide-ranging knowledge including cultural background of the language. In our country, interpreter education is carried out at universities, along with language schools and private enterprises. It is hoped that from now on interpreter education will be further developed at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, to foster highly trained professional interpreters and researchers of interpreting theory, so that Japan will be blessed with human resources to face the age of globalization. (Kokugo Shingikai, 2000, p.6, my translation)

It is axiomatic that a small number of genius-like interpreters will not suffice in the globalized and multicultural world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Interpreting will take on even more importance in a society where different cultures coexist. Even with technological advances in machine translation, 'only human interpreters are able to translate subtle meanings, based on cultural and social contexts, taking into account human relations and the situational constraints' (Kokugo Shingikai, 2000).

### 3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, a brief overview was presented to illuminate the place of interpreting and translation in the history of Japan to better understand the pioneer interpreters in the present study. The chapter started with Nagasaki *tsūji* and went on to the significant role translation played in the modernization of Meiji Japan. At the same time, recent trends in the interpreting field in Japan were shown, from the introduction of simultaneous interpreting after World War II to the emerging interpretation studies.

In the following chapters, attention will be directed specifically toward agents in

the interpreting activities, particularly interpreters, invisible but indispensable. We will begin by trying to understand them as human beings, exploring their '*habitus*' by examining the narratives of the pioneer diplomatic interpreters.

## Chapter 4 *Habitus*

In this chapter, the life stories of the five pioneer interpreters in their earlier years will be introduced. Their narratives are examined in such a way to incorporate their experiences, emotions and feelings at times not directly associated with language per se, such as their wartime experiences, in order to seek what Pierre Bourdieu terms '*habitus*.'

As systems of durable dispositions and as 'past history internalized as a second nature,' the *habitus* makes the individual agent a 'world within the world' (Bourdieu, 1990, p.56).

It is thus deemed significant and legitimate to try to obtain a glimpse into the individual *habitus* of the five interpreters, which generate their thoughts, perceptions, decisions and actions. To this end, this chapter places particular focus on how they became interested in languages in the first place, going back to their upbringing, as well as how they actually learned two languages.

One popular notion about simultaneous interpreters is first and foremost that they are bilinguals. This expectation is justified when you consider that in interpreting, particularly in simultaneous mode, you have to change the code instantaneously with the time lag of seconds, rather than minutes. And yet, the question of how a bilingual would emerge as a translator and an interpreter, especially outside of the schooling system (Toury, 1995, p.241), is a complex issue in itself. Toury (1995) argues that notwithstanding a predisposition for translating, 'the identification of translating *as a skill* with mere bilingualism seems an unwarranted oversimplification' (p.245, emphasis in original).

AIIC dictates language combination according to the A-B-C system.<sup>27</sup> Among the

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<sup>27</sup> Retrieved March 21, 2006, from <http://www.aiic.net/ViewPage.cfm/article118.htm>.

two active languages, A is 'the interpreter's native language (or another language strictly equivalent to a native language), into which the interpreter works from all her or his other languages in both modes of interpretation, simultaneous and consecutive, whereas B is a language other than the interpreter's native language, of which 'she or he has a perfect command and into which she or he works from one or more of her or his other languages,' and C is a passive language, of which 'the interpreter has a complete understanding and from which she or he works.'

Although AIIC does not make reference to the process of how their members achieve proficiency in their classification of three working languages for professional interpreters, generally people assume that simultaneous interpreters are all bilinguals who were brought up in a bilingual environment. Among the five interpreters under study, only Nishiyama would fall into such a category. While Nishiyama states, 'when I interpret, it comes out without thinking in one particular language. It comes out naturally in Japanese for Japanese listeners and in English for English-speaking people,' Komatsu admits that he feels more comfortable when he interprets English into Japanese than the other way around, since English is his second language and by the time he went to the U.S. he was already 20. Muramatsu and Kunihiro likewise grew up in Japan, spending their adolescence during WWII, hardly an ideal time and place for language study. Sohma is a unique case in that she was brought up in a bilingual family in monolingual Japan. In sum, the five interpreters have varied backgrounds which makes it difficult to simply presume that they 'acquired'<sup>28</sup> naturally the needed linguistic competence to enable them to become simultaneous interpreters.

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<sup>28</sup> Here, 'learning' and 'acquisition' are distinguished based on Stephen Krashen's Acquisition-Learning distinction, where 'acquisition' is defined as 'a subconscious process' similar to 'the way children develop ability in their first language,' as opposed to more formal and explicit 'learning,' with 'conscious knowledge of a second language' (Krashen, 1987, p.10).

The five pioneer interpreters will be categorized in two groups based on the difference in their language learning experiences. The first group is Muramatsu, Kunihiro and Komatsu, who learned English as a foreign language (EFL) in formal education. The second group is Nishiyama and Sohma, who were exposed to English as they grew up and more or less acquired it as a second language.

The chapter begins with the life stories of the first group, ‘4.1 Learning English as a foreign language,’ followed by the second group, ‘4.2 Growing up in a bilingual environment.’ Then in ‘4.3 Experiencing World War II,’ the shared experiences of WWII will be introduced through their narratives, with the final discussion at the end, in ‘4.4 Discussion.’

#### **4.1 Learning English as a foreign language**

Muramatsu Masumi, Kunihiro Masao and Komatsu Tatsuya were all born in pre-war Japan—Muramatsu and Kunihiro in 1930 in Tokyo, Komatsu in 1934 in Nagoya—and learned English as a foreign language, before, during, and after WWII, their experiences representing many Japanese of the same generation.

Kunihiro repeated several times in his talk that he was in the ‘third year of junior high school’ when Japan was ‘defeated in the war in the 20<sup>th</sup> year of Showa (1945),’ and reminisces how he studied English, when it was still considered to be ‘the language of the enemy.’ He explains at length how the environment was not a favorable one for learning English, and goes back to the days during the war:

Anyway, [...] it was the time when people said ‘*kichiku-beiei*’<sup>29</sup>.

Countries such as England and the U.S. were considered ‘*kiciku*,’ demons

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<sup>29</sup> Literally meaning ‘devilish and bestial Americans and British.’

and brutes, you see, the time of ‘*kichiku-beiei*.’ In my days, it was actually ‘*kichiku-eibei*,’ Britain (*ei*) coming first and then the U.S. (*bei*). Then gradually, the U.S. gained power, and the phrase became ‘*kichiku-beiei*,’ America first, and then Britain.

So it was the time of ‘*kichiku-eibei*’ or ‘*kichiku-beiei*,’ and the English language was referred to as ‘*tekiseigo*’ (hostile language). The Chinese characters used for ‘*teki-sei*’ were ‘enemy’ (*teki*) and ‘nature’ (*sei*). English was called ‘*tekiseigo*.’ So, I can say, the time didn’t exactly provide a favorable environment for studying English.

In addition, Kunihiro continued, more serious were severe food shortages and air raids, which burned down his house when he was in his second year of junior high school. According to Kunihiro, the average person received ‘only 1200 calorie ration of food per day’ which would be ‘what a seriously ill person is allowed to take in one day.’ What was worse was, in Kunihiro’s memory, food rations were ‘not proper food, but leaves or stems of poor quality potatoes or yams which today would be used as livestock feed.’ It certainly was not enough for a young, growing boy, and a hungry boy ‘didn’t at all feel like studying English.’

#### 4.1.1 Motivation for language learning

For Muramatsu, the first time he realized the ‘power of speech’ was when as a small boy he fought against a neighborhood bully:

I was full of curiosity, and also extremely verbal and had the gift of the gab. I never used dirty words, but because I grew up in *shitamachi*<sup>30</sup>, and

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<sup>30</sup> *Shitamachi* is an old part of downtown Tokyo, where people are more

also due to my parents' influence, I was good at overpowering others verbally.

[...]

I recognized the power of speech for the very first time when I was about to start elementary school. There was a neighborhood bully, or a 'bully boy.' He was a very tall, handsome, beautiful boy with fair skin, even to the eye of a child. He was actually the heir to an honorable family that, for generations, had been carrying on the *Okagura*<sup>31</sup> tradition in Torigoe area, or Asakusa. He was even in the newspaper [...].

He was a bully. We were terrified of him. But one day, while several children were being bullied, I bawled him out like crazy...because I was not physically strong. 'You, son-of-a-bitch! Come back here after you wash your face with *miso* soup! Get lost!' And so on and so forth, non-stop. Then what happened was, he burst into tears and ran home [...]. That incident suddenly made me a hero in my neighborhood. That's when I realized what counts is verbal strength, and not physical strength.

Muramatsu was born and raised in Kuramae, an old part of Tokyo, where there was a popular entertainment area nearby. He explains that his father, who used to be what they called a 'modern boy,' enjoyed operetta and movies:

We lived in Kuramae, and my father used to take me to see movies in Asakusa quite often. He would always be humming what they used to call 'Asakusa Opera' back then, which was really an operetta. For example, he would hum songs like, "In the wind, like a feather," or old songs like,

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straightforward, not as reserved as uptown people.

<sup>31</sup> *Okagura* is Shinto music and dance.



“Women always change their minds.” I used to memorize the lyrics right away and mimic the singing.

When I was in elementary school, he used to take me to Asakusa Rokku<sup>32</sup> from Kuramae to see Western movies, foreign movies. It took about 30 minutes on foot as a child. I remember many of the last silent movies. I also remember the narrator’s performance very well. I think it was Tokugawa Musei.

You see, I grew up very close to these things. Even during the war, I always listened to Tokugawa Musei telling the story of ‘Miyamaoto Musashi’ on the radio. I listened at home during the air raids, right until it was time for us to move into an air-raid shelter after the air alert. Also *rakugo*<sup>33</sup>. There used to be something called *heitai rakugo* back then. And I think it was Yanagiya Kosan that I used to listen to a lot.

Kunihiro likewise was influenced by his farther, but not quite in the same way as Muramatsu. Kunihiro attributes his ‘strong interest in languages’ to two factors, the first one being his father and his teaching of reading Chinese classics aloud—*sodoku*, literally meaning ‘simple reading’:

For one thing, even as a small child, I enjoyed reading... I read widely, including Japanese classics, for example the work of Matsuo Basho, and because of my father’s thinking, I was taught to read Chinese classics. And my father made me do what’s called ‘*sodoku*’—oral reading, or reading

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<sup>32</sup> Asakusa Rokku (District 6 of the 7 zones in Asakusa area) was a popular entertainment area, somewhat like Broadway, from Meiji to early Showa, with many theaters for opera and movies.

<sup>33</sup> *Rakugo* is Japanese traditional art of comic monologue or storytelling.

aloud.

My father was what you could call a ‘Sinophile.’ He was in a way an aficionado of Chinese civilization. He insisted, ‘Do not assume you understand Japan without understanding China. Do not assume you understand the Japanese language unless you understand Chinese.’ That was his basic way of thinking. By Chinese I mean... he was able to speak modern Chinese, but he did not teach me contemporary Chinese. Personally, I regret this very much... looking back on it. However, when it comes to Chinese classics, you could say I was thoroughly disciplined to read Chinese literature. From an early age on. In elementary school...no, it was before entering elementary school...

Literature such as *Shisho Gokyo* and *Tohshisen*... And Chinese poetry [in Tang Dynasty]. My father, he would just read it and do *sodoku* without any explanation. I would not say anything, whether I understood the meaning or not, and just read out loud. I read, but actually, I repeated after my father. That was one of my initiations into language.

The second factor which acted as an initiation into language for Kunihiro was his moving to Kobe and being exposed to Kansai dialect, very different from the Tokyo dialect he was brought up with.

I was not familiar with Kansai dialect as people are now. We didn’t have television back then. So, those of us living in the Kanto region never had a chance to hear ‘*manzai-shi*’<sup>34</sup> or ‘*rakugo-ka*’<sup>35</sup> with *Kansai-ben* or

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<sup>34</sup> *Manzai-shi* is a stand-up comedian.

<sup>35</sup> *Rakugo-ka* is a story-teller.

*Osaka-ben*<sup>36</sup>. Therefore, Kansai dialect existed almost as if it were a distinct, independent foreign language, you see. I had been raised with *Tokyo-ben*, born in Tokyo, brought up with Tokyo accent, read an extensive number of books in *Tokyo-ben*, and then, in the second year of junior high school, for the first time, I go and live in Kansai. [...] And, really, it was a foreign language! Definitely, a foreign language [...].

I really needed an interpreter! Without somebody interpreting for me, it was impossible... In other words, we couldn't communicate, even though we were both speaking Japanese.

Ultimately, in Kunihiro's view, for these two factors, he 'didn't have any other choice but to become interested in languages.'

Kunihiro's account of English as 'the language of the enemy' is in sharp contrast with Komatsu's experience, who as the youngest of the three, entered junior high school in Tokyo after the war. Komatsu, like many other Japanese in post-war period, 'liked English very much.'

Incredibly, scarcely a month after the surrender, in September 1945, an English conversation textbook *Nichibei Kaiwa-chō* was published and sold 3.6 million copies in two and a half months. Also, a nationwide radio program started to teach English, attracting the audience with an opening song, calling out, 'Come, Come, Everybody!' (Torikai, 2005b, p.249).

Komatsu spent his days as a teenager against the backdrop of this craze over the study of English and an immense interest in a country that had defeated Japan.

Komatsu admits:

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<sup>36</sup> *Kansai-ben*, *Osaka-ben* and *Tokyo-ben* are dialects in Kansai, Osaka and Tokyo, respectively.

I was very fond of the United States, and this feeling may have resulted in my fondness for the English language as well. For example, when I was a student at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, I liked Shakespeare very much. Or English literature, and American literature. I did a lot of study in that field.

Komatsu went to a private high school in Tokyo, where the teaching was based on Grammar-Translation Method and he 'didn't receive any special English language education,' and yet, the junior high school student 'liked English as a school subject.' In a way, it is intriguing how he became interested in a foreign language. Unlike Kunihiro, he didn't meet any native speakers of English until he entered college, and unlike Muramatsu, Komatsu was not a born linguist:

I liked English as a subject at school. But when I spoke Japanese, I wasn't a good talker and I was extremely reticent. [...] I'm not like Muramatsu-san. He is eloquent in Japanese, too, and he enjoys talking. Compared with him...well, it's kind of strange to say this myself, but I am extremely shy. And I was never a good speaker. And I didn't particularly like speaking or talking.

The only thing that kept 'shy and reticent' Komatsu interested in English study and motivated him to major in English at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, it seems, was his fascination with the United States. This is close to what Gardner (1985) calls 'integrative motive,' a 'motivation to learn a second language because of positive feelings toward the community that speaks that language' (pp.82-83).

#### 4.1.2 Teachers of English

Kunihiro started to study English in junior high school in Tokyo, before moving to Kobe. He recalls reading a biography of Nitobe Inazo<sup>37</sup>, Undersecretary of the League of Nations and author of *Bushido*, as a junior high school student. What Nitobe, one of the most eloquent speakers and writers of English in Japan, said about his motivation ‘to study English to become a bridge over the Pacific Ocean’ impressed him immensely, making him realize that ‘nothing starts unless you know the language’ (Igarashi, *The Mainichi Shimbun*, Friday, March 31, 2006, p.4), which motivated him to study English, an enemy language. Kunihiro speaks highly of his teacher in junior high school, who taught him to read English out loud:

I was blessed with a wonderful teacher, who taught English. He said...  
‘You have to read English out loud.’ This is what he emphasized and reiterated. ...I don’t think he had ever studied abroad, and yet this teacher said, ‘It’s important to read English over and over, out loud.’

Since I had knowledge of the Chinese classics, because my father made me do *sodoku* with Chinese classics, it wasn’t much of a jump for me to move from Chinese classics to English. It was natural for me. So, I read out loud a lot. I devoted myself to reading English aloud.

This experience eventually led Kunihiro to design his own ‘*ondoku* (read-aloud) method,’ attracting many learners of English in Japan.

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<sup>37</sup> Nitobe Inazo (1862-1933), professor at Sapporo Agricultural School, Kyoto Imperial University Law School, University of Tokyo Law School, and the first president of Tokyo Women’s College. At the age of 37, he published *Bushido* in English, which even today, is considered to be one of the best English prose works written by a Japanese. As Undersecretary of the League of Nations, Nitobe gave numerous speeches in Europe on behalf of the Secretary General.

Muramatsu likewise spoke highly of his teachers and their grammar-based traditional teaching, especially Mr. Imaishi who taught English using *Macbeth*, and who later became president of Hiroshima Jogakuin University.

Torikai: The English education that these teachers gave, including Imaishi-sensei, was quite orthodox, or...

Muramatsu: It was an orthodox method.

Torikai: Grammar, and reading...

Muramatsu: Yes, grammar, but I think the teaching material was also very good.

Torikai: How?

Muramatsu: Imaishi-sensei's class was the best. For example, we did *Tales from Shakespeare* by Charles and Mary Lamb, believe it or not, in the fall of our third year in junior high school. It was right after the end of the war, and the teacher selected this book for us and we read *Macbeth*. That was when I learned the story of *Macbeth*. It started with, 'Macbeth, the lord of Glamis,' and I learned how to pronounce 'Glamis.' And the king named Duncan, who was killed, was an extremely meek person, 'the meek king.' There, I learned the word 'meek,' m-e-e-k.

Nobody learns this kind of stuff in junior high school any more. I truly believe that it's better to provide students with textbooks that are slightly difficult. So, we studied it very hard.

As you know, Lambs' *Tales from Shakespeare* was re-written in easy-to-understand language from the original Shakespeare of more than 100 years ago in order to make it easier for the British youth to understand. But its words still retain the original flavor. So when you read it, the rhythm and some of the phrases that appear are quite close to the original.

When I went to Waseda University and studied the real *Macbeth*, it was true déjà vu. ‘Oh, I know this one.’ I was quite delighted. I was able to read *Macbeth* smoothly, as if I were cruising. Nowadays Charles and Mary Lamb are all but forgotten, but I think it’s something that’s definitely worth reading.

#### 4.1.3 Studying a ‘hostile language’ during the war

Although officially the teaching of English was prohibited in wartime Japan as a ‘hostile language,’ Muramatsu and Kunihiro reveal that they studied English during the war as junior high school<sup>38</sup> students.

Muramatsu recalls he studied English officially in junior high school in Tokyo, until air raids started:

Torikai: So, even though people said English was the language of the enemy, you actually studied it.

Muramatsu: Yes, that’s right. Right until the air raids began. There were no more classes after we were mobilized to work in factories, but right until then. I believe we labored in factories for about a year, until the end of the war. It may have been less than a year. However, up until then, it was officially taught. I remember the things we studied back then quite clearly.

Kunihiro recalls what he learned was a very formal kind of English, which he facetiously calls ‘*kamishimo*’<sup>39</sup> English—‘I’m afraid it was awfully formal ...almost

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<sup>38</sup> Under the old education system in Japan, before the postwar educational reform, there were 6 years of elementary school, followed by 5 years of junior high school. First grade in senior high school under the old system was equivalent to the first year in university today.

<sup>39</sup> *Kamishimo* is formal attire for samurai.

as if English were wearing *kamishimo*. It was really *kamishimo* English.’ Kunihiro then elaborated on the English textbooks he used during and after the war:

Kunihiro: During the war, there was one published by Sanseido called *King's Crown*, which was a quality textbook, a very good one.

Torikai: In the middle of the war?

Kunihiro: Sure, right in the middle of the war. Kanda Naibu-sensei wrote *King's Crown Reader*, which had five volumes, from one to five, from the first grade to the fifth. In those days, there were five years of junior high school, so there were five volumes. I was in the first and second grade, so I studied volumes one and two.

Being a textbook written by Kanda-sensei, the content was outstanding, and I remember the binding and the design of the book was good as well. The only problem was, how should I put it, the topics were extremely sophisticated, probably because the baron lived in the U.S. for a long time. The situations were all taken from the U.S. or England. I learned what kind of city London was, for the first time, in Kanda's *King's Reader Volume 2*. There was a detailed description of London. I thought, ‘Oh, London! I really want to visit this city.’ And this was in the middle of the war.

When Kunihiro advanced to the third grade, however, textbook screening and authorization by the Ministry of Education started. In Kunihiro's opinion, the topics chosen reflected wartime propaganda, for example, ‘A Japanese Navy torpedo bomber attacked two English battleships, *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse*, off the coast of Malaya. One was blown up and sank immediately, and the other was totally destroyed.’ Also, Kunihiro doubts if there were any native speakers who checked the English and its usage, because he remembers finding sentences that sounded ‘Japanese-English’ which



made him wonder, 'Do they really say this in English?'

### An encounter with a prisoner of war

Interestingly, for both Muramatsu and Kunihiro, their first contact with speakers of English was talking to prisoners of war during the war, when in Kunihiro's words, there was 'no one from English speaking countries,' 'no TV, no radio programs in English,' and 'English was a language of the enemy.'

Muramatsu (1978) recounts meeting a POW from the Netherlands at an aircraft factory he was mobilized to work, and remembers that, as a junior high school student, he was very excited to communicate with him in English (pp.4-5).

Kunihiro's first contact with a native speaker came in his second year of junior high school. He wanted desperately to use English he learned with native speakers of English from a foreign country, and so he decided to visit a POW camp. He knew there was a prison camp near Nada Station in Kobe, where 'they were setting up an anti-aircraft gun emplacement, with shirtless prisoners carrying baskets of dirt on their shoulders.' This of course was a risky adventure which required courage because, 'if you approached prison camps back then, you were risking being charged with espionage.' However, Kunihiro decided not to worry about the consequences and just went ahead with his 'audacious and reckless' plan and went to the prison in August:

There, inside the fence... I was outside the enclosure and they were inside. The prisoners behind the fence all looked like ogres and demons to me. They looked so big. And some of them had tattoos. So these guys are ...foreigners, '*ketou*,' I thought. The word *ketou* was used those days... It's written with a character *ke*, which means hair, and *tou*, which comes from *toujin* (Chinese people)...It meant foreigners. White foreigners...All of these guys looked intimidating and scary...

While Kunihiro thought most of the prisoners were '*okkanai*' (frightening), there was one young soldier who was short and looked 'gentle and mild':

Even now, his face still comes back to my mind from time to time...He was young, say, twenty-something, I'm not sure, but there was this very young soldier, probably around 22 or 23. So this young one, who was short in stature, looked at me and smiled... from behind the fence. I presume that when he saw me, he remembered his younger brother or someone back home.

And at that moment, Kunihiro thought, 'He's the one! I'm going to talk to him.' The question, then, was what to say in English. He thought of asking him what country he was from, because there were POWs from different countries such as the USA, the UK, the Netherlands, Australia, New Zealand and India. Unfortunately, however, the textbooks those days did not teach the expression 'Where are you from?' and Kunihiro ended up asking him, 'What is your country?' The young prisoner smiled again and answered in one word, 'Scotland.'

If he had said something complicated or gone into details, Kunihiro recalls, he would not have understood him. The young boy understood because the POW just said one word, 'Scotland':

'Oh, Scotland!' I thought, because I already knew the name of the place, Scotland. At that moment... how should I explain this...I was, should I say, ecstatic or something like 'dancing for joy.' I felt as though I was on cloud nine or in heaven and shouted, '*Tsuji-ta!* (We communicated!) *Tsuji-ta!* *Tsuji-ta!* *Tsuji-ta!*' all the way to the mountain. My house used to be located

at the foot of a mountain in Kobe, so I ran all the way screaming, '*Tsuji-ta!*,  
*Tsuji-ta!*, *Tsuji-ta!*, *Tsuji-ta!*'

Kunihiro believes that if it weren't for this experience, he would not have been so 'bewitched' or 'intrigued' by English, and that it definitely determined his destiny. It is indeed intriguing to think that his career in a way started with his meeting a young POW from Scotland, and that after more than half a century, Kunihiro was appointed a distinguished visiting professor at the University of Edinburgh, offering him a chance to visit Scotland.

#### **4.1.4 Studying English after the war**

For Muramatsu, the end of the war meant the end of his dream to make aircraft. The first thing they did at the Aviation Engineering School after the surrender was to destroy the aircraft themselves:

The war ended and we destroyed the airplanes with our own hands, with tears. [...] We thought the U.S. Army would come and destroy them anyway. If that's the case, we would rather do it ourselves, so before the arrival of the U.S. Army, we went to a hangar in the corner of the schoolyard. An aircraft hangar, that is. There were many twin-engine planes there, though they would seem small today. And although we were all boys, we were crying and we smashed these airplanes apart with farming hoes and rakes. Back then, most of the planes were made of wood rather than metal.

Although some years later Muramatsu started to feel as if 'the United States symbolized the world,' he was not too amused to see American soldiers come to his school. In September 1945, a month after Japan's surrender, several American soldiers

appeared and tried to take away basketball poles from the school yard. Muramatsu and his classmates were so angry that they shouted at the Americans using English which they had just learned:

‘You shall die!’ is different from ‘You will die,’ because the former denotes a deliberate intent to kill. I remembered this, and so I yelled it out to the American soldiers, when they came to school immediately after the war. The pronunciation was awful, undoubtedly, and they didn’t get it.

Apparently, the soldiers didn’t understand what Muramatsu and other students were shouting and they kept trying to take the poles. Then, their teacher, Mr. Imaishi, walked over to them, told them something in English, and to the amazement of students, the American soldiers gave up the basketball poles and quietly left. Muramatsu recalls how impressed he was with this teacher.

#### Soldiers of the Occupation Forces

Unlike Muramatsu who shouted, ‘You shall die!’ to American soldiers, Kunihiro tried to seek help from soldiers to teach him English as soon as the war ended. Kobe was under the jurisdiction of British Commonwealth Forces, its headquarters located in Hiroshima, and the Occupation Forces in Kobe included soldiers from the UK, Australia, New Zealand and India, not to mention the U.S.

Kunihiro narrated vividly how he used to ask these soldiers to teach him English. What he did was to somehow obtain two copies of the same textbook, which in those days, despite their poor quality, were hard to come by. Young Kunihiro then took these two copies of an English textbook, and went to downtown Kobe, such as Sannomiya and Motomachi. In the beginning, Kunihiro recalls, the Occupation Forces were cautious with the Japanese people and were not too friendly. However, gradually they

began to relax, realizing that people in Japan were not much of a threat:

[...] there were many soldiers leaving their rifles on the wall and just roaming around the area, two or three of them in a group just hanging around. And I thought, 'This is perfect!' It was the same as when I spoke to the prisoner. Except this time, I wasn't going to speak to a prisoner—I was one of the captives, like all the other Japanese!

Kunihiro approached some of these soldiers with his valuable textbooks, kept one for himself and showed the other copy to the soldiers and asked:

'Would you mind reading this to me?' There were no tape recorders back then. They didn't exist yet. No television either. So, I had them read it to me. And they simply read it out loud. While listening to them, I would take notes, 'Oh, here, the intonation went up, here downward. He paused here.' I would jot down intonation marks and pauses in my own textbook.

After a while, another soldier would come by and ask, 'Hey, what are you doing?' And the soldier would reply, 'This kid is studying English and asked me to read his textbook. He made me read a textbook for the third year of junior high school or something. I read a whole lot, so why don't you take over.' And thus, they took turns and continued to read the textbook aloud for him. Kunihiro continued this ritual almost every day in downtown Kobe after school, and soon he noticed that soldiers had different ways of pronouncing English depending on where they were from:

[...] I had a tremendous amount of interest in the United States and was quite knowledgeable about U.S. geography and history. So I would ask them,

‘Where are you from?’ and they would answer, ‘I’m from New York,’ or ‘I’m from such and such.’ And it sounded different when a guy from Tennessee read after a New Yorker. I wondered why there was such a difference when they were both Americans.

I was quite sensitive to differences in dialects and regional varieties, because I knew both Tokyo and Kobe dialects. I repeatedly noticed such things as ‘Oh, there’s a difference in this way,’ or ‘Ah, the Tennessee guy said it this way.’

Eventually, Kunihiro started to do the reading himself, asking soldiers to listen to him and correct his English:

I tried to imitate them as much as possible. And they acted as if they had some sort of authority and said things like, ‘This part is wrong,’ or ‘You shouldn’t pause in the middle of a sentence like that,’ or ‘Your tone should come down like this.’ They were ordinary soldiers. Around 20 years old or so.

Kunihiro explains that this experience, too, helped to fortify his belief and the habit of learning a foreign language by reading passages out loud. Kunihiro then started to participate in various events that are related to English and English study such as English recitation contests started around that time by *The Mainichi* Newspapers. He was also involved in establishing the ESS (English Speaking Society), student-run clubs to study English, which still exist in most universities in Japan. All of these provided Kunihiro with ‘a type of very important fieldwork, an actual fieldwork of English’ to lay the foundation for his future activities.

By winter, several months after the surrender, Muramatsu was busy reading books:

And my dream of airplanes just wilted in the end. And I was starving for printed words at the time. [...] in the winter of the year the war ended, when it had already become cold, I clearly remember that there was a Tokugawa mansion in front of Sendagaya Station, where there is a gymnasium now, and it served as a metropolitan library of Tokyo. It may have been a temporary library because the original library had been burned down. Inside this small mansion was a library, and I would go there all the time and read books in the warm hallway, because it was cold outside, you see. And what I read at the time was, guess what, poetry.

He read Japanese poetry, such as Hinatsu Konosuke and the like, and he also read Akutagawa Ryunosuke. He not only read the books but copied them in his notebook, which he feels is 'similar to what Kunihiro-san calls "devoted recitation" and a very good learning method,' enabling him to acquire a sense of rhythm for poetry as well as learning *kanji* characters and various expressions.

It was just about this time that once again foreign literature began to be translated, and the translation of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* came out, in Muramatsu's recollection, about a year after the war ended:

Torikai: It became available so soon?

Muramatsu: Yes, it came out right away. But some parts were blacked out. That's how it was back then. All the essential parts were blacked out. Being full of curiosity, I went to a second-hand bookstore in Kanda and, guess what, found a paperback version, most probably sold or thrown away by an American soldier after he read it, and I translated all of the blacked out portions in detail— imagine a young boy doing that! A 15 or 16 year-old

boy translated the blacked out parts of *Lady Chatterley*. [...] I wrote it down on a mimeograph and distributed the translation to everybody. All the curious boys got together and said, 'Wow!' We were all so excited. It wasn't so much that I was precocious, but my intellectual curiosity was getting the better of me. It was so much fun.

At school, he not only read Shakespeare in Lambs' edition, but another textbook used was Koizumi Yakumo—Lafcadio Hearn and his *Kwaidan*. Muramatsu reminisces how he enjoyed the story called "Mujina Zaka" (badger hill):

There was an illustration of a face like this, you see. I found it so funny. We would read it aloud all together, and then the teacher would ask, 'Does somebody want to read it?' 'Yes,' I would say. And as I read, the word '*ojochu, ojochu*' comes up. I found it so amusing and entertaining to see a Japanese word *ojochu* (maid-servant) appear in an English passage and I was dying to read that part.

Then I thought, 'But these are stories from Japan.' I would come across stories such as "Miminashi Hoichi" (Hoichi without ears), and because it's originally a Japanese folktale, I vaguely knew the story, so I could understand it right away when I read it in English. I thought to myself, 'Oh, I can read so much about Japan in English. What fun!'

Muramatsu looks back on reading *Kwaidan*, which made him think, 'Ah-ha, since it's so interesting to read about Japan in English, it must be even more exciting if I could read foreign novels in English,' and this motivated him to study English even harder.

Once in college, Komatsu became even more interested in the U.S., including



literature, jazz, movies, musicals, American management and industry, and politics, and when he graduated from university, he wrote a thesis on American politics:

“Theodore Roosevelt and the Emergence of American Imperialistic Diplomacy,” was an outrageous or shall I say, exaggerated title, but the content was nothing so dramatic.

When I was a college student, I was a leftist, you see. I was involved in things like the Gensuikyo<sup>40</sup>. I was a leftist, but I liked America very much. From my leftist perspective, the U.S. seemed imperialistic. However, in reality... I was extremely fond of the U.S. I wondered why the U.S., the country I liked very much, was imperialistic. Imperialism was evil... I had a notion that it was evil. For this reason, I wanted to study a little about why the U.S. became imperialistic. It was right about the time Theodore Roosevelt’s diplomatic policy first began to surface, and it was clearly imperialist diplomacy. So, I read a few books and managed to write something that looked like a thesis. Nothing spectacular, really.

Komatsu admits that the only reason he applied to become an interpreter for the Japan Productivity Center-U.S. State Department program was to go to the U.S.:

I think I applied in my senior year. All I wanted was to go to the United States. It wasn't all that easy to go to the U.S. in those days. And...my thesis happened to be on American studies, and I also liked jazz very much. I had a great admiration for the U.S. The reason I took the test was because if I passed it, I could go to the U.S., and I really wanted to go.

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<sup>40</sup> See Section 3.3.

Thus, although at the time, his primary motive was ‘to go to the U.S., rather than to become an interpreter,’ this decision would eventually change his entire career.

### Going Abroad

For ordinary Japanese in the 1940s and 1950s, going abroad was something exceptional, and as such, for Muramatsu and Komatsu, the first time they left Japan was when they were selected as interpreter trainees at the U.S. State Department. Among the three who learned English as a foreign language, only Kunihiro went abroad while in college.

Kunihiro was a sophomore at Aoyama Gakuin University in Tokyo, when he participated in the first Japan-America Student Conference<sup>41</sup> after the war, held in Honolulu, Hawaii, not yet a state. He was one of 5 or 6 students chosen out of 2,000 applicants.

Kunihiro recounts a presentation he gave at the conference, which virtually paved the way for him to study cultural anthropology at the University of Hawaii later. In the presentation, he talked about his future dream of having people understand Japan through English translations of Japanese literary works. He specifically talked about a British woman named Constance Garnett, who devoted herself to translating Russian literature of the Czarist era, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, into English:

Thanks to her work, Russian literature was translated into English and disseminated among the British and the Americans, and at the time of the

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<sup>41</sup> Japan-America Student Conference started before the war, continuing until today, and many participants later became leaders in both countries, such as Dean Rusk, Secretary of State in Kennedy Administration, and former Prime Minister of Japan Miyazawa Kiichi.

Communist Revolution, although it came as a surprise and people didn't like it, the feelings of British and the Americans did not change toward the Russian farmers, people in small businesses, tradesmen, and younger Russian men and women. This is something only literature can accomplish, acting as a kind of bridge, and this is something I would like to do in the future. [...]

The dean of the University of Hawaii heard this speech, and said, 'Why don't you come to our university?'

Kunihiro actually had been dreaming of going to Scandinavia to study, in Denmark or Sweden, as these countries were known for being agricultural, pacifist and welfare nations (see 4.3). Nevertheless, Kunihiro accepted the offer to study in Hawaii, one year after the conference. The dean not only encouraged Kunihiro to study at the University of Hawaii but he let the young Japanese student stay at his place, providing him with an opportunity to live in a different culture. Kunihiro stayed in Hawaii for approximately two and a half years, from age 23 to 25 or 26, studying cultural anthropology.

## 4.2 Growing up in a bilingual environment

Nishiyama Sen and Sohma Yukika can be classified as the products of what Jim Cummins calls 'additive bilingualism' (2000, pp.37-39)<sup>42</sup>, fluent and cognitively intelligent in two languages. As Nishiyama aptly summarizes, 'all the experiences combined have, in a way, automatically made me bilingual.' On closer look, however, one notices that their respective *habitus* are quite different. Nishiyama grew up in a

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<sup>42</sup> The term 'additive bilingualism' refers to a form of bilingualism that results when students add a second language to their intellectual tool-kit while continuing to develop conceptually and academically in their first language (Cummins, 2000, p.37).

monolingual family in an English-speaking environment, while Sohma was brought up in a bilingual family in monolingual Japanese society.

#### 4.2.1 Acquiring English

Nishiyama was born in 1911, in Salt Lake City, Utah, to Japanese parents, brought back to Japan briefly when he was around two years old, but mainly lived in the U.S., attending college and obtaining a master's degree there. He returned to Japan with his mother after his father passed away, under pre-war conditions when it was difficult for a young Japanese-American to find decent work in the U.S.

Nishiyama recalls that he never learned 'child talk' in Japanese but instead he acquired Japanese spoken by adults. To him, his Japanese was 'literally my mother tongue. My mom's words...' Since he only spoke Japanese with his parents, although 'one step outside the house everything was English,' he couldn't understand any English at first. Nishiyama recounts one of his early linguistic experiences in a small town in Nevada when he was about five and a half:

I was playing with some American friends—kids in the neighborhood. One day, there was a toy railroad. I couldn't understand a word they were saying but the American kids and I were playing together, just like romping puppies. And then, after putting a box next to the toy train tracks, a boy said, 'We'll make this the station.' That rang a bell...you know, during the Taisho and Meiji periods in Japan, we didn't use the Japanese word '*eki*.' We used an English word '*station*.' And then I thought, hey, these guys can speak Japanese. So I went home thinking that he speaks Japanese and talked to my mom about it and she told me, 'No, that's English.' So I thought 'OK, that's what English is like...'

Nishiyama recalls another episode which, in retrospect, motivated him to learn English. He was around five years old then:

It was before I started school. I was playing with American kids in the neighborhood, without understanding what they were saying. And the thing was, whenever one kid slips out of the group, they'd say, 'Hey, where're you goin'?' In English. They said, 'Hey, where're you goin'?' This particular sound only, I was able to guess that it meant where you are going.

One day, as evening sets in, I tried to slip out of the group to go home since I thought it was nearing dinnertime, but was confronted with, 'Hey, where're you goin'?' Now, how do I say this? I have to tell them that I need to go home and said... I put together the minimal English words that I learned until then, and I think I said something like this. I don't remember word for word but I said, 'me, go, me, papa, house.' Then they said, 'Oh,' and understood. I headed home very relieved.

Nishiyama then told his father about this, who taught him to simply respond in such a situation, 'Home.' Some days later, his father took him shopping. When they passed a friend's house, the man asked the little boy, 'Hey, where're you goin'?' Nishiyama replied, 'Home,' as his father had taught him, although in this particular situation, he should have answered 'Shopping' instead of 'Home.' Nishiyama remembers that his father rather than correcting the error and teach him the appropriate answer, simply praised his son and said, 'Yes, that's exactly how you should say it,' which made Nishiyama feel very good. In Nishiyama's view, his father, not a language or education expert, instinctively tried not to discourage his boy in acquiring English, and provided him with one of the basic things you need in life—you should not be afraid of speaking.'

When Nishiyama was six, his father took him to a small elementary school and on the way, he said to his son gently, ‘Sen, my boy, you are going to school starting today but you aren’t going to understand what the teacher is saying. But it’s okay that you don’t understand. Just quietly listen and that will be fine.’ The six-year-old boy believed his father and thought, ‘Oh, if I didn’t have to worry and just had to listen, then going to school would be easy.’

Nishiyama tells about one episode at school which stayed in his mind to this day:

The teacher handed out balls of clay to each pupil at their desk. Then, the teacher said something. I had no idea what was said, so I just stared at the ball of clay and remained still. Then, a boy right behind my desk was babbling away as he worked on his project. Actually it sounded like he was saying, ‘I’m gonna make a turtle, I’m gonna make a turtle, I’m gonna make a turtle...’ I had no idea what he was saying. Finally I turned around, wanting to know what he was saying, and he picked up the object and said, ‘See, this is my turtle,’ and showed it to me. So what do I see but a clay turtle. Oh, I see, the word ‘turtle’ he was uttering means *kame*. That was my first English lesson at school.

Nishiyama remembers, ‘I continued to attend school on my best behavior, played with other kids in the schoolyard outside, after school and during breaks, and as a result, ‘started to chatter away in English 2 or 3 months later.’

After acquiring what Cummins terms ‘conversational language’ in English, he started to learn ‘academic English’<sup>43</sup> (2000), or in Bourdieu’s term ‘*langues*

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<sup>43</sup> Cummins, in his earlier study, called the distinction BICS (basic interpersonal communication skills) and CALP (cognitive/academic language proficiency).

*d'enseignement*' (Miyajima, 2003, p.25). In Nishiyama's memory, it started with phonology in the second grade when his teacher began to teach reading and writing:

And the teacher wrote letters on the blackboard and taught us how to pronounce each one. And then, the teacher wrote the letter C and explained that it can be pronounced as <s> and also <k>. After that it was the letter A and she said, 'This can be... <a> or <ae>.' Then letter T and she explained that it's pronounced <t>. At this point, I thought, 'Wait a minute! Then if we arrange those letters to spell 'c-a-t,' we could get the word 'cat'!' It dawned on me, and I felt as if I had made the century's biggest discovery...

So I went home, properly pronounced the word, and 'taught' my mom saying, 'Mom, this is how you can read English.' At that time my mom didn't say that was obvious. She warmly replied, 'Oh, really. That's nice.'

Nishiyama's mother was not a language specialist, but she was an educator who used to teach domestic science at the Nihon Women's College, one of the two oldest women's universities in Japan. As such, along with his father, his mother was instrumental in helping Nishiyama feel that he had 'learned English using my own abilities and that greatly boosted my confidence.'

Nishiyama attributes his 'journey in becoming bilingual' to using both languages since he was a child, Japanese at home and English outside, making him 'quite fluent in both languages by the second or third grade' in elementary school.

#### **4.2.2 Critical thinking**

Unlike Nishiyama, Sohma grew up in a unique environment where she spoke English with her half-British mother and Japanese with her father, living in Japan. Sohma Yukika was born in 1912 in Tokyo. Her father Ozaki Gakudo Yukio

(1858-1954) was a statesman, who studied both in the U.S. and UK from 1888 to 1890, and was known for his anti-fascist political views. He served as a member of the Diet for 63 years and was dubbed the 'Father of Constitutional Government' for his belief in democracy, peace and internationalism. Her mother, Theodora Hideko, was born in England as a daughter of a Japanese baron and a British woman, came to Japan at the age of 16, and worked as secretary to Mary Fraser, the wife of the UK Minister to Japan, until she married Ozaki, then a Member of the Diet, as well as Governor of Tokyo.

In speaking English with her mother, one thing Sohma learned was to use language precisely and accurately, not leaving things ambiguous. For example, whenever Sohma said 'now,' her mother would press and ask what exactly she meant by 'now,' right now or one minute later (Hinohara & Sohma, 2003, p.90). Sohma's daughter Fujiko writes that Sohma did the same thing to her children, telling them that in English, 'now' means 'at once,' not 5 minutes later (Hara, 2005, p.19).

Other than that, Sohma did not say much about language taught and used at home. Instead, Sohma gave a detailed account of the influence her parents had on her outlook of the world:

I myself may have been influenced by the fact that I am quarter-British, but even my father was always saying that Japan is only a part of the whole wide world. That's why I cannot help but think about the world and its relations.

Sohma denies that she had experienced any difficulty in filling in cultural gaps, 'Most probably because I grew up in an environment where I did not feel the difference between Japanese and English.' Sohma adds, however, that she was taught logical reasoning and critical thinking at home, which was never taught at school:



So, about arguments, in our house, we were always told, ‘Argue with reason.’ ‘Don’t quibble, but argue with reason.’ Of course, my mother argued, too, very naturally. You can’t say anything without reasoning.

Sohma acknowledges that her tendency to think critically came from her parents, especially the way her father reacted to many things that people in pre-war Japan said: ‘I would come home and tell our parents what the teacher taught us, and they would say, “Those are all lies.”...My father didn’t trust education at school and so he complained all the time.’ One illustration Sohma gives is what the teacher said about cherry blossoms:

In a geography class in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, the teacher said, ‘Cherry blossoms are the soul of Japan. And yet, there is a traitor who gave that soul to a foreign country.’ I was sitting in the front row then, and thought it was stupid to say something like that. It was my father [Governor of Tokyo] who gave cherry trees to the U.S. as a gift from Tokyo, and I knew he didn’t sell the ‘soul’ of Japan. It was then and there that I learned that teachers didn’t know things, and ever since then, I became critical of what the teachers said. My parents taught me to ‘think by yourself’ and to ‘decide for yourself.’

(Hinohara & Sohma, 2003, p.111, my translation)

Clearly, as in Sohma’s own analysis, her upbringing nurtured her attitude toward life. When she was as young as 3 or 4 years old, she became aware of her own view of life, which was, ‘Strike, before you are struck. There are only two choices in life. So why wait to be struck?’ In retrospect, Sohma feels this presumably came from watching her elder sister having a hard time being bullied because of her very

Caucasian appearance:

Back then, I wanted to do everything I could so that I won't be discriminated against for having European blood in me. I decided to pass as Japanese, and that's why I kept my mother away from me. Not so much at the Sacred Heart school<sup>44</sup>, but I'm sorry to say, I didn't allow her to come visit at all at Gakushuin<sup>45</sup>. Not even to parents-teachers' meetings. I would tell the teacher, 'I will take full responsibility, so please tell me everything,' and never allowed my mother to come to meetings at school... See, I was a self-assertive child...I must have been in 5<sup>th</sup> grade in elementary school. But I entered a year late, so age-wise I was a 6<sup>th</sup> grader.

It seems that this remarkable sense of independence and autonomy became the backbone of Sohma's life, as a person and as an interpreter.

#### 4.2.3 Learning Japanese

As for learning Japanese, Sohma read Japanese and Chinese classics extensively and remembers that it was her teachers at school who were 'strict. Japanese was hammered into our brains. This has definitely paid off later.' While her father never really commented on linguistic issues, he had an indirect way of teaching his daughter by reading much himself, occasionally giving her such comments as 'You haven't even read this yet?' Ozaki was known as a great orator as well, especially for his

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<sup>44</sup> Sohma left Sacred Heart and entered Gakushuin Girls School, because when 8-year-old Sohma asked why people are not punished for killing other people in a war, despite the Ten Commandments injunction not to kill, her teacher-nun scolded her and said, "You should not ask such an insolent question" (Hara, 2004, p.18).

<sup>45</sup> A private school, where aristocrats and imperial family members send their children.

historic address calling for the impeachment of the Katsura Cabinet. Sohma attributes this to his voluminous reading as well as his strong will and determination.

With Nishiyama, while in an elementary school in the U.S., he had lessons of Japanese after school, from four to five, when his friends were outside playing baseball, and he ‘hated’ being ‘stuck inside for an hour studying awful Japanese’ learning to read and write, struggling with *kanji* characters. However, he liked his teacher, a student from Japan, who taught pupils judo and had a black belt himself.

In spite of these lessons, since he rarely used *kanji* on a daily basis, by the time he graduated from college, Nishiyama didn’t remember any *kanji*, not even the basic ones. As such, it required Nishiyama a considerable effort to study reading and writing in Japanese later when he was back in Japan and started to work.

Since he could not read or write Japanese, he was first assigned to the library, where he ‘started to read electrical engineering textbooks, especially those related to elementary radio communication’:

I was able to read *katakana* and *hiragana* letters, but not the *kanji* characters.<sup>46</sup> But since I had studied the content in university, I could understand what was being explained. So it was purely using a dictionary to look up the *kanji* character’s meaning and tracing it from there...

Nishiyama gave a detailed account of how he learned to read and write *kanji*, which obviously was an enormous task. He learned different forms of the parts that constitute a *kanji*<sup>47</sup> and the number of strokes<sup>48</sup> needed, used a Japanese dictionary for

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<sup>46</sup> The Japanese writing system consists of three different forms—*kanji*, imported from China, and its derivatives *hiragana* and *katakana*. All three are used daily.

<sup>47</sup> The *kanji*, Chinese characters, are graphic and are formed with a couple of parts—*hen*, usually on the left and *tsukuri* on the right. Once you learn various kinds of these parts, you are able to infer the meaning of a *kanji*.

*kanji* to see how it should be read, and after figuring out how to read it, he ‘then used a Japanese-English dictionary’ to search for its meaning. He calls this ‘a three-step process’ where he tried to read *kanji* using English. Nishiyama continued this strenuous study of *kanji* for about three months and reached junior high school level of literacy, at the same time acquiring technical terminology in Japanese. Then he was assigned to another department, where his boss trained him by having him write reports on weekly experiments. His boss would ‘edit it using a red pen’ and Nishiyama made sure that ‘If something was corrected once, I made it a point to remember it.’ Eventually, ‘the red pen marks for corrections began to diminish,’ and after many years of continuous efforts, by about 1939, there was nothing for his boss to edit and he finally became confident about reading and writing, enabling him to use Japanese and English in much the same way.

Nishiyama summarizes that all his experiences, including the steps he took to study Japanese, helped make him bilingual—comfortable in both languages.

Bourdieu, in discussing language and communication, did not particularly consider ‘language capital’ of bilingual or multilingual agents (Miyajima, 2003, p.35). However, it is evident that Nishiyama and Sohma, although their linguistic *habitus* were different, were both blessed with language capital which enabled them to become autonomous learners.

### 4.3 Experiencing World War II

One thing the five interpreters with varied experiences shared was the experience of World War II. The stories were told with frequent references to WWII to mark the

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<sup>48</sup> In order to look up a *kanji* in a dictionary, you need to know how many strokes are used to write it.

time, as ‘before the war,’ ‘during the war’ or ‘after the war.’ The interviewees often talked about the end of the war using the term ‘*haisen*’ (defeat in the war) or a more popular euphemism ‘*shusen*’ (end of the war). In this section, differing dimensions of war are narrated by the five people in testimony to show how each person was affected by WWII.

#### 4.3.1 Pre-war years

As the daughter of a pacifist politician, Sohma remembers well the ambience of pre-war Japan, which bothered her and her father greatly. When the Japanese Army invaded Manchuria in 1931, Sohma was in Los Angeles visiting her mother, who was ill and hospitalized. It was ‘around September 17 or 18, when the newspapers issued a special edition in Los Angeles, announcing “Japan invades Manchuria.”’ Her father kept saying ‘Japan is making a mistake,’ and ‘there was much pressure at that time to shut Ozaki’s mouth.’ Sohma recalls that on their way to New York in October from LA, they stopped in Washington DC, and her father went to see President Hoover, while Sohma and her sister were waiting at the hotel:

He came back saying, ‘What a shame. What a pity.’ We asked what the problem was, and he said, ‘Everyone there, including Hoover, believes Japan’s governmental policy to be non-expansionist, that Japan will not invade any further.’

Sohma reminisced about her father telling her that in spite of his efforts to explain the danger, Hoover and his people replied, ‘The Japanese government has never told a lie since the Meiji era. So, we will believe what the Japanese government says.’ Ozaki told his daughters, ‘It is a shame to see the trust eroded. The world trust that has been formed since the reign of the Meiji Emperor...’ That was when Sohma strongly felt

‘the importance of trust between countries.’

Sohma's mother passed away in London the following year, and the family returned to Japan in January of 1933: ‘There, in Kobe, the rightists awaited us with a flag saying, “Ozaki shall not be permitted to disembark.” ’ Ozaki, his two daughters and the mother’s remains sailed to Yokohama, where ‘we secretly got off. We went back to our house in Zushi, constantly worrying what people might do to us. That was in Japan, in 1933.’ Ozaki was ‘doing the best he could to stop what the military was trying to do, but even the Diet was on the side of the army, and there was nothing you could do about the whole situation.’

The militaristic movements not only worried Ozaki Yukio, but they bothered his daughter deeply, especially after she married Viscount Sohma and became pregnant with their first child:

Those days, the entire air surrounding Japan was rightist. The education was geared toward the ‘Empire of Japan’— even education had changed. I did not want my child to receive such education, but I could not do anything about it... So I was extremely troubled...she was to be born in May.

So, around March...I went to my father for some advice, and he said, ‘They are all idiots. There’s nothing to be done.’ This was getting me nowhere. My father can’t do anything about it, so obviously there is nothing I can do, I thought. On the other hand, my child was to be born. I was at a loss as to what to do.

It was ‘during this helpless period’ in 1939 that an American friend of hers introduced Sohma to an MRA woman who came from the U.S. to Japan and explained

the philosophy of Moral Re-Armament<sup>49</sup> that ‘You can’t just blame other people. That’s what the whole world is doing. Even if you blame them, they are not going to change. People are always paying more attention to themselves. The only thing you can do is for yourself to change.’ Sohma quite agreed but the question was how it could be done:

You have to change yourself. How? Well, she told me to have a guidance based on four absolute norms. But you know, she says you would have to ask God to give you this guidance, and I didn’t believe it at first. ‘That doesn’t matter,’ she said and kept saying, ‘He believes in you.’ Well, I didn’t know about that, but I couldn’t do anything else to remedy the situation, so I thought maybe I’d give it a try. And that’s how it started.

Then, in November or December of 1939, some MRA members visited Japan and asked Sohma to be their interpreter, which marked ‘my first interpreting experience.’ And this was the beginning of Sohma’s lasting involvement with MRA, including her first involvement with simultaneous interpreting after the war.

Nishiyama, an electrical engineering major, graduated from college in 1932 at the age of 21. It was only a few years after the worldwide Great Depression, which made it extremely difficult for any graduate, let alone a young American of Japanese descent, to find work. Nishiyama somehow found a part-time cleaning job at his university, when one day he was offered a teaching assistant job:

And so I was washing windows. Then, the dean of College of Electrical Engineering saw me and said, ‘Hey, Nishiyama, do you wanna job for this

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<sup>49</sup> More on MRA in Section 5.2.

fall?’ I said, ‘Do I want a job!?’ I practically jumped off my perch on the window and followed him. And then this professor said, ‘I’m now able to hire one teaching assistant, and this assistant position is open.’ He was kind enough to say, ‘So, if you want it, it’s yours.’ Luckily, my grades at school had been at the top of the class. I was lucky.

Nishiyama believes that the dean offered him a teaching assistant job because he was the top of his class, and goes on to explain why he earned such good grades:

In those days, most American companies did not hire people of Japanese descent, or Asians in general. [...] Because of racial prejudice. When I was in Salt Lake City, I experienced racial discrimination in different ways. However, schools were different. There was no such discrimination. In other words, the relative standing of students in school was determined by their grades and I was fully aware of this situation. I certainly didn’t dream of coming to Japan, and intended to live in the States all my life, and I’d have to live with discrimination. So my motivation was that I had to get good grades at school, otherwise nobody would recognize me

Isn’t it interesting that such social problems became a motivation to study? Looking back on it, it turned out to be a positive thing for me. Racial discrimination worked positively for me to study harder. Because of this, I pulled many all-nighters to study, to do homework, and got the best grades.

Consequently, Nishiyama had all ‘A’s except in history, and these good grades earned him the teaching assistant position, which he occupied for two years.

In the spring of 1934, Nishiyama finished his graduate work in electrical engineering with a Master of Science degree, when his father became ill. Nishiyama



recounts the racial discrimination he experienced:

Around that time, a human resources representative of a company came, and had interviews with different students. My professor recommended me, and I had an interview with this representative. And this person said, 'All right.' After all, my grades were very good, so he said, 'Okay, you should go to the headquarters for a year, get some training there, and then our company has a subsidiary in Japan, so why don't you go there and work?'

So, I thought, sure that's all right. I had never even dreamed of going to Japan but at least I can work at the headquarters for a year. And so I said, 'If there is such a job opening, I would be very happy to take it.' Remember, the entire world was going through the time of the Great Depression, and for a long time, there was no employment for anyone.

After a while, the human resources representative sent me a letter saying, 'I had told you that we would send you to Japan after training here for a year, but U.S.-Japan relations have deteriorated and the situation has become so tense that we are finding it difficult to continue our operations at the subsidiary in Japan. We regret to inform you that we are not able to hire you.' So I wrote back. In the letter I said, 'No, it is not necessary for me to go to Japan. I am an American who majored in electrical engineering, and would be happy to work at your headquarters.' And then another letter came, right before my dad died, which said, 'We are unable to hire you under conditions other than what we offered you before.'

That was a tremendous shock for me. At this moment, I learned for the first time what racial discrimination was all about. What made the matter worse, my dad had one foot in the grave. To receive such kind of letter at that particular moment was, for a young man...but there was nothing I could

do.

Nishiyama's father passed away shortly after this. Since his mother did not want to stay in the States after her husband died, Nishiyama decided to come back to Japan with her, because 'as an only child I felt responsible for her.' However, he was hoping the economy would pick up while in Japan, and thought, 'if there was a job opening, I would go back to the U.S., work, and send money to my mother.'

Once in Japan, despite his initial reluctance to come back, Nishiyama became enchanted with the beauty and warmth of his homeland:

It was the autumn of 1934, and my cousin showed me around Tokyo. Autumn is often referred to as 'autumn for art,' right? So, my cousin took me to an art gallery in Ueno and showed me a variety of paintings and wood carvings. I was so surprised. You see, I grew up in Salt Lake, a very remote place in those days, and things like culture and art, well, they did exist to a certain degree, but I thought, 'Wow, the Japanese are people that make such wonderful things. I'm impressed!' I was overwhelmed.

On top of it, all my relatives fussed about me and they were so nice to me. And when I looked around, everyone seemed to have the same sort of face. Wow, I never realized there would be so many Japanese. I thought, 'They all look like me!'

Nishiyama found also that there was no need to worry about prejudice and so he 'absolutely fell in love with Japan. I thought, what a wonderful place.'

Having come back to Japan, it didn't take Nishiyama long to find work. It so happened that his great uncle, professor at the Tokyo Imperial University in the Meiji period, was the founding director of the Electrotechnical Laboratory of the Ministry of

Communications, and he asked the director of this governmental institute if there were any openings:

Anyhow, my great uncle told me, 'Take your résumé and your transcripts, and go see the director.' [...] I went to see the director of the Electrotechnical Laboratory and he kindly interviewed me in his office. I showed him my transcripts. He saw my grades and said, 'Oh, these are pretty good grades,' and told me, 'Well, we will hire you,' on the spot.

Although Nishiyama was offered a position immediately, he did not forget to remind the director of his nationality:

I replied, 'Oh, I see,' and added, 'but sir, to tell you the truth, nationality-wise, I am an American, which means I am a foreigner here.' He generously said, 'That is not a problem.' And he hired me. I asked, 'Sir, when shall I start?' and his reply was, 'Well, you can start tomorrow, if you like.' It was as easy as that. In other words, I was a lucky kid. I must say I was blessed with much good fortune.

This marked the beginning of not only Nishiyama's professional career, but his re-learning of his native language in terms of reading and writing in academic and technical Japanese, which many years later would have tremendous impact on his interpreting career.

#### **4.3.2 Wartime days**

Muramatsu remembered clearly the day the war started:

On the day the Pacific War started, the whole class was at a movie theater in Asakusa, to see a movie. The movie was *Triumph of the Will*, the one about the Berlin Olympics. It was directed by Leni Riefenstahl, who died yesterday<sup>50</sup>, a German lady who was known as pro-Nazi. I remember it very well. We saw the movie and came out of the theater to find that the war had started.

When the teacher told us the news...we were all children and we thought, 'Wow!' And walking back to Kuramae, I remember all of us chanting something like, 'The war has begun...'

Muramatsu also remembered the days without much food, air-raids that started in Tokyo and working in factories instead of studying toward the end of the war. He explains why he entered the Tokyo Aviation Engineering School:

I loved model airplanes as a boy. I dreamed of flying, but the thing is, I get motion sickness. So that wasn't going to work, and therefore I decided I would build airplanes instead. There was a school in Minami Senju called Tokyo Prefectural Aviation Engineering School, which was founded as a national policy. [...] So I studied aviation there. Despite the need to educate college graduates as flight engineers for the war, there was not enough time. Therefore, this school was going to train junior high school students...that is, fifth grade students in the old junior high school system...to assist college graduate engineers.

Kunihiro gave a most detailed and a vivid account of his days during the war. After

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<sup>50</sup> September 9, 2003.

explaining about English being the ‘language of the enemy’ (Section 1, this chapter), he depicts the dreadful situation he remembers:

More serious were the severe food shortages, and the living conditions were truly dreadful. And pretty soon, when I was in the second year of junior high school, air raids started. And when I was in the second and third year of junior high school, I was in Kobe then, there were air raids in Kobe, and my house was burned down three times.

And the food shortages were extremely serious. In those days, ordinary citizens in big cities [...] were able to receive only 1200 calorie ration of food per day. It may not be clear to you how much that is, but 1200 calories would be what a seriously ill person, a strange analogy I admit, but like a diabetes patient, is allowed to take in one day. [...] when I say 1200 calories, I don’t mean proper rice or proper food. In the extreme cases, yam leaves were given. Leaves or stems, things like that. [...] As such, to put it bluntly, something like English, you didn’t at all feel like studying.

Kunihiro talked about the food shortages extensively, adding that he wanted to study in Denmark, Sweden or Norway, for several reasons. One was food:

And the food shortage was the biggest problem. And you know, Northern Europe had great agricultural countries with an abundance of agricultural products, butter and cheese—dairy farming and stock breeding included. We were starving in Japan. I think that food had a lot to do with the fact that I was attracted to Scandinavia.

Another element was that Scandinavian countries were welfare states, and ‘it was a

time when people were attracted and interested in welfare states. Japan was in a miserable state back then.'

One more attraction, probably the most important one for Kunihiro, was he thought Scandinavian countries were 'complete pacifists': 'I experienced more than enough hardships during the war and became a total pacifist. I had become a pacifist. Almost a religious pacifist. I still am...' Kunihiro is widely known as a staunch pacifist, an advocate of Japan's '*heiwa kenpo*' (Peace Constitution), and he started to talk about his aversion to war, nearly in tears, when he remembered the situation during the war:

[...] Then, when I was in the second year of junior high, it started—what you call air raids. Toward the end of the war, they came about twice a week, the air raids. My house was bombed and burned down three times. And in my neighborhood, there was my..., who treated me like his brother—he was what you call now a university student, and he helped me with my studies. A bomb hit him in his thighs, you see, and in no time he turned pale and died. In my arms. When a person dies, you know, you convulse. You have convulsions like this. He convulsed and passed away. I held his head in my arms like this, but there was nothing I could do. I couldn't do anything, and before I knew it, he passed away.

I experienced something like this, and so it's natural that I do not want a war. I cannot possibly say, 'Yes, let's go to war.' No matter what! Even if I were turned upside down. So these were the kinds of things that surrounded me when I first started to learn English.

While Kunihiro, Muramatsu and Komatsu were all in Japan during the war, Sohma experienced wartime as a wife and mother in China. She accompanied her lieutenant husband to Manchuria, had her youngest child there, and came back to Japan with her

four children. Her youngest was only 6 months old, and the trip back home by train to Rajin, then by ship to Niigata was a hard one. Sohma recalls 'it was really hard' and narrated the details, how they had to wait for the boat back to Japan, which finally came. Her eldest child Fujiko was born in May of 1939, and was about 5 or 6 years old when they traveled home in 1945:

We had to walk up the gangplank to the boat, and Fujiko still tells me that she thought at that time, 'The only person who can take care of me in this world is myself'...

So we got to Niigata, but we had no place to stay. And since we had to take the train, we headed towards the station. I don't remember how we got there, though. I was hoping to stay at this inn in front of the station, but I was told that no room was available. I said, 'Okay, I hear you. But I am taking the first train in the morning, so let me just stay somewhere' and tried to negotiate by offering some sugar from ration distribution. Seeing that I was with children, they decided to let us stay in some kind of a closet for bedding.

After Sohma safely landed and spent the night in Niigata, the following morning, she headed for Sohma in Fukushima Prefecture, where her husband Viscount Sohma owned the family estate. However, since people did not welcome Ozaki Yukio's daughter, Sohma and her children moved to the Ozaki family villa in Karuizawa and stayed there until the family went back to Tokyo after the war (Nishijima, 2002).

#### **4.3.3 Post-war period**

Kunihiro witnessed Japan's defeat in Kobe, when he was in the third year in junior high school, and 'the year after the defeat in the war...I thought, I would do anything

to go to Denmark.’ Unfortunately, there were no official diplomatic relations between Denmark and Japan then, hence there was no embassy. However, Kunihiro found in the newspaper that Denmark would ‘open a legation in Japan,’ and thought, ‘This is it!’ He then used a Japanese-English dictionary and wrote a letter to the Honourable Minister, who to a Japanese high school boy was ‘someone above the clouds.’ Kunihiro remembers that ‘From above the clouds, Minister Tiritse replied to my letter and I was so happy.’

There were actually two things he had requested in the letter. Firstly, he wanted a book published by the Copenhagen University Press. The University of Copenhagen was ‘famous for linguistics with scholars such as Otto Jespersen’ and Kunihiro ‘found out somewhere that Paul Christophersen, a student of Dr. Jespersen’s, wrote a 700 page dissertation on *Articles in English*. Kunihiro maintains that he was ‘very interested in articles. Extremely interested,’ so much so that he once received a compliment from a renowned American professor praising him for not making mistakes in his usage of English articles, when Japanese people tend to make errors with articles.

The second request Kunihiro wrote was: ‘I would very much like to study in Denmark. Honourable Minister, I would appreciate it if you could help me make my wish of studying in your country become a reality.’

Young Kunihiro put much effort in writing this letter, looking up almost every word in the dictionary, not expecting he would receive a reply. Then about a month later, the Danish Minister sent him a reply. As for the boy’s first request, he wrote, ‘I understand your request about the book. I will order it for you and send it to your place when it arrives.’ Months later, the book arrived by surface mail, airmail not being available those days. Young Kunihiro was excited to see that book, but also, he was enchanted by the ‘foreignness’ it brought: ‘this book...used European style binding, or should I say, French style. In other words, it was different from these types of books



you see now, so you had to cut it open each time and read it like this...French binding. It distinctly had a European smell. The smell...it had a Western aroma.'

As for Kunihiro's wish to study at the University of Copenhagen, the Minister replied by saying that he himself was a graduate of the University of Copenhagen and that he was delighted to hear the wish. He then continued, 'It would be wonderful if you could attend my alma mater in the future but at present unfortunately, our countries do not have official diplomatic relations. Without such relations, it is indeed difficult to grant students' wish to study in each other's countries. When diplomatic ties should be restored in the future, we would be happy to welcome you. As a Dane, I look forward to having you come to our country.' While the letter was disappointing, Kunihiro was truly thankful 'to have received such a sincere reply to my letter, written by a young nobody living in a country defeated in the war.' Kunihiro still keeps the book and remembers his feelings then.

Like many college students in Japan of his time, Komatsu liked English and joined ESS, where for the first time he spoke English with other members. And like many Japanese college students of his time, Komatsu was a leftist. These two elements led him to volunteer to do interpreting for the annual conference against atomic and hydrogen bombs held by Gensuikyo:

And then I started to interpret for the Gensuikyo. That would be out of the question today, with current professional standards and ethics. However, it would be wrong to say that I was useless as an interpreter. I was quite useful, you know. I was in my sophomore year in university, and I escorted approximately 15 foreign representatives on my own to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and did consecutive interpreting for their speeches at a meeting there. And as in the case of productivity missions, Japanese interpreters used portable microphones like this one, to interpret for foreign delegates. [...]

Well, in a way, you could say it was formidable. One contributing factor was because I felt that I was a part of the movement against atomic and hydrogen bombs. I felt very strongly about it, as I was a leftist myself. For this reason, I tried my very best. I worked together with Asano-san, Fukui-san, Mitsunobu-san, and others from Tokyo University of Foreign Studies; the group was called ‘the Gensuikyo interpreters.’ They all experienced simultaneous interpreting there, and I must say, Fukui-san, Mitsunobu-san, and Asano-san were all outstanding interpreters. They all learned their English in Japan, just like I did.

Gensuikyo has held World Conferences against A & H Bombs annually since 1955, and started to use simultaneous interpreting with the second conference, because the official languages of the conference included not only Japanese and English but other languages such as French, German, Spanish and Russian (Komatsu, 2003, p.79). They recruited student volunteers as interpreters, providing on-the-job training opportunities for prospective interpreters. Komatsu volunteered to do interpreting from the very first conference. As such, when Komatsu applied to go to the United States as an interpreter, he already had ‘some experience as an interpreter.’

#### **4.4 Discussion**

The narratives of the five pioneers about their earlier life in many ways are enlightening. While the five pioneers’ *habitus* were varied, they had a few things in common: encounters with language which possibly helped foster their sensitivity toward language in general; parental influence, especially their fathers; wartime experience; incidents that prompted their interest and motivation in English; and

curiosity as part of their personality.

It is noteworthy that all five interpreters gave accounts of events which in retrospect might have helped them become sensitive to languages. Nishiyama became aware of English as distinct from his mother tongue, when as a small boy, he did not know how to express his wish to go home, and when he first learned the relationship between spelling and the sound in English at school. Muramatsu remembers that he realized the power of speech when he confronted a neighborhood bully with words. While Komatsu did not discuss his childhood, it can be surmised from his patchwork of narratives that he was made aware of language precisely because he felt he was not good at speaking. Likewise, Sohma was not particularly articulate about her early contacts with the two languages, and yet it became clear from her narratives that even as a child she was conscious of language as something to reason with logic and accuracy. Kunihiro attributed his interest in language to two factors: his father's attitude toward Chinese language, and his moving from Tokyo to Kobe, where the language spoken was completely different from Tokyo dialect. It can be summarized that early experiences with language are important in forming later attitudes toward language, but that they do not have to be in a foreign language, and experiences with mother tongue are just as important.

Kunihiro pointed out the influence of his father on his outlook on language, through the teaching of oral reading of Chinese classics. Significantly, Kunihiro is not the only one who talked about his father. Four of the five subjects talked at length about their fathers, without being prompted by the interviewer, the one exception being Komatsu, who declined to discuss his family on record as being too private. Although Nishiyama talked about his mother with affection, he talked more about his father. It was his father, Nishiyama explained, who did not discourage him from speaking when he made a mistake in English, and it was his father who assured him that he need not worry at school even though he could not speak English. Similarly, Muramatsu singled

out his father as the one who influenced him by taking him often to movies and musicals. Sohma likewise spoke more about her father, with respect and adoration, although obviously her mother played a key role in forming Sohma's inclination toward language, by disciplining her daughter to speak precisely and logically.

Although the amount of time they spent talking about wartime experiences varied, from detailed accounts by Kunihiro to virtually none by Komatsu, they all experienced and were affected by World War II one way or the other. However, it is amazing how they perceived war as something between nations, quite apart from individuals that constitute a country. Kunihiro, for example, whose house was bombed and burned three times and whose good friend was killed by a bomb, which made him a staunch pacifist, held no ill feelings toward prisoners of war or occupying soldiers, and was ready to go and study in Hawaii. Muramatsu did not hesitate to work for the Occupation Forces, and Komatsu, a leftist student, liked American literature and music and was eager to learn about the United States.

The narratives by Nishiyama and Sohma offer invaluable insights into the situation in the U.S. and in Japan before the war broke out.

For one thing, Nishiyama admitted that he made sure to get good grades at school in order to fight racial discrimination in the U.S. Usually calm and mellow Nishiyama never talked in a vehement way, but was quite straightforward when he recounted the discrimination he experienced in the United States, his country, simply because he was Japanese-American. Although he asked to delete the name of the company which treated him unfairly, he left the story itself intact, giving permission to keep it on record. Contrary to the situation in the U.S., surprisingly, a government organization in Japan hired Nishiyama, just before the war, knowing that technically he was not a Japanese citizen but an American, having been born in the United States. It did not present any problems, presumably because it was obvious Nishiyama was Japanese by birth.

Sohma's story about her father, Ozaki Yukio, and his view of pre-war Japan, including his desperate efforts to prevent Japan from going to war, is informative and moving. Sohma offered a unique perspective on Japan seen from an exceptional position, and her account revealed the existence of an outspoken, courageous and independent woman in Japan more than half a century ago.

Kunihiro's encounter with a prisoner of war from Scotland, as well as his contact with soldiers of the Occupation Forces, is both amazing and touching. Here, again, an unknown picture of the situation in Japan during and immediately after the war is presented. It is not commonly known that there were POW camps all over Japan, as in Kunihiro's testimony, and that although it was officially prohibited to contact prisoners of war, the fact was they were not entirely inaccessible for Japanese citizens.

The lack of tension and hostility between soldiers of the Occupation Forces and the citizens of the occupied nation is also remarkable, something not usually reported. Interaction between the Japanese people and the soldiers from different countries is possibly an interesting area of enquiry from the perspective of interpersonal and intercultural communication.

One thing about wartime Japan which has to be mentioned here is that, contrary to popular notions, or at least to the surprise of the interviewer, who held the impression that teaching English was prohibited during the war, both Muramatsu and Kunihiro testified that they did indeed study English at school in the middle of war. Muramatsu even went so far as to say that he was blessed with an outstanding teacher of English thanks to the government policy, in his view, to have quality English language education in a public school specializing in aviation, which was deemed important for the government. Kunihiro also testified that the outstanding textbooks by Baron Kanda Naibu were used during the war, and that the Ministry of Education started to authorize textbooks of English toward the end of the war. This is contrary to the generally held belief that English was totally banned as a hostile language, and contradicts the

collective memory of the Japanese contemporaries that they were not allowed to use English and had to change English loan words, such as baseball terms, into Japanese.

It seems as if the government of Japan, before and during the war, was ambivalent in their attitude toward the English language, resulting in double standards in their policy, and despite the antagonistic campaign against the language of the enemy, the Ministry of Education was well aware of the importance of English language teaching and learning. Yamaguchi Makoto (2001) found that NHK, then government-owned public broadcasting system, started its *Eigo Kôza* (English lesson) programs long before the war, in 1925 with Okakura Yoshisaburo<sup>51</sup> as the first instructor, continued the broadcasts until the morning of the Pearl Harbor attack on December 8, 1941, and resumed the program one month after the end of the war (p.36). All these contradictory findings tell us that the issue of language in society and in government policies before, during, and after the war is one area where more research should be carried out.

Another area which merits attention from the point of view of English language education is how the pioneer interpreters learned English. Despite the recent trends in English language teaching which emphasize practical and functional aspects of communication, Muramatsu, Kunihiro and Komatsu all admitted that the English education they received was the grammar-translation method, which in itself is expected, but what is significant is they all felt it was effective and contributed to their proficiency in English.

Closely related to language learning is the element of motivation. The narratives of the three interpreters, who lived in Japan and studied English as a foreign language, presented some incidents or factors which presumably helped them to be interested in English and motivated them to study the language. For example, it was talking to a

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<sup>51</sup> Professor of English at the Tokyo Koto Shiha Gakko and later, Rikkyo University.

prisoner of war from Scotland that excited the teenaged Kunihiro, so much so that he was ‘bewitched with English’ all his life. For Muramatsu, it was the way his teacher communicated successfully with American soldiers that impressed him, strongly motivating him to study English to become like his teacher. For Komatsu, it was his interest in the United States that motivated him to study English. It is insightful that all of these motivations fall within the category of self-determination (intrinsic) forms of motivation, rather than controlled (extrinsic), in the self-determination continuum proposed by Deci and Ryan (1985, in Dörnyei, 2001, p.28).

Additionally, it seems the personal traits of the five subjects might have something to do with their becoming interested in English, for although their characters are different, there is one attribute that the five pioneers share, namely their immense intellectual curiosity. It was curiosity that drove Muramatsu, Kunihiro and Komatsu to venture on new things, such as applying to go to the United States to be trained at the U.S. Department of State. It was curiosity that drove Sohma to join Moral Re-Armament. It was curiosity that drove Nishiyama to try simultaneous interpreting for Apollo space mission broadcasts, to cite just a few examples. As Muramatsu aptly pointed out, ‘curiosity’ is a ‘vital qualification’ for interpreting, and all five pioneer interpreters evidently possess a great curiosity, along with the will and the determination to pursue what they decided to do.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the *habitus* of each of the five subjects was explored, from their upbringing and early contact with language, particularly the acquisition and learning of both their mother tongue and a foreign or a second language, as well as from their wartime experiences, ascertaining that they had tremendous impact on their lives.

The five subjects were categorized in two broad groups: Kunihiro, Muramatsu and

Komatsu in one category, learning English as a foreign language, while Nishiyama and Sohma in the other, acquiring English in a bilingual environment. Notwithstanding some commonalities, it is clear from their narratives that they are the products of differing *habitus*, each unique in its own way. Supposedly shared experiences of the war manifested different experiences with varying influences on the ensuing life of each of the pioneer interpreters. Likewise, even when being grouped together because of seemingly similar backgrounds, the ways they learned languages were individually unique, from Kunihiro's read-aloud method to Nishiyama's rigorous writing exercises.

At the same time, however, some basic features were evident which enabled them to excel in their linguistic and communicative endeavours. They had early memories of coming in contact with language, which helped shape their later outlook on language, and their fathers played crucial roles in this formation. They experienced war, which did not have direct bearing on language per se, but nevertheless had an important impact on their life, as shown in the case of Kunihiro turning into a staunch pacifist. In language learning, all five subjects shared striking similarity in the enormous efforts they exerted in learning both Japanese and English, by reading extensively and intensively. In addition, interestingly, both Sohma and Kunihiro, with entirely different *habitus*, mentioned the need to study Chinese classics, and Muramatsu and Komatsu emphasized the significance of studying literature, English and Japanese. This is to testify that for interpreters, despite their work being oral, the basic foundation to enable their work has to be built with solid blocks, some of which are classics, the linguistic and cultural heritage across history. All three interpreters who studied English in Japan revealed that the grammar-translation method was not entirely useless in achieving proficiency in a foreign language. Also, some concrete examples of incidents were detailed which helped motivate them in their study of English.

Another common attribute found among the five interpreters is their immense curiosity to propel them into adventurous actions, along with their strong will to



sustain their endeavours.

The following chapter will be devoted to observing further the *habitus* at work in the field, by studying the narratives of the five subjects to see how they entered the field of interpreting, and how they finally became intercultural communication professionals at international conferences and in diplomatic negotiations.

## Chapter 5 Into the Field of Interpreting

Interpreters are an ambivalent presence. As in-between figures, crossing linguistic and cultural boundaries, they are both valued and at the same time treated with hidden contempt. Michael Cronin (2002) considers this the ‘problem of control,’ arguing that ‘Proximity is both desirable and dreaded. The desire is to manipulate and the dread comes from the fear of being misled, either by the native interpreter or by the nonnative interpreter going native’ (p.55). According to Cronin, there were two different kinds of interpreters in the colonial past:

The choice for the architects of empire was between what might be termed *heteronomous* and *autonomous* systems of interpreting. A heteronomous system involves recruiting local interpreters and teaching them the imperial language. The interpreters may be recruited either by force or through inducements. An autonomous system is one where colonizers train their own subjects in the language or languages of the colonized. (2002, p.55)

Whereas it is obviously far-fetched to make an analogy of post-war Japan with an imperial colony, the fact that the United States, an occupying country, tried to recruit interpreter trainees from the youth in Japan, a defeated country, is somewhat reminiscent of the ‘*heteronomous* system,’ although the interpreters, including Muramatsu, Kunihiro and Komatsu, wished to be trained of their own will and were already able to speak the language of the victor.

Sohma, despite her upbringing as a bilingual daughter of a Japanese-British mother, was asked to do simultaneous interpreting for MRA conferences as a Japanese interpreter, and has worked for Japanese politicians as their interpreter.

Nishiyama, on the other hand, was born and brought up as an American citizen in the United States, eventually working as an official interpreter for ambassadors at the U.S. Embassy in Japan.

In this chapter, life stories of the five interpreters will be examined focusing on the beginning of their career, to see how they went into the ‘field’ of interpreting. In section 5.1, stories are told by Muramatsu, Kunihiro and Nishiyama, who all worked for the General Headquarters (GHQ) of the Allied Forces in different capacities. Particularly for Nishiyama and Muramatsu, their work at GHQ laid the foundation for their future careers. In the following section, Sohma’s initiation into the field of interpreting is studied. In Section 5.3, the narratives of Muramatsu, Kunihiro and Komatsu show how the ‘*heteronomous*’ interpreters were given on-the-job training in the U.S., which in later years would have profound impact on interpreting as a profession in Japan. In Section 5.4, a brief overview of the initial Japan-U.S. Ministerial Meetings on Trade and Economic Affairs is offered, to show how Nishiyama in Hakone, followed by Muramatsu and Kunihiro in Washington DC, contributed to the first official attempts at simultaneous interpreting. The final section is devoted to the discussion of the insights and implications drawn from the experiences of the five pioneers.

## 5.1 Occupation Forces

Nishiyama, Muramatsu and Kunihiro, by chance, all worked for GHQ at different locations, in different capacities, and consequently with differing experiences.

For Kunihiro, like many of his contemporaries, working for GHQ was out of economic necessity:

[...] my father had failed in his business. It was like ‘a *samurai* trying to

do business'...he was not suited or trained for the job and thus failed. He ended up deeply in debt, and our household finances were awfully tight. And my brothers—I'm the eldest and have five, six younger siblings. We were the perfect example of what they call, 'the poor with many kids.' So I thought, 'I have to do something about this. I have to help my father.'

He was hired by GHQ's Civil Affairs Section in Urawa, Saitama Prefecture, and worked as their translator:

Thinking back, I can't believe I actually did such a thing, but I was a something clerk...a translating clerk or something...who translated Japanese into English, or rather like English composition; and commuted to Urawa everyday. I don't remember exactly how much I got, but being those days, it must have been around 10,000 yen a month. You could wish for nothing better if you received 10,000 yen, in those days.

Then Kunihiro started to think about going to college, feeling that 'it would make a big difference in my long life whether I went to university or not.' Since he worked during the day, he looked for universities which offered evening courses, and decided to study at night at Aoyama Gakuin University in Shibuya, a convenient location for commuting.

Kunihiro spent some time 'going to Urawa during the day to do translation, and to Aoyama Gakuin University in the evening,' when one day, he ran into a friend at Dogenzaka in Shibuya, who said, 'Hey, they're holding a Japan-America Student Conference soon. It's a revival of what existed before the war. Why don't you apply?' Kunihiro decided to apply to be a student delegate for this conference, was selected, and went to Hawaii, which he believes, marked the beginning of his 'destiny' and his

relation 'with the outside world.'

Muramatsu tried to work for the Allied Forces, wishing to learn English. He first worked at a Commonwealth camp in Tokyo with mainly Australian soldiers. He then went to a typing school in Kanda, where he studied twice as hard as the other students and was soon able to type 50 words a minute, which made him eligible to apply for GHQ work as a typist. He was interviewed by Mrs. Edna Callow, then chief of the welfare section, when the Tokyo Military Government Team changed its name to the Tokyo Civil Affairs Team of GHQ. Muramatsu did not speak English well. He had a hard time understanding Mrs. Callow when she told him to 'Come back at one-thirty,' because he was not familiar with the American way of slurring the 't' sound in 'thirty.' Mrs. Callow later told Muramatsu that she was not impressed with his English but that she decided to hire him out of sympathy.

Thanks to her kindness, Muramatsu was hired, at a salary of about 6,000 yen a month, and he vowed to himself that he would become the best typist in Japan (Muramatsu, 1978, pp.6-7). He soon realized that typing becomes faster with linguistic knowledge and started to regard the other female typists as 'copyists':

And since I had knowledge of English, I didn't make any typos. Back then, there were these 'girls', as we used to call them, and these ordinary female typists didn't know the meaning of words in English. They were simply copying letters. I used to look down on them and say, 'They are copyists,' because they were just copying. To me, they weren't really typists. For example, if you know it's a transitive verb, even if it is immediately followed by an inserted phrase, you know that an object would follow. The reason many typists skip a line is because they are not thinking about the meaning, and that's why they skip. This never happened with me.

Muramatsu soon became an expert typist. He typed so fast that people watched in astonishment, describing it 'like a machine-gun,' and one of the Americans called him, 'the fastest typist west of the Rockies.'

On top of having studied grammar thoroughly reading *An Outline of English Syntax* by Hosoe Itsunori, Muramatsu studied *Writer's Guide to English* and the *Manual of Style*, so much so that soon he was correcting what the Americans wrote. Sometimes, offended native speakers would challenge him and they made bets on grammar, but it was always Muramatsu who won, enabling him to earn some extra dollars, when a dollar was 360 yen (Muramatsu, 1978, pp.7-9).

Before long, they made Muramatsu the chief clerk, supervising three typists, and his salary went up. However, he noticed that the interpreters' pay envelopes 'were much thicker' than his. Salaries were not paid through bank transfers then. The money was handed out in brown envelopes with names written on them. It was obvious 'if someone was earning three times as much as you were making.'

There were several senior interpreters around, men and women, young and middle-aged, and 'they looked so sophisticated' when they acted as mediators between Japanese and the Americans. And there was something else he noticed other than their bulky pay envelopes:

So I would listen to them, but they were making quite a few mistakes. The errors were not so much to do with the meaning per se, but to me...For instance, there was a kind, elegant middle-aged lady, a Japanese-American. She was born in the States, but came back before the war and lost her citizenship and became a Japanese national. [...] This lady spoke quite fluently, but since she never studied English properly, although it was spoken English, she often made mistakes. For instance, she would say 'in actual' instead of 'actually.' The word 'actual' is an adjective, so in my view,

it's hardly possible to say, 'in actual.' But she had a habit of saying 'in actual' and used it all the time. None of the American soldiers complained, because they understood what she wanted to say. She got by, you see? That's why I thought I should be able to interpret as well.

Nineteen year-old Muramatsu thought 'it's a cool job that paid well,' and decided to file a request to his superior to transfer him to interpreting work. He read a book on 'how to succeed in business,' which was in the library opened by GHQ's Civil Information and Education Section, in Hibiya, and learned a strategy to 'appeal to the interests of your employers.' The letter he wrote used official phrasing he had learned, 'the undersigned': 'It will be in the interests of the United States Occupation to give the undersigned an opportunity to prove his potential ability as an interpreter [...]' (Muramatsu, 1978, p.9).

Muramatsu was 'prepared to be fired,' afraid they might tell him he was being 'presumptuous,' but he decided to take the risk:

My boss—he was Director of the Welfare Department in Oakland County, Maryland, a very gentle man from the countryside. He did not so much as smile from under his thick glasses that looked like the bottom of a Coke bottle, and just said to me, 'Muramatsu.' [...] He looked me in the eye and said, 'So, you wanna be an interpreter?' 'Yes, sir. Yes, Mr. Stemple,' I said it nice and clear. And he said, 'All right. You are an interpreter.'

The very next day, Muramatsu visited Saitama Prefectural Government in Urawa with a senior interpreter, the woman who always said 'in actual':

I first observed her interpreting, and the thing is, if you get a pain in

your stomach at this point and think, 'No way can I handle this,' you are no good. I thought, 'Hmm, I should be able to handle this.' It's called the power of positive thinking.

The following day, Muramatsu was assigned to interpret for a Japanese-American named George Hoshino and accompany him on what they called field trips, about three days a week, to Chiba, Saitama, Ibaraki, Shizuoka and Nagano.

Without any training whatsoever, young Muramatsu started his interpreting for lectures and discussion sessions at municipal offices in different cities and towns in Kanto region, making mistakes or at times faking his way through. One time, Muramatsu remembers, in a two-hour lecture, the word 'agenda' appeared many times:

I didn't know the word 'agenda.' I knew the word 'gender,' though. [...]  
So I wondered why the speaker was talking about sex. But the thing is, and this is very important—you must always translate things in context. The topic about sex was not in the least in the context, so I never uttered a word 'sei (sex or gender).' Every time the word came up, I said various things, trying to make the story make sense.

Muramatsu wrote in his memoir how his boss, who later became professor of sociology at Minnesota State University, looked at him incredulously when he asked, 'By the way, what do you mean by *gender*?' (Muramatsu, 1978, p.10). This was in 1949, and Muramatsu was 19 years old.

After Muramatsu had been working as an interpreter for 7 or 8 months, the Korean War broke out, and at one point it seemed like 'We were all going to be laid off.' However, because of the Korean War, in Muramatsu's recollection, the National Police Reserve, the predecessor of the Self Defense Forces, was being developed and



the group that had been controlling the Japanese local administration shifted its role to a military advisory group. Under such circumstances, Muramatsu was asked, 'We need a competent clerk with experience. Why don't you stay on?' which he accepted gladly. As a chief clerk for the personnel section, meticulous Muramatsu read *Military Correspondence Manual* thoroughly and memorized writing formats, including military deployment and transfer orders. Soon he knew more about military writing style than anybody else and they all came to him with questions.

Then Muramatsu's superior, a major and a military advisor, asked him if he was interested in becoming his interpreter. Muramatsu thanked him and started immediately, leaving administrative work again. Having been involved in administrative work proved an advantage, since by then Muramatsu was quite knowledgeable about the U.S. Army and Japan's precursor of the Self Defense Forces, which helped a great deal in his interpreting.

Muramatsu remembers the leaders of the Japanese National Police Reserve at the time clearly:

[...] they would have been equivalent to officers in the U.S. Army, but the word 'commissioned officer' was not used [in Japan] then. In the beginning, the pre-war officers were not hired. However, they were short on manpower, and so they lifted the ban on hiring former officers, which led lieutenants or majors from the pre-war Imperial Japanese Army to come back to join the Reserve. They were all extremely courteous toward the commissioned officers of the U.S. Army—the commissioned officers of the country that had won the war. It was different from how Iraq is today. They were showing respect toward the victors, who were also extremely gentlemanly and wanted to help Japan.

These aged officers used archaic words and expressions, and Muramatsu tried hard to translate them into English:

There was no such thing as simultaneous interpreting back then, so it was consecutive. 'That's *toki-no-ujigami*,' they would say. I thought, '*Toki-no-ujigami*?' 'How do you say *toki-no-ujigami* in English?' they would ask me. I managed to answer, 'God of time,' the only thing I could think of. I explained that it refers to the time when God appears, just at the right time. That wasn't really a mistranslation. There were many instances like this, and as such I accumulated quite a lot of interpreting experience.

The first time Nishiyama saw and heard interpreting was when a noted American scholar in electrical engineering named Dr. Irving Langmuir of General Electric was invited to lecture in Japan:

I went to listen to this lecture and saw one Japanese person interpreting for Dr. Langmuir. It was of course consecutive interpreting. So I listened carefully. Naturally I understood what the scholar was saying without translation, but the interpreter was doing an admirable job of interpreting in sophisticated Japanese. I thought, 'Oh, interpreting is done in such an admirable way.' It was my first time to actually see what interpreting was all about.

At the Electrotechnical Laboratory where he worked, Nishiyama was asked to interpret once or twice, when foreigners visited the institute and engineers in charge showed them around. Nishiyama only remembers these occasions vaguely but he is sure he 'did it in an amateurish way.'

It was not until after the war that Nishiyama started to do 'real interpreting':

When the war ended, which means when the Emperor's message was broadcast on August 15<sup>th</sup>, we...we were called '*kanri*' (government officials) then, and all of us civil servants received an instruction. The instruction said, 'The Occupation Forces would be coming. When they come, you are to wholly cooperate with the Occupation Forces.' That's what we were told. The way I received this instruction was not in writing but in verbal form. So when the Occupation Forces came, found out that I spoke English, and asked me to come and help, I couldn't say no.

It all started in September, the month after the war ended. Nishiyama went to the laboratory and was told that an engineer, Mr. Ishikawa, had been summoned to GHQ to explain his research during the war, but they were having problems communicating, and he was asked, 'Will you go and help?' Nishiyama took the train and went to the Mitsubishi Building in Marunouchi, then used for the Far East Air Force:

I found a colonel and an officer of the Far East Air Force, and Mr. Ishikawa was there with them. So I approached them and said, naturally in English, 'I understand you're having trouble with language. Perhaps I can help you?' That's what I said, and they responded, 'Oh, good!' And they said, 'Mr. Ishikawa is trying to explain what he's done. We can't quite understand....' As it happened, I knew what Mr. Ishikawa's research was about. So I explained, 'Ah, this is such and such,' writing on a blackboard. And they responded, 'Oh, now we understand. Thank you very much.' Then, the colonel in charge said, 'Thank you very much Mr. Ishikawa. You may leave now,' and continued, 'Mr. Nishiyama, would you mind staying

behind?’

The colonel told Nishiyama, ‘Actually our mission is to investigate Japanese research efforts carried out during the war, in the field of communication. Will you help us?’ With the order given by the Japanese government to comply and cooperate with the Allied Forces, he couldn’t possibly say no:

So I answered, ‘Oh I see. Well if that’s the case,’ and then returned to the laboratory and told the director, ‘Actually, I was asked to do such and such.’ The director replied, ‘Oh, I see. If that’s the case, you must go....’ So I took a temporary leave of absence... they told me my position would still be there and allowed me to be on leave...and thus, I started to work for the Occupation Forces. If you worked for the Occupation Forces, there was a budget for post-war management at that time, and my salary came from there. I ended up staying at GHQ for about 5 years.

Ever since then, more than half of Nishiyama’s workload was interpreting, the remaining half writing drafts for various reports, which meant he had to do interpreting ‘every single day.’ It was all consecutive interpreting at first, and not knowing note-taking techniques, what Nishiyama did was ‘to try to drum the content into my head to remember, retain it, and then reproduce it.’

With the aim of restoring Japan, GHQ invited engineers from places such as Bell Laboratory in the U.S., who worked closely with Japanese engineers in the Ministry of Communications, as it was called then. Nishiyama did interpreting for their communication, which was mostly technical.

Nishiyama’s self-taught way of interpreting consecutively without taking notes sometimes presented problems, especially when ‘a speaker got carried away and talked

too long,' making it difficult for the interpreter to remember everything.

Oftentimes, he would add later what he omitted in his interpreting:

They told me later, 'Nishiyama-san, we were so impressed. We thought you forgot, but you managed to add it later.' It was nothing but an amateur doing what's called in English 'on-the-job training.' It was training yourself doing actual work.

Gradually, however, Nishiyama became better in doing interpreting without taking notes, which in retrospect provided him good training for very basic simultaneous interpreting.

Around that time, the United Nations was inaugurated and the news of simultaneous interpreters working in booths was reported in newspapers. Some Americans said, 'Hey, the United Nations has started something called simultaneous interpreting. Nishiyama, why don't you give it a try?' To this, Nishiyama replied, 'That's impossible,' and explained, 'In the first place, the word order of English and Japanese is exactly opposite. It just can't be done.' Although by this time, simultaneous interpreting had been used at the Nuremberg Trial, it was not yet common, and it was generally considered impossible between languages as distant as Japanese and English.

Although Nishiyama was 'convinced simultaneous interpreting is impossible' and although 'Everybody said it was impossible,' as he interpreted daily, he started a rudimentary simultaneous mode on his own:

[...] let's say there were five or six officials present for the Japanese side. There were one or two Americans from the Occupation Forces or GHQ. Then what happens is, I interpret what the American said into Japanese and

that is fine. This American would take it for granted that he'd have to wait for my translation. But when one Japanese person speaks, the rest of the Japanese have to wait while I interpret it into English. These people are busy doing their work day and night, and they come to these meetings. So I thought this was a waste of time for them to have to listen to my consecutive interpreting. I felt guilty\_for wasting their time.

I wanted to do something about it, so initially, I tried to interpret as fast as I could...by speaking rapidly. And one day, after I spoke miles-a-minute, someone said, 'Nishiyama-san, if you talk that fast it's difficult for me to understand. Will you speak a little more slowly?' I was speaking that fast. To save time. Well, I did make these kinds of mistakes.

Nishiyama pondered how to save time in his interpreting without speaking fast, and then he noticed when a Japanese person speaks, there is usually an introduction. Even in one sentence, an introductory part comes first. Nishiyama realized that when he heard and understood the introduction, he had an urge to at least interpret that part in English. Therefore, as soon as he heard the beginning, Nishiyama would whisper the translation of the introduction into English, while the rest of the sentence continued:

The verb appears at the very end in Japanese, and it determines the meaning, and so I would wait for this verb to show up, working on the sentence structure in English, and when it does, I would throw it in. I would wait a short while for the speaker to begin, and then start to talk. When the speaker finishes, I would finish just moments after the speaker finishes. This I was able to accomplish eventually.

Nishiyama realized that this is basically what simultaneous interpreting was all

about. As he continued to try this new technique, he began to understand the basic principle of interpreting:

We are not translating language or words. What the speaker is trying to convey with words is 'information.' As long as we perceive and understand this information, all we have to do is simply say it in English, because Japanese and English languages are not related at all anyway. And where important verbs are used, you would of course recognize them and use corresponding verbs accordingly. But the main thing is, information should be expressed in another language, and that's interpreting, I came to perceive.

I didn't have any teachers so I learned that through experience alone. And I became able to do simultaneous interpreting from Japanese to English, first. In time, I learned how to do simultaneous interpreting from English to Japanese also. It must have been around 1951, when I learned to do this.

Nishiyama devised his own way of simultaneous interpreting on the job. And there was another person who learned to do this. It was Sohma Yukika:

Yukika and I are on a first name basis, calling each other 'Yukika' and 'Sen.' We're interpreting buddies. We probably were the first ones capable of doing simultaneous interpreting between Japanese and English. There might have been other people in, say, Kansai or elsewhere, but as far as I know, we were the first ones. That was about 1950 or 51.

## 5.2 Moral Re-Armament

Sohma Yukika vividly remembers her first attempt at simultaneous interpreting at a MRA (Moral Re-Armament)<sup>52</sup> world conference in Caux, Switzerland, in 1950 with Nishiyama:

So Nishiyama Sen and I just happened to be working together at this conference, and while interpreting, we quarreled. Sen would say, ‘You are going fast. Too fast!’ I replied, ‘What’s wrong with translating fast?’ and we quarreled. But in the end, it automatically became simultaneous.

Japan was invited to this MRA conference, with the aim of bringing it back to the international community. Over 70 Japanese participated, including politicians, business people, labor union leaders, and the mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Sohma and Nishiyama were interpreters for the Japanese delegation.

Actually, Sohma is the only one among the five pioneers who experienced ad hoc interpreting before the war. It was in 1931, the year she graduated from Gakushuin Girls School in March. Sohma wanted to pursue her study, but ‘universities would not accept women back then,’ and yet she ‘had no interest in entering a women’s college.’ Her father then said, ‘Studying is something you should continue throughout your lifetime, and school is not the only place to learn. You’ll learn much more studying with me.’ Thus, in October, when Ozaki Yukio was invited to speak in New York, Sohma accompanied her father and acted as his interpreter. Sohma admits, however, that since her father didn’t have any trouble with English he didn’t need an interpreter

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<sup>52</sup> MRA (Moral Re-Armament) changed its name to Initiatives of Change in 2001, and Sohma is Honorary President of its Japan branch.



and that she ‘merely acted as his ears,’ translating English into Japanese when her father couldn’t hear the questions from the floor. It was rather an informal duty.

Sohma’s introduction to simultaneous interpreting was when she and her husband attended the first post-war MRA world conference held in Los Angeles in 1948. MRA<sup>53</sup> was started by Frank Buchman, an American Lutheran minister of Swiss ancestry born in 1878. In the 1920s, Buchman’s ideas to build a just society took root at Oxford and in some American universities. As war in Europe loomed in the summer of 1938, Buchman issued a world-wide call for moral and spiritual re-armament, and Moral Re-Armament (MRA) was publicly launched in Europe and North America.

Believing that lasting world peace could only be established on the basis of a change in personal and public relationships, MRA opened an international conference center in 1946 in Caux, Switzerland, where more than 3,000 Germans and 2,000 French were invited, and their encounters became the basis of a massive development in reconciliation and reconstruction. The conferences at Caux, and similar ones at Mackinac Island in the U.S., contributed further in post-war years to the reconciliation of Japan with her South-East Asian neighbours.

After the conference in Los Angeles, the Sohmas went to MRA on Mackinac Island and then on to MRA international conference center in Caux, Switzerland. There were two things that impressed Sohma. She vividly remembers how surprised she was to find that European conference interpreters were so professional that they made you ‘feel as if the speaker is talking to you in that language,’ and she became convinced then that ‘this is how interpreting should be done.’

Another thing Sohma learned was:

In the U.S. people apologized to us, ‘We are so sorry for dropping

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<sup>53</sup> Retrieved May 26, 2006, from <http://www.uk.initiativesofchange.org/>.

atomic bombs,’ and I would be listening with an arrogant expression on my face, as if to say, ‘Yes, you should be sorry.’ [...]

So, I went to Switzerland. When I arrived in Switzerland, there were people who could not stand to be in the same room with Japanese. I was shocked. [...] Why? Why do they hate us so much? I wondered. I asked people, read books, and little by little, I learned what Japan did during the war...I had no idea. You see, I thought Japan was only fighting against the United States. I was so shocked to find out about all the things Japan did in Asia and other places, about the Netherlands, and Australia...I was flabbergasted. I was overwhelmed. That was a real eye-opener. I felt ashamed that I had no friends in Asia until then. And that was when I started to think about Asia. I was really astonished.

Her trip to the U.S. and Switzerland in 1948 in a way laid the foundation for her later career and vocation—diplomatic interpreting as ‘calling’ (see Chapter 6) and volunteer work for Asia, including her work to help refugees<sup>54</sup>.

After she came back to Japan from this trip, she acted as an interpreter for MRA representatives and met Ichimada Hisato, then the president of the Bank of Japan, several times, and although she was terrified of the way Ichimada behaved toward her interpreting, looking up at the ceiling whenever he became bored with the talk (see Chapter 6), she never gave up interpreting and continued to work on improving her interpreting. Her field was mostly meetings of Japanese Diet members: ‘there weren’t too many interpreters those days in Japan. So I did most of the interpreting for Diet members at various meetings. I don’t know what Sen [Nishiyama] was doing at that time, but I did a lot of interpreting those days. [...] I learned a lot. It was hard, though.’

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<sup>54</sup> Sohma initiated and became president of an NGO to help refugees: Nanmin wo Tasukeru Kai (AAR=Association for Aid and Relief, Japan).

Sohma reiterated, 'I do not see myself as an interpreter,' because she never studied English formally and never received interpreter training. However, she strongly believed that 'Interpreting is something that comes to you naturally, as long as you have this wish or feeling to make the other party understand what is being said' and thus Sohma continued her calling—interpreting.

### **5.3 Productivity teams**

In the fall of 1955, the United States Department of State, in collaboration with the Japan Productivity Center, created under the leadership of Goshi Kohei, recruited prospective interpreters who would accompany missions from Japan to study industry and business in the United States. The program was designed to help Japan rebuild after the devastation of war, and it was considered necessary to train escort interpreters for this purpose. Muramatsu was one of the first-year people chosen, and Kunihiro joined the following year, with younger Komatsu participating a few years later.

Muramatsu spent a total of six and a half years with the Occupation Forces, with a variety of work from typist, clerk to interpreter, when one day he heard the U.S. Department of State was recruiting 'simultaneous interpreters.' It was the first time he had ever heard the term 'simultaneous interpreters' and he didn't know what it meant, but Muramatsu decided to give it a try. The test was conducted at Mantetsu Building in Toranomom, which used to house an annex of the American Embassy. There were two examiners, Mrs. Nora Lejins, director of the languages section at the State Department and Mr. Yoshioka, an old second generation Japanese-American. Muramatsu remembers that 'there was a box this big, so big that you cannot even imagine what it's like today.' It was a tape-recorder, with 'a huge ring,' a reel with the diameter of 'about 10 or 15 cm,' Muramatsu had heard that wire recorders were used during the Nuremberg Trial, but the test took place 'shortly after magnetic tapes were invented.'

Muramatsu recalls they made him try simultaneous interpreting, on the spot, without any prior warning:

The tape was spinning slowly. The examiner said, 'This is President Eisenhower's message to the Congress, about education.' I had huge headphones on. 'Interpret this message into the microphone in front of you.' I said, 'What?' and was told, 'Just keep interpreting what you hear into Japanese.' I only interpreted from English into Japanese. There was no Japanese into English.

I was astonished at what I had to do. Having to speak in Japanese the minute I hear something. But I have always been talkative since my childhood, so I was quick in bringing out the words as I heard them. When I look back, I'm quite impressed how I wasn't really talking nonsense. I still remember some of the words well, like education, teachers, and shortage of qualified teachers. 'Ah!' I thought. 'In order for the U.S. to thrive in the future, it is vital to train qualified...I thought I probably shouldn't use the word *sensei* (teacher) and use more formal *kyoshi* instead...educators.' Instead of saying that it was *daiji* (important), in a colloquial way, I used a more formal word *kanyo* (vital). In any event, I kept talking the whole time.

The examiner told him much later, 'Muramatsu, the reason you passed was because you didn't stop, not even once. You just continued to speak the whole time.' He also said, 'You skipped some parts and there were some mistakes, but you never missed the main idea.' It was not difficult for Muramatsu to get the main idea of the speech, because the President would 'never say that educators are unnecessary for the future' and 'as long as you listen with this in mind, you can follow the logic. You use the words you understood as clues to infer the parts you couldn't get, using your

imagination, and you will be sure not to be so far off.'

After approximately five minutes of this 'test' of simultaneous interpreting, Muramatsu was exhausted and was convinced that it was in no way natural for a human being to listen and speak at the same time. However, just before Christmas that year, he was notified that he was selected as one of the eight chosen interpreters. And Muramatsu left Japan in February of 1956.

Officially, these interpreters were hired by the Japan Productivity Center, but in practice, they worked as members of the International Cooperation Administration of the U.S. Department of State on a two-year contract. Their job was to accompany productivity study teams from Japan, invited to the U.S. as part of American technical assistance to Japan. The interpreters were paid 8 dollars per day and 12 dollars per diem on the road, considerably low by American minimum wage standards of one dollar an hour those days (Muramatsu, 1978, pp.15-17). They escorted about six 6-week study tours a year and Muramatsu remembers he covered 45 states when there were only 48 states in the United States.

Pulitzer Prize-winning David Halberstam wrote about these productivity teams in his 1986 bestseller *The Reckoning* on the economic wars between Ford Motor Company and Japan's Nissan, introducing Muramatsu as 'interpreter Masami Muramatsu':

[...]Meanwhile, hundreds of Japanese productivity teams were landing in America, endlessly touring American factories. They came in groups, and to the Americans watching them they often seemed comical little men. They were all the same height, and they wore the same blue suit, and they carried the same camera. They measured, they photographed, they sketched, and they tape-recorded everything they could. Their questions were precise. They were surprised how open the Americans were—open as they might not have

been for, say, English or West German visitors. The truth was, there was a certain condescension in all this; the Americans were open because they never took these odd little Asians seriously. They were prejudiced and generous.

The Japanese exploited this prejudice skillfully, playing the role to the hilt. It was, said **Masami Muramatsu**, an interpreter who accompanied many of these teams, almost embarrassing the way they poor-mouthed, becoming ever more humble as they dealt with Americans. We are the poor little Japanese, they would say, we have been devastated, you are very rich and generous, and we have come to learn everything we can. The Americans, he suspected, had obviously liked their complementary role of bountiful benefactor. Their lectures were a commercial extension of the American missionary spirit. In the beginning the Japanese were staggered by America, the ease, indeed eagerness, with which Americans talked to strangers, about professional matters but also about personal things. Why, the travelers would tell their friends upon their return, the Americans wanted to show visiting Japanese not just their houses, but their bedrooms!

The Americans were proud and confident in those days, and somehow innocent. Their own world was so complete that they did not really need to think of any world outside it. The American market was quite sufficient for most American managers. The visiting Japanese productivity teams were potential customers as well as students, but the major American companies never seemed very interested in talking to them about exporting—neither about selling them a main product line nor about customizing a particular product to make it suitable for Japan. There was an unusual pride to the Americans then, **Muramatsu** thought, a pride that was attractive in its generosity of spirit but flawed by self-satisfaction. The Americans were

powerful, they were rich, they were helping their former adversaries; but they did not need to look beyond their own coasts, and they did not need to learn.  
(pp.311-312, emphasis added)

When Kunihiro applied for the same position the following year, the test was conducted at Waseda University Okuma Auditorium in Tokyo, and the place was packed with thousands of applicants. Both Kunihiro and Muramatsu testify that the compensation for the work wasn't much, just 'enough to put food on the table.' Also back then, the term 'simultaneous interpretation' was not a household word. The general reaction was, 'Simultaneous interpretation? What's that?' And yet people flocked to take the test. Kunihiro attributes the big turnout to three factors. In the first place, they all wanted to 'go to the United States. In those days, it was still a big deal to go to the U.S. Still a big thing. Added to that, you would be able to travel around the United States.' Another thing people might have considered was a chance this job offered to meet and work closely with influential people from different sectors in Japan, such as leaders from the business community, labor unions, academic fields. The third reason was an added benefit that they would be able to learn the skills for a new type of job, namely, interpreting. Kunihiro concludes, 'So, for all these reasons, a throng of people wanted to go. I applied and luckily got accepted.'

Kunihiro testifies to what Halberstam wrote about American hosts being open was true:

The U.S. in those days was really accommodating and generous. [...]

The United States was really an amazing country back then. They were ready to show us everything, 'Let us show you everything. Please look at anything, anything you like.' That was the kind of America we saw then. Good old days in the U.S.

Regarding the training at the U.S. State Department, Muramatsu commented that as far as consecutive interpreting is concerned, 'there was nothing new' for him to learn. As for simultaneous interpreting, 'there was no one to teach us. There was one person who was kind of like a teacher, but frankly speaking, he didn't have much simultaneous interpreting experience. He just happened to be there before us.'

There was, however, an American, most likely born in Europe, who was a veteran simultaneous interpreter between French and English, and he talked about his own diplomatic interpreting experiences, which Muramatsu found useful: 'I still remember clearly...the way he was speaking in front of the four of us was already a speech in itself. I remember being impressed as I listened. He told us how we shouldn't panic, for example.' There was another person who gave lectures on American history, geography and politics, which proved to be helpful.

According to Kunihiro, the U.S. Department of State was not quite ready to do any decent training in the first year, but they needed people, and so they recruited those who already had interpreting experience, such as Muramatsu. By the time the second-year group arrived, the Department of State was relatively ready with an interpreter-training institute they had created in European languages. However, for interpreting between Japanese and English, especially simultaneous interpreting, it was not yet a full-fledged training program, and Kunihiro comments it was 'more like we all helped to create one.'

Although they had interpreting booths for training, and there were two instructors, Aoyama Seiji, a graduate of Kyoto University studying in the States, and James Wickel, a native speaker of English, neither of them functioned as 'instructors.' Aoyama was neither a professional interpreter nor a specialist in interpreter training, and Wickel was a new member for the program who was studying Japanese. He would ask the group questions about the Japanese language, and they in turn would ask him questions about English. Kunihiro contends that their relationship was more of



‘colleagues’ or ‘equal partners,’ and they ‘worked together to set up the program.’ They knew the University of Geneva or Georgetown University offered courses in conference interpreting at the postgraduate level, but ‘this didn’t affect our training. What they were doing in Switzerland or at Georgetown didn’t have a direct bearing on us. We were right in Washington DC, where Georgetown University is, but we never went there for training or anything.’ Consequently, Kunihiro and the group were obliged to work without any training and it was ‘more like we were thrown into a swimming pool together and as we gasped for air, we all learned to swim out of necessity.’

Kunihiro recalls that the basic assumption in those days was, there was no way simultaneous interpreting could be done between Japanese and English, with the difference in syntax so large, especially in the word order. Kunihiro remembers he said that himself, ‘There’s no way you can do it.’ However, the reality was they had no choice but to give it a try. They had to go out on field trips with the productivity teams.

They carried mobile equipment for simultaneous interpreting on a six-week tour, with a week in Washington DC to study the basics, and five weeks on the road, before coming back to Washington DC for a wrap-up session. Kunihiro, therefore, considers himself a ‘self-made carpenter.’ Since he is ‘a carpenter who learned his trade on the job,’ Kunihiro makes it a point to say, ‘Please don’t ask me about theories,’ and explains:

A ‘self-made carpenter,’—you know, a carpenter who learned from scratch, worked hard and finally became a professional, all on the job. I think you can call this a ‘self-made carpenter.’ I’d have to say, ‘Please don’t expect a self-made carpenter to give a lecture on the theory of architecture. I can’t do that.’ I clearly say that I cannot do it.

Muramatsu feels interpreting on the job, or ‘in the field,’ proved to be extremely useful, ‘one thing the young interpreters of today absolutely lack.’ One example he gave was presentation skills he learned:

For instance, it could be at a civil engineering construction site, or at a place surrounded by noisy machines, where you have to interpret in a LOUD VOICE. [...] we used to battle the noises, making sure we uttered no unnecessary words, in order to make ourselves heard among twelve people who were scattered about. [...] If you speak loudly, you naturally try abdominal breathing to save your voice, and you cannot afford to say anything unnecessary. It’s when you speak softly that you begin to utter, ‘Um...’ or ‘Well...’

Muramatsu also learned to speak with ‘articulation and enunciation, with *ma* (pause) just before crucial points, which helps make the meaning clear to listeners.’ Muramatsu summarizes that on the job interpreting experiences became wonderful opportunities for public speaking training.

For Kunihiro, what made their interpreting task even more daunting was that these productivity teams came from all sorts of different fields that ‘encompassed virtually all topics in the universe.’ As an example, Kunihiro cited a plastics molding team he accompanied:

I mean, plastic! To start with, I am not good at chemistry, in other words, natural science, any kind of natural science. But I had to try my best...furthermore, I had to listen to this in English, naturally. That is to say, I had to understand what manufacturing plastics was all about—the content. What I mean by ‘*koto* (content)’ and ‘*kotoba* (words)’ is that, if I don’t know

the content, it is impossible to understand words.

What was worse for Kunihiro was visiting 35 or 36 mines all over the U.S.: ‘I couldn’t see a thing below. Total darkness. I would clamber down, trembling, into these places...I had to do this countless times, in these coal mines. What’s more, I had to listen to the explanations given by local coal mine specialists or mine excavators and interpret what they said. I hated coal mines.’ However, Kunihiro recalls they didn’t have much choice: ‘We took turns and it was like, “Okay, next. Okay, you go.” [...] The easiest was when we accompanied top management. Top business leaders, such as Ishizaka Taizo<sup>55</sup>-san, came.’

Komatsu was in his senior year when he applied to become an interpreter for the productivity study mission, known as the ‘*Kentoshi*’<sup>56</sup> of the Showa era.’ He had already started working for a company after graduation, and he took a two-year leave of absence to go to the U.S. He was 23 when he left Japan. His initial plan was to return to the company after two years, which he never did, because ‘after I moved over there, I realized it was a lot more fun, so I quit.’ He stayed in the United States for five and a half years, making America his second home. Komatsu admits that his primary motivation in applying was ‘to go to the U.S. rather than to become an interpreter’ and that ‘All I wanted to do was to go to the United States’ (see Chapter 4). He passed the screening, in which he was tested for his interpreting skills:

I remember...we recorded our interpreting onto a disc. There was a short interview in English first, and then our interpreting from both English into

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<sup>55</sup> Ishizaka Taizo (1886-1975) is a successful business manager, known for his strong leadership as president of Keidanren (Federation of Economic Organizations) for 12 years and was called ‘the prime minister of business community.’ He became the first president of the Japan Productivity Center in 1955.

<sup>56</sup> *Kentoshi* is the ancient Japanese missions to Tang Dynasty China.

Japanese and from Japanese into English were recorded on a disc. I was able to do this because I had done quite a lot of interpreting for the Gensuikyo during college. So in that sense, I suppose I did have some experience as an interpreter.

When Komatsu went to the State Department, someone who couldn't speak Japanese was in charge of training, which was mainly 'reproduction'—listen to a passage and reproduce exactly the same thing, preferably with the same words and phrases, and Komatsu claims that was all he did:

Reproduction. That's all we did. [...] Yes, that was all we did. We received no other training, that's for sure. [...] I never received any training that you could consider to be proper. I don't think anyone did...I think it was the same with Kunihiro-san and Muramatsu-san. There was no special system for us to receive training after we went there. So, that's all we did in terms of training.

After doing nothing but reproduction for three or four days, Komatsu was sent out into the field to work. Komatsu concludes that it was 'on the job training,' in the true sense of the term, but he managed:

Well, somehow, I was able to interpret from English into Japanese even from the beginning, when I was interpreting for the Japan Productivity Center or the Department of State. It was field trips—we went out into the field, learned about the subject matter there, then moved to a room and heard more explanation from the American side, and that's what we interpreted. We did whispering, talking to a microphone, like this. However, in a strict

sense, it was a little different from simultaneous interpreting for a conference.

So, I remember myself as being able to do this type of simultaneous interpreting from the beginning.

At the time, though, with the translation of Japanese into English, we did consecutive interpreting. The questions asked by Japanese people were translated consecutively. However, after a field trip, the study team would go to Washington DC to have what you call a wrap-up session, where the Japanese side gave feedback, impressions or comments to the U.S. side, and for this, we did simultaneous interpreting from Japanese into English. I remember I had a hard time trying to do it. With simultaneous interpreting from Japanese into English...well, everything was off the cuff, you see. We didn't have any training, and whether we could or couldn't do it was not an issue. We just had to do it. Well, I think that perhaps, that kind of situation worked to our advantage.

For Komatsu, interpreting from English to Japanese presented no problems from the beginning, whereas he remembers 'always having trouble' with interpreting from Japanese into English, and still considers interpreting from Japanese into English 'a challenge.'

Kumihiro continued the work for seven years, from 1956 until 1962, accompanying the largest number of teams among his colleagues, because he volunteered to be assigned to agricultural productivity teams, with longer trips—eight weeks instead of six. Kumihiro was interested in agriculture and forestry and accompanied teams to study such matters as grain storage and fumigation, traveling to the South and studying American rice farming.

Kumihiro concludes that his experience with productivity teams helped him understand the United States, in terms of both '*koto* (content)' and '*kotoba*

(language)’ :

All these things—it was tantamount to all the creations of the earth, if you will. I got to see all these ‘*shinra bansho* (creations of the universe)’ which took place in the United States, studying its diverse dimensions, in terms of both ‘*kotoba* (words)’ and ‘*koto* (content).’

[...]So...when I came back to Japan, I said, ‘In a way, what I studied was a kind of, if you take an example of Yanagita Kunio-sensei’s ‘*Nihon minzoku-gaku* (ethnographic study of Japanese society),’ it would be an ethnographic study of American society. I studied that much by observations of diverse aspects of the United States. In terms of both ‘*kotoba* (words)’ and ‘*koto* (content).’

#### 5.4 Japan-U.S. Ministerial Meetings on Trade and Economic Affairs

According to Nishiyama, the initial attempts to try conference interpreting were made in Japan at the first U.S.-Japan Joint Meeting on Trade and Economic Affairs, held in Hakone, November 1961. Then, at the second meeting, held in Washington DC, Muramatsu and Kunihiro, along with two people from the U.S. Department of State, offered full-fledged simultaneous interpreting.

The U.S.-Japan Committee on Trade and Economic Affairs was initiated by President John F. Kennedy and Prime Minister Ikeda Hayato. According to Michael A. Barnhart (2001), Kennedy agreed to its creation to ‘forward economic integration through regular discussions among Japanese and American political and business leaders’ (p.207).

As one of the interpreters hired by the American Embassy, Nishiyama recalls that although customarily in diplomatic negotiations, an interpreter hired by the Japanese

government interprets what the Japanese delegate says into a foreign language, he was asked to do it, although technically he was hired by the American government:

The Foreign Ministry would provide interpreting from English to Japanese. It was the other way around from the usual protocol. Completely the opposite... It was decided to do it that way with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The reason for this decision was that the native language of those in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is Japanese, and although they are good at English, it is still a foreign language to them. As for me, although my mother tongue is Japanese, I use English just the same as a native language. So when we discussed the procedure with the Ministry, it was decided to depart from the usual procedure. That is why for this particular meeting, the Japanese side interpreted what the Americans said, and I interpreted what the Japanese said into English.

Since there were very few simultaneous interpreters then, they provided simultaneous interpretation for prepared texts only, and spontaneous discussions were interpreted consecutively. Nishiyama remembers that with any prepared text, he would 'translate it beforehand, so it was not really simultaneous interpreting. It was voice-over, so to speak.' Aside from the general assembly, Japanese cabinet ministers and U.S. department secretaries held individual one-on-one meetings. Each of these meetings had its own interpreters, and Nishiyama explains that 'the people best in English interpreted Japanese into English, and the people best in Japanese interpreted from English into Japanese.'

While Kunihiro and Muramatsu were in the United States, the second Japan-U.S. Ministerial Meeting on Trade and Economic Affairs was held in Washington DC, where officially simultaneous interpreting was used between Japanese and English.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Ohira Masayoshi was the head of the delegation, the Minister of Finance then was Tanaka Kakuei, and the Director of the Economic Planning Agency was Miyazawa Kiichi, all of whom later became prime ministers.

Kunihiro remembers hearing that the Japanese government objected to simultaneous interpreting, but that the Department of State, as a host, overruled that objection, insisting they could do it. There were four in the interpreting team. One was James Wickel, working on the American side. The others were Japanese: Muramatsu, Okamoto Yutaka, and Kunihiro.

The Japan-U.S. Ministerial Conference was held just after the Cuban Missile Crisis, and Kunihiro remembers two things. He recalls he was traveling with a productivity team in Florida, very close to Cuba, in the middle of the Cuban Crisis. He was convinced that a nuclear war would break out, and made an international call to his home in Tokyo, 'to say *sayonara*.' When this crisis was at last over, the Japan-U.S. Ministerial Meeting was held on 'either the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> of December, in Washington DC. The meeting was successful with simultaneous interpreting. The United States was relieved, and Japan was even more relieved. Simultaneous interpreting was better than they had imagined' and the Japanese delegation went to the White House to pay a courtesy call to President Kennedy. Both Muramatsu and Kunihiro accompanied the Japanese delegation, and were struck to see 'frost-like dandruff in his hair,' which made them think about 'the weight of matters this man had to deal with' in a crisis.

## 5.5 Discussion

One striking thing about the five pioneer interpreters is that none of them received any formal training. Even the three people who went to the U.S. Department of State all testify that they received only minimal and nominal training and it was more of training on the job in the field. This is understandable when you consider that



interpreting as a profession was established only about a few decades ago, in the 1960s in Europe and well into the 1970s in Japan, the driving force for which was none other than these five pioneers.

Although Sohma repeated that she did not see herself as an interpreter because she never received interpreter training, this is not a valid claim, since not one among the five received proper training. Muramatsu considers this an advantage, claiming that what today's young interpreters lack is the kind of 'on the job training' in the field they received, not simply in terms of interpreting skills but in presentation skills as well.

The experiences of the five interpreters as trainees, apprentices and novices in a way prove Gideon Toury's claim that what trainees need is the opportunity to 'abstract *their own guiding principles and routines* from actual instances of behaviour' (1995, p.256, emphasis in original), and 'the pedagogically most appropriate key concepts are those associated with experiencing, exploration and discovery, involving as they do a considerable element of trial and error' (p.256).

This, in a way, brings forth the issue of 'aptitude'—are interpreters simply born, rather than trained? Etilvia Arjona-Tseng<sup>57</sup> told the audience when she was awarded Pierre François Caillé Memorial Medal<sup>58</sup>: '30 some years ago, when I structured the Monterey program<sup>59</sup> along professional lines, I would be publicly laughed at and ridiculed because "Professor Arjona, don't you know that translators and interpreters are born—they are not taught." '

Toury (1995), in the innateness discussion<sup>60</sup> of a bilingual speaker becoming a

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<sup>57</sup> Etilvia Arjona-Tseng is founder of graduate programs for interpreting and translation at a number of institutions worldwide, such as the Monterey Institute of Foreign Studies, Florida International University, Fu-Jen Catholic University in Taiwan and the University of Panama.

<sup>58</sup> FIT XVII World Congress in Tampere, Finland, August 7, 2005.

<sup>59</sup> Monterey Institute of Foreign Studies in California, USA. Their interpreting program celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2005.

<sup>60</sup> See also Daniel Simeoni (1998) for his view of 'internalization of outer norms' (p.14).

translator contends:

[...]whereas the **predisposition** itself for translating is indeed 'coextensive with bilingualism', its **emergence as a skill** should be taken as coextensive with the ability to establish similarities and differences *across* languages, which may be termed 'interlingualism'. The unfolding of this skill, in turn, hinges upon the presence of a kind of transfer mechanism, which makes it possible to actually *activate* one's interlingual capacity and apply it to utterances in one or another of one's languages. It stands to reason that these added capacities are inherently different in different people, part of different mental structures [...] At the same time, these facilities seem to be *trainable* too, at least up to a point, a training which involves actual practice in translating in context, along with the reactions one may receive to one's behaviour. (p.248, emphasis in original)

Saito Mitsuko, former professor at International Christian University, who started Japan's first interpreter training program there, strongly believed that anybody can become an interpreter with proper training. Muramatsu disagrees: 'When it comes to aptitude, my view differs completely from that of Professor Saito Mitsuko, who insisted anyone can become an interpreter if you train them. I don't think that's the case. To be frank, I think interpreting is 90 per cent aptitude, 10 per cent studying or luck.'

The issue, then, boils down to exactly what kind of elements constitutes the necessary aptitude for becoming an interpreter. Sohma wonders if maybe women are better suited for the job because 'women talk more.' Komatsu points out, however, that the popular notion that people who like to talk are suited for interpreting work is a myth, because he himself has always been reticent and not inclined to talk much.

Reticent or verbal notwithstanding, it is easily assumed that interpreters, particularly simultaneous interpreters, require solid linguistic competence before starting training.

To demonstrate this, we can discuss one of the training activities Komatsu mentioned as virtually the only training he received at the Department of State—reproduction, an activity to reproduce a story you hear as accurately as possible in the same language. This actually is a demanding task, making explicit the linguistic competence of a trainee in multiple facets, namely comprehension, expression, discourse competence, vocabulary, syntactic and grammatical accuracy, as well as phonology. An ordinary language learner of English in Japan usually finds reproduction in English an overwhelming challenge, or something way beyond their capacity, and even in advanced courses of English at college the activity runs the risk of discouraging students. In other words, trainees for conference interpreting have to be equipped with sufficient linguistic competence to enable them to cope with reproduction exercises. The author remembers the activity being used at the screening test to select trainees for conference interpreting, introduced to Japan by people involved in the State Department training, and felt it was an excellent way to judge an examinee's production skills in a foreign language.

Hatim and Mason (1997), in discussing assessment of translators and interpreters, distinguish between translation (including interpretation) quality and translator's performance (p.197), and claim that the ability to handle task specification and audience design, an important translator skill, is teachable and testable (p.204). In trying to define translator ability, Hatim and Mason (1997) introduce the distinction made by Hewson (1995) between translator's linguistic competence and their cultural competence (issues of culture to be discussed in Chapter 7), as well as Nord's addition of 'transfer' competence and 'factual and research competence' (as cited in Hatim & Mason, 1997, p.204). Hatim and Mason (1997) then propose their model for translator

abilities, drawing on Bachman's (1990) model for communicative competence.<sup>61</sup>

The set of translators abilities, in Hatim and Mason (1997), is a three-stage process: source-text processing, transfer, and target-text processing, which is further subdivided into relevant skills such as inferring intentionality in source-text processing and creating intentionality in target-text processing, the skills interacting with one another, and some processes occurring concurrently (pp.205-6). The overall premise in Hatim and Mason (1997) seems to be that many of the skills for interpreting and translation are teachable, trainable and testable.

Not strictly an interpreting ability, and yet possibly related to aptitude for interpreters, which was pointed out by Komatsu explicitly, and which might apply to all five pioneers, is optimism and positive thinking. In Komatsu's words, if you are disappointed easily by failures, this means you are not suited to become an interpreter. Komatsu mentioned this when he was talking about the times 'when things didn't go well and I was very disappointed or embarrassed,' and one time he left a meeting as soon as it was over, not wanting to see anyone, but he never thought of giving up the interpreting profession and the mistakes he made resulted in his 'determination to strive to become better.'

Although not all five presented specific cases of when and how they made mistakes, it would not be surprising to imagine they made at least some mistakes during their many years of interpreting. The fact that they did not remember too many mistakes in detail might suggest two things. For one, it could be a testimony to what Muramatsu and Komatsu said about the qualities needed to become an interpreter—positive thinking. Another possibility is the seasoned interpreters actually did not make too

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<sup>61</sup> Bachman's (1990) model of communicative competence consists of (1) organizational competence (grammatical and textual); (2) pragmatic competence (illocutionary and sociolinguistic); (3) strategic competence (judging relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, and forming plans for the achievement of communicative goals).

many errors because as Muramatsu and Komatsu pointed out, if you know the content well enough, you can ‘anticipate’ the message with logical reasoning, and it is not difficult to grasp the main idea.

And this is something all five interpreters suggested one way or the other. Some expressed it as ‘information’ or ‘content’ and some others described it as ‘knowing the speaker’ or ‘context.’ As Kunihiro aptly suggested, if you do not know ‘*koto* (content),’ you cannot translate ‘*kotoba* (words).’ This is what Nord (1991) classifies as ‘factual and research competence’ (in Hatim and Mason, 1997, p.204) in translators ability, which can be applied to interpreting as well.

While many translators are unsure ‘whether translation is a trade, an art, a profession or a business’ (Bellos, 1987, p.164, as cited in Baker, 1992, p.2), the interpreters in this study were clear in their understanding of their work—it was not a trade nor a business, but a ‘calling’ for Sohma, an art perhaps for Kunihiro and Nishiyama, and certainly a profession for all five.

Whereas some talented translators ‘who have had no systematic training in translation but who have nevertheless achieved a high level of competence through long and varied experience tend to think that the translation community as a whole can achieve their own high standards in the same way’ (Baker, 1992, p.3) and consider translation ‘an art which requires aptitude, practice, and general knowledge—nothing more’ (p.3), the ‘self-made carpenters’ in this study, although not entirely denying the place of aptitude as a gift, recognize the importance of formal training. Nishiyama, Muramatsu, Kunihiro and Komatsu were all involved in interpreter training, and Komatsu, a strong advocate of academic training, with theoretical components brought into practical training, continues his efforts in university interpreter training. Although Sohma does not teach herself, she brought up a daughter who became a conference interpreter and who runs an interpreter training school.

Baker (1992) strongly argues that if translators wanted to remedy the unjustly low

status of the profession:

[...] the translators need to develop an ability to stand back and reflect on what they do and how they do it. Like doctors and engineers, they have to prove to themselves as well as others that they are in control of what they do; that they do not just translate well because they have a 'flair' for translation, but rather because, like other professionals, they have made a conscious effort to understand various aspects of their work.

Unlike medicine and engineering, translation is a very young discipline in academic terms. It is only just starting to feature as a subject of study in its own right, not yet in all but in an increasing number of universities and colleges around the world. Like any young discipline, it needs to draw on the findings and theories of other related disciplines in order to develop and formalize its own methods [...]. (1992, p.4)

Baker (1992), while admitting which particular discipline translation can be related to is still a matter of some controversy, suggests that in order to overcome 'current mixture of intuition and practice'(p.4), translators will need to acquire 'a sound knowledge of the raw material with which they work: to understand what language is and how it comes to function for its users'(p.4), referring to text linguistics (the study of text as a communicative event) and pragmatics (the study of language in use) as specific examples. This remains a substantial task for present and future interpreters in Japan.

## 5.6 Conclusion

This chapter showed the trajectories of the five interpreters, each entering the field

of interpreting in a different way and yet with some common experiences. One striking similarity among the pioneers was that none of them received systematic training and all were what Kunihiro called ‘self-made carpenters,’ precisely because they were pioneers. This might invoke the never-ending fundamental discussion about interpreters and translators—are they born or can they be made? Is the ability to translate and interpret a gift, and either you have or you do not?

On the surface, the narratives of the five interpreters testify to the former, that the interpreters are born, not trained. And yet, with some closer look at the way they studied or acquired languages, and the way they learned the skills of interpreting, it becomes evident that the born linguists were not just born and enjoyed their innate abilities, but they made conscious efforts to learn languages and improve their linguistic competences, as well as interpreting skills. In addition, even without formal training, they learned substantially from their on-the-job experiences, as well as from their colleagues and from the more experienced. In other words, the only thing they lacked was systematized training, which would be needed if we try to produce a greater number of interpreters than simply a handful, and establish interpreting as a profession. The pioneers themselves, while admitting the strength of on-the-job training, are well aware of the need for systematic, more theoretically based, formal training for professional interpreters, so that the interpreting profession will enjoy the kind of recognition and respect that it deserves.

The chapter on the five interpreters going into the field of interpreting will necessarily leads us onto the next step, the actual practice of interpreting. The practice by the five pioneer interpreters in various interpreting settings, with different agents in the communicative events, will be the topic of the next chapter.

## Chapter 6 Interpreting as a Practice

Erving Goffman (1981), in 'giving credit to the autonomy of "a talk" as a unit of activity in its own right' (p.131), proposes to examine the role or function of all the participating members of the social gathering in relation to their 'participation status' (p.137). The word 'talk' as used by Goffman includes not only conversation, but can take the form of 'a platform monologue' such as in the case of political addresses, stand-up comedy routines, lectures, dramatic recitations, and poetry readings (p.137). Within this 'participation framework,' Goffman argues, the 'notion of hearer or recipient' is rather crude (p.137). For Goffman, the notion of a *hearer* starts with an official status as a ratified participant, which is further broken down into the 'addressed' and 'unaddressed.' At the same time, although not 'ratified,' equally important is purposeful 'eavesdropper,' unintentional 'overhearer,' and 'bystander' (pp.131-132).

Likewise, Goffman analyzes his notion of *speaker* in three different kinds of functions. In talk, 'one of the two participants moves his lips up and down to the accompaniment of his own facial (and sometimes bodily) gesticulations, and words can be heard issuing from the locus of his mouth. He is the sounding box in use [...]. In short, he is the talking machine, a body engaged in acoustic activity, or, if you will, an individual active in the role of utterance production' (1981, p.144). This function, in Goffman's term, is an 'animator.' However, in using the term 'speaker,' we often think of 'someone who has selected the sentiments that are being expressed and the words in which they are encoded' (p.144), and this is the 'author' of the words that are heard. Moreover, a speaker is a 'principal' who is 'someone whose position is established by the words that are spoken, someone whose beliefs have been told, someone who is committed to what the words say' (p.144). In Goffman's view, the same individual can 'rapidly alter the social role in which he is active, even though his capacity as animator



and author remains constant' (p.145). He likens this shift in the social role to 'changing hats' in committee meetings, acknowledging at the same time that these roles do have institutionalized exceptions such as reciting, and mentions simultaneous interpreting:

We can openly speak *for* someone else and *in* someone else's words, as we do, say, in a deposition or providing a simultaneous translation of a speech—the latter an interesting example because so often the original speaker's words, although ones that person commits himself to, are ones that someone else wrote for him. (1981, pp.145-146, emphasis in original)

Goffman does not elaborate further on simultaneous translation, let alone the role of an interpreter in his participation framework, but states that 'The relation(s) among speaker, addressed recipient, and unaddressed recipient(s) are complicated, significant, and not much explored'(1981, p.133).

It is therefore worthwhile to explore the participation status of the interpreter. In doing so, we shall make the matter simple by assuming that the original speaker is speaking his own ideas, not something written for him. Even then, the communication becomes rather complex. Granted that the interpreter is a 'ratified unaddressed recipient,' does s/he function as an animator? Or an author? Generally, people seem to think that an interpreter functions as an animator, a 'sounding box' or a 'talking machine' (Goffman, 1981, p.144), speaking the words uttered by someone else. This is not entirely deniable, since one thing that distinguishes a professional interpreter from an amateur is that a non-professional tends to interpret with expressions such as, 'So and so says...' or 'According to so and so, it is...', speaking in the third person. By contrast, trained professionals invariably use the first person singular 'I' for the speaker. In fact, this is one of the first things that is taught in interpreter training—you

should put yourself in the speaker's shoes and interpret as if the interlocutor's thoughts are yours (see Nishiyama, 1979, p.83). If, for example, an interpreter wants to correct a mistake made during interpretation, what should be said is, 'The interpreter is sorry she made a mistake,' for if she said, 'I am sorry I've made a mistake,' that would mean the original speaker has made a mistake. Consequently, when an interpreter is doing interpretation, you are not yourself any longer. When you utter the word 'I' or 'my,' you are not talking about your own self. Rather, you are talking about the person who happens to be talking at the time. An interpreter speaks on behalf of this speaker. In Goffman's term, you are an '*animator*.' Or, at least, you are supposed to, or expected to, function as such.

Kunihiro (1969) claims that an interpreter is 'not a robot, nor a machine' (p.88), which many interpreters would agree with, but what about the function of '*animator*'? How do interpreters themselves perceive their roles as '*speaker*' in their interpreting assignments? In Chapter 6, this question will be the underlying theme for the representative description of interpreting as a practice of each of the five interpreters, and their feelings about the interpreting profession. Specifically, Nishiyama's case is analyzed in his relationship with his major client, Ambassador Reischauer, whom Nishiyama addresses as '*sensei*' with great respect. The interpreting practice of Komatsu is studied in different situations, such as a series of diplomatic negotiations for the return of Okinawa to Japan, in which Komatsu acted as 'a visible machine' to cite his own words. In the following section, a noted case of mistranslation is examined, with Muramatsu's own account of his translation of Prime Minister Nakasone's rhetoric as 'unsinkable aircraft carrier,' along with comments from people involved, such as the *Washington Post* reporter at that time and Nakasone Yasuhiro himself. As the first female simultaneous interpreter in Japan, Sohma's narrative offers a unique case of interpreting practice as a 'calling.' Finally, Kunihiro's case is analyzed, particularly his practice of what he calls '*keren* interpreting' offering a

non-traditional, non-normative view of interpreters.

### 6.1 Nishiyama and Reischauer-Sensei

When Nishiyama was working for Civil Communications Bureau at GHQ, there was one incident which made him angry. Japan drafted a telecommunications related bill, which was translated into English and submitted to GHQ. The intended procedure was to have it approved by the Occupation Forces, and then to propose it to the Diet. However, there was an American lawyer, who, for some reason, had complaints about it, and told the Japanese to revise it for resubmission:

So, we revised it, and again, he would not accept it. I've forgotten what this lawyer said, but it was unreasonable. And then this Chief of Communications<sup>62</sup> said, 'I see,' and he took the bill and ripped it up into shreds. That was his way of '*tanka wo kiru*,' expressing his anger. In this case, there was no need for interpretation. He had demonstrated his way of '*tanka wo kiru*' in the true sense of the word. As such, the meetings ended without reaching any agreement.

Afterwards, since what the American lawyer argued, in my view, was unreasonable, not at all suitable for the situation in Japan...I've forgotten what exactly the thing was. Finally, I wrote a report on this, fully explaining why it failed. [...] I was to be working for the American Embassy in a month. I was about to move when I wrote that memo, intentionally. I summed up everything that happened in my memo as my impression, and

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<sup>62</sup> The Chief of the Ministry of Communications, equivalent to the Minister of Communications.

then said, ‘*Sayonara*.’ In a way, I did my own ‘*tanka wo kiru*.’ It was my way of expressing anger.

This episode was introduced when Nishiyama was recounting the story of Kono Ichiro and his *tanka*.

### 6.1.1 Kono Ichiro’s *tanka*

During one of the discussion sessions at the first U.S.-Japan Ministerial Meeting on Trade and Economic Affairs (see Chapter 5), Nishiyama recalls that Kono Ichiro, then the Minister of Agriculture, made quite an aggressive statement, almost an ultimatum, to U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Freeman. It was virtually ‘*tanka wo kiru*,’ a Japanese expression meaning to speak out with angry determination, ready to fight, almost issuing an ultimatum. Nishiyama explains that Kono did not use the term ‘*tanka wo kiru*,’ but what he said amounted to ‘*tanka wo kiru*’ which he did not perceive it as such at the time. Nishiyama explains:

The topic, as I remember, was import and export of agricultural products. Up until that point, the Minister made jokes which left Secretary Freeman puzzled and the atmosphere was amicable. I interpreted Kono’s words into English using slang, to which the U.S. Secretary responded with big gestures, and the Minister of Agriculture seemed quite satisfied. This particular statement came up in the middle of such friendly situation, and I simply interpreted Mr.Kono’s ‘*tanka*’ in ordinary English. Thanks to my interpreting, Secretary Freeman had no idea that the Japanese Agriculture Minister said something aggressive in a ‘*tanka wo kitta*’<sup>63</sup> manner, and simply gave an

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<sup>63</sup> The past tense of “*tanka wo kiru*.”

ordinary answer. Later, somebody in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said to me, ‘Mr.Kono, at that time, meant to *tanka wo kiru* and so he was somewhat dissatisfied with your interpretation.’ For the first time I realized it was meant to be a ‘*tanka*,’ and at the next meeting, I deeply apologized to Mr. Kono. (1970, pp.20-21)

Asked about this episode in the interview, Nishiyama replied that he did not recall the details, but that he believed he ‘summed up in English what Mr. Kono had said.’ It was only after the meeting, when others were saying how Kono’s remarks in Japanese were, in effect, ‘*tanka wo kitta*’ that he realized the Minister meant his statement to be angry:

Torikai: So you did not see it as a ‘*tanka wo kiru*’ at that time?

Nishiyama: I don’t think so. If I did, I would have approached it in that manner. [...] I suppose it was not too clear to me. I believe the subject was regarding an importing issue of some agricultural product.

Torikai: But if you had realized at that time, the words spoken were actually ‘*tanka*,’ as an interpreter, what do you think you would have done? Do you think you interpreted it that way even if you thought it might risk offending the American side?

Nishiyama: It would have been inevitable. The reason is, if that is what the speaker intended, it is not the responsibility of the interpreter even if the listener became offended.

Torikai: That’s for sure.

Nishiyama: Sometimes, the interpreter is blamed for some talks that did not go well. The responsibility is placed on the interpreter whether he likes it or not. However, I say that it is the speaker who should take the responsibility,

not the interpreter.

Nishiyama concludes the episode with comments on the need of what is close to a French word '*rapport*' between a speaker and his interpreter:

I felt strongly at that time, that communication between a speaker and an interpreter should not be just in language or words, but communication between hearts is necessary. Whether '*tanka wo kiru*' in that situation is effective or not psychologically to an American is not something I should judge. As an interpreter, we have to understand the feelings of a speaker as if they are your own, and express the opinion in that feeling to the other party.  
(1970, pp.20-21, emphasis in original)

While Nishiyama remembers the episode well, he doesn't regard this as a single most difficult case in his interpreting career. Rather, he recalls that occasions he encountered hardships while interpreting were when he interpreted for U.S. Ambassador to Japan, Edwin O. Reischauer.

### **6.1.2 *Kakeai manzai* with Ambassador Reischauer**

Nishiyama attributes the difficulties he encountered to his lack of knowledge, particularly in history:

In my experience, there were no meetings that were too difficult for me to handle. Although, there were times, such as with Ambassador Reischauer, when I lacked the knowledge necessary to render accurate interpreting. As I mentioned earlier, I had barely passed my history classes, so I had little knowledge of history. And, the Ambassador was an internationally

acknowledged scholar of history. He was especially well versed in Asian history.

Nishiyama's first work with Reischauer was at a small meeting with journalists as a newly arrived U.S. Ambassador. Born and brought up in Tokyo until the age of 16, as a Presbyterian missionary's son, the scholar-turned-diplomat was fluent in Japanese, but he made it a rule to speak in English officially as U.S. Ambassador. Nishiyama, who had already been working at the U.S. Embassy, interpreted Reischauer's English into Japanese for the first time at the ambassador's residence. Nishiyama 'didn't have any problems then, because the discussion was about U.S.-Japan relations,' and thus, he assumes that 'as the Ambassador heard me interpret, he must have thought that I would be of use.'

From then on, Nishiyama became almost an exclusive interpreter for Ambassador Reischauer. His responsibilities at the U.S. Embassy included 'being an advisor, among other things, but whenever there was a lecture or a press conference, he would always ask for me.' This, Nishiyama feels, was a great experience, although sometimes he made mistakes in his interpretation:

At times, I would interpret what Ambassador Reischauer said into Japanese based on my own understanding, and he would say, 'No, Sen, that isn't quite what I meant.' And I would ask, 'Mr. Ambassador, what did you mean?' and the Ambassador would explain to me, 'I meant it this way.' It was almost like a '*kakeai manzai*'<sup>64</sup> (a stand-up comedy duo) act on stage.

[...] Then eventually I would tell him, 'Oh, I see. Now I think I

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<sup>64</sup> A "*manzai*" is a stand-up comedy, and a "*kakeai manzai*" is with a pair of comedians in a duo style.

understand. Let me try it again,' and speak in Japanese, and the Ambassador would listen and say, 'That's better.' The audience would get a kick out of this and roar with laughter. It was just like '*kakeai manzai*.' On stage. We did this many times.

Nishiyama narrated the story of how Reischauer used to correct his mistakes in front of the audience, as if it were something funny, describing it as '*kakeai manzai*.' This, however, by no means is something commonly done. As a matter of fact, ordinary interpreters would resent this kind of embarrassment; their pride as a professional deeply hurt, losing face in front of an audience. Moreover, Nishiyama was no ordinary interpreter. Reischauer (2003) himself commented on Nishiyama's outstanding interpreting in his diary. On February 15, 1962, Reischauer's notes about the visit of Robert Kennedy, then U.S. Attorney General, to Waseda University, mentioned Nishiyama's fluent interpreting of Kennedy's spontaneous speech (p.68), and in his February 25, 1962 diary entry, Reischauer praised Nishiyama as his indispensable, fabulous interpreter (p.70).

Nevertheless, at every lecture, Reischauer would correct Nishiyama's interpreting at least two or three times on the spot, and afterwards apologize for 'correcting him so many times' (Nishiyama, 1970, p.25). An example would be when Reischauer corrected him and said, 'No, it's not exactly "*soutou ookina sa*" (a very big difference). It's "*kiwamete ookina sa*" (quite a big difference)' (p.85; Nishiyama, 1979, p.31). Nishiyama insists not only did he not mind this, but he felt more secure that way, because Reischauer's corrections were all to do with his 'misunderstanding the meaning or intention of what the Ambassador was trying to say' (1970, p.86). To some interpreters who dislike being corrected by the speaker, Nishiyama argues that 'such corrections are not to be feared, because they are not about interpreting per se—they should be considered as the correction on the comprehension of certain information'



(pp.85-86). This exceptional tolerance seems to be based on the profound respect that Nishiyama has for Reischauer:

The most admirable, or should I say, impressive about the Ambassador, was how stimulating his talks on history were. The history he spoke about was really the drama of people living in society. That is why it was so exciting. I was captivated by his stories. For the first time I thought history was fascinating and began to be interested.

As time went on, their relationship turned into a warm friendship. In Nishiyama's words, 'He made me his best friend, and treated me extremely well.' One factor, it seems, that fostered such relationship is Nishiyama's unending curiosity and willingness to learn something new: 'I learned a great deal just by speaking with the Ambassador. I would often comment that a world-famous authority of history has given me free private lessons, and is even paying me. I must be the luckiest person in the world.' Even today, Nishiyama is grateful for the way Reischauer explained history so that an engineer would easily understand and appreciate the study of history, and recalls that to him, Reischauer was more than a friend. To explain this feeling, Nishiyama talked about the form of address that bothered him for a long time:

Nishiyama: [...] Ambassador Reischauer considered me his friend, so whenever he wrote me, he would start off by addressing me as 'Dear Sen,' and he would sign his name as 'Ed' at the bottom. So it would be natural for me to call him Ed, but I just couldn't do that. He was such a great scholar. And thanks to him, I became interested in things in the sociology field, and came to write books. [...] That is why I feel always indebted to Ambassador Reischauer. And that is why I can never say, 'Dear Ed.' For the

first couple of times, I wrote, 'Dear Professor Reischauer,' but he would always reply, 'Dear Sen,' and 'Ed'. It seemed as if he were telling me, 'Just call me Ed.' But I just couldn't bring myself to do it. On the other hand, 'Professor Reischauer' sounded much too formal.

Torikai: So then, what did you do?

Nishiyama: I suddenly found a solution. Right, I thought. From then on, I wrote, 'Dear *Sensei*.' I wrote this '*sensei*' in the roman alphabet.

Torikai: That is a wonderful idea.

Nishiyama: From then on, whenever I saw Prof. Reischauer, I would say, 'Hey, *Sensei*, Come over here.' I always called him '*Sensei*' since then. When you call somebody '*sensei*' you sound friendly, and at the same time you can show your respect. In this sense, Japanese is more convenient.

This decision to use the Japanese word '*sensei*' is, in a way, symbolic of Nishiyama's inner feelings toward Reischauer. The word is not simply a common noun meaning a 'teacher.' It is used to address people in a teaching position, including university professors, medical doctors and members of the Diet.<sup>65</sup> It is never used to address a friend, colleague or peer. Edwin McClellan, who translated Natsume Souseki's *Kokoro* into English, did not translate the word '*sensei*' in the novel and kept the Japanese word, as in a sentence in the beginning of the story:

I always called him 'Sensei.' I shall therefore refer to him simply as 'Sensei,' and not by his real name. It is not because I consider it more discreet, but it is because I find it more natural that I do so.

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<sup>65</sup> This is why Japanese students often make the mistake of addressing a teacher or professor as 'Teacher,' a literal translation of '*Sensei*.'

According to Mark Petersen (2003, p.217), McClellan found it impossible to translate the word '*sensei*' in the original, and therefore decided not to use an English word and simply explained in the footnote that it is close to '*maître*' in French.

Although Reischauer treated Nishiyama as a very close friend, and being a Japanese-American, Nishiyama was perfectly at home with American culture, he could not bring himself to comply with the American way of addressing a friend. It might be possible to think this was because Reischauer was more of a mentor to Nishiyama than his friend. Hence, the choice of the address term '*sensei*' rather than calling him by his first name, 'Ed.' As an expert on Japan, married to a Japanese wife, and proficient in Japanese, it is likely that Reischauer understood Nishiyama's sentiments. The unique duo of '*kakeai manzai*' could not have been realized without this unusual relationship, solidly built on trust and respect.

### 6.1.3 Interpreters as *tomei ningen*

Nishiyama (1970, 1979) maintains that an interpreter should not be recognized as a presence, because the ideal situation for interpersonal communication is a dialogue with two people talking to each other without an interpreter. In this sense, the presence of an interpreter is a 'necessary evil' (1970, p.140). An interpreter is 'a mediator, and yet, he should not be a mediator' (p.134). He considers it a failure if speakers became conscious of the presence of an interpreter as a mediator, because they should be interacting with each other, not with the interpreter. What he meant by this is that the only time an interpreter is allowed to speak up, other than when he is interpreting, is 'when he didn't understand the message he heard and needed to ask. An interpreter should never speak his own mind' (p.134). In other words, interpreters should try 'not to impose their own character. Rather, they should concentrate on listening carefully to an utterance as if the speaker's feelings are their own' (Nishiyama, 1970, p.135). In

essence, according to Nishiyama, ‘A skilled interpreter is like a *tomei ningen* (transparent person). The interpreter is surely there, but the interlocutors rarely notice the presence and are left with the impression that they talked directly with each other’ (p.35). In the interview, Nishiyama elaborated on this point:

I wrote an interpreter is ‘*tomei ningen*’ (transparent person), because when I was at an international conference in Europe, there were interpreters in Arabic, German or English. They were on the podium providing consecutive interpreting. Skilled interpreters translated the message as if they themselves were the speakers. That’s how good they were. They interpreted exactly how the speaker would speak in that language, it seemed. You felt as if you understood Arabic or German speeches yourself, and you did not remember who the interpreter was...

So, interpreters are there and although not actually transparent, they seem invisible. That is the ideal situation, although, lately, being in a booth makes you invisible anyway. But even when you are interpreting in a face-to-face interaction, and you see an interpreter there, the interpreter should be invisible. The speaker should be looking at the other speaker, not the interpreter. When I do interpreting, I intentionally look away so that people automatically look towards the speaker. This is how I do interpretation. That is when I realize that I am present in person, but should only remain as a voice to convey messages. That is the ideal way.

The last point Nishiyama made about intentionally looking away from the speaker to make him look at the listener, instead of the interpreter, is significant in revealing his perception of the role of an interpreter. Lang (1978) observed a trial in New Guinea and reports that the interpreter tried to convey his status as a neutral rather than an

active initiating party by ‘directing his attention not to any one of the people talking through him, but just to his own hands’(p.235, as cited in Wadensjö, 1998, p.71). While the actual non-verbal actions differ, both cases represent the interpreter’s efforts to have the interlocutors communicate as directly as possible, with interpreters remaining as invisible as possible.

#### **6.1.4 Nishiyama made visible by Apollo**

Nishiyama became a nation-wide hero for his simultaneous interpreting on NHK satellite broadcasts of the Apollo moon landing. While other interpreters were also involved in this historic event on commercial TV stations, Nishiyama, a rare interpreter with an engineering background, was on the public nation-wide NHK-TV network, exposed most widely and perhaps the longest hours—around 35 times for the 10-day Apollo live broadcasts. The astronauts’ conversation with NASA reporting, ‘Everything is go’ or ‘We’re A-OK’ was translated by Nishiyama as ‘*Subete juncho*’ and this became a household word at the time (Nishiyama, 1979, pp.127-149).

In retrospect, this 1969 event was epoch-making in that the Japanese people for the first time saw simultaneous interpreters at work on TV, motivating many students to study English (Torikai, 2005b). Among the events that ushered Japan into the international society, including the 1964 Tokyo Olympics and Osaka World EXPO in 1970, the Apollo broadcasts had a tremendous visible impact throughout the nation, particularly because TV stations, including NHK, decided to show simultaneous interpreters on the job to viewers. Nishiyama recalls how surprised he was when there was no seat for him in a booth in the TV station:

I thought it was weird, but there was a seat for me in the studio. And a TV camera was pointed toward my seat. I said, ‘Hey, what’s going on?’ And they said, ‘Actually, we want to show your face.’ So I said, ‘No thank you.

When I am doing simultaneous interpreting, I am very focused, and when I am concentrated my face looks scowled and serious. I don't want to show that face.' But they said, 'We need your face.' I asked why, and they said, 'Viewers are calling in to ask, "What type of equipment are you using for simultaneous interpretation?"', so we decided that we need to show viewers that it is not a machine, but a living person.' That's how I ended up on TV.

Nishiyama added with a shy smile, 'That's when my face became famous.' And indeed, that was when Nishiyama, the interpreter, became visible. Nevertheless, this visibility was something out of the ordinary, and didn't alter the nature of the work being basically invisible. In the book he wrote in 1970, soon after the Apollo moon landing, Nishiyama continued to regard interpreters as '*tomei ningen*' (p.35). Nishiyama (1970, 1979) admits that interpreters often feel frustrated, because while they need considerable intellectual capacity, oftentimes their work requires them to contain and restrain their urge for creativity:

In interpreting work, you have to exclude your own presence from yourself as much as possible. You need creativity to reconstruct the original sentences in another language, and yet at the same time, you have to be careful that your own opinions and volition do not interfere with your interpreting. Interpreting work being as such, it runs the risk of suppressing human desire for creativity. Therefore, anybody involved with interpreting work must try to keep a healthy psychological balance. (1979, p.109, my translation)

Interpreting work demands great intellectual capacity. In spite of the intelligence required, an interpreter must repress an aspect of creativity (your own opinion, ideas etc.) and concentrate on faithfully reproducing the words

of the speaker. This would cause anybody, even someone with extremely strong mental strength, to suffer from frustration. (p.37)

One solution, Nishiyama suggests, is for the interpreter to have a different specialty, or another job besides interpreting, such as writing or teaching, which many professional interpreters actually do. Asked whether he himself ever felt this frustration and regretted having become an interpreter instead of an engineer, Nishiyama replied:

Of course, when you are overworked and the work is tiring, I would like nothing else but not be an interpreter. [...] while interpreting, some people notice mistakes, some people complain, or someone gets drunk and addresses me, 'Hey, interpreter.' Those were the days, really. I was often treated like a sheer language machine. [...] However, there was one time when I was happy I became an interpreter.

Then he went on to narrate the story of an old woman he happened to meet on a bus in Tokyo one day. The old woman, just like millions of others in Japan, saw Nishiyama on TV, interpreting live broadcasts of the Apollo moon landing. She bowed deeply to Nishiyama and thanked him courteously by saying, 'Thank you very much. I did not even dream it possible that men would walk on the moon while I was still alive, but thanks to you, I was able to see for myself that it actually happened. Thank you so very much!' Nishiyama was too surprised to say anything to this woman:

I was at a loss for words and could not say anything except, 'Oh,' and bowed. I didn't know what to say. It just hit me... How shall I explain this...I was terribly moved. At that instance, I thought to myself, 'I guess

being an interpreter can be rewarding sometimes.’ That was the first time I felt that way... I thought, ‘I’m so glad I learned to do simultaneous interpreting.’ There are times in your life you feel that way, right? I’ve been doing what I did for this occasion. That’s the way I felt.

Nishiyama, who aspired to become an electrical engineer when he was young, became an interpreter by chance. Ironically, it was because of his background in electrical engineering that he was asked, and accepted, to be the primary simultaneous interpreter for the NHK Apollo broadcasts<sup>66</sup>. As an engineer, he had a genuine interest in the space mission and enjoyed the work (probably the only interpreter who did.)<sup>67</sup>. And thanks to this interpreting work, he was given the unusual chance to become visible to people, which eventually led to his chance encounter with the woman who, for the first time, made him feel ‘rewarded’ by the interpreting profession.

## **6.2 Komatsu as a visible machine**

Komatsu Tatsuya’s career after the Japan Productivity Center (JPC) missions started while he was still in the U.S., with such meetings as U.S.-Japan Conference on Cultural and Educational Interchange around 1965. He recalls that at these meetings, he was more of a conference interpreter rendering simultaneous interpreting in a booth, whereas consecutive interpreting for the tripartite North Pacific Fishery Meeting, with U.S., Canada and Japan, was closer to diplomatic interpreting and was much more

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<sup>66</sup> Nishiyama explains that he was recommended to NHK for his technical knowledge in electrical engineering, which most interpreters lacked.

<sup>67</sup> For example, Kunihiro Masao tried to hide from NHK when they were looking for interpreters for the Apollo broadcasts, because he didn’t have confidence and didn’t want to do it, having not enough technical knowledge. He remembers when finally he had to interpret for one of the Apollo broadcasts, he was “miserable” and felt like “a sheep being dragged to a slaughterhouse.”



difficult:

It was completely different from interpreting for JPC missions. Asano<sup>68</sup> and I were a team at this meeting, but you see, it was almost like being thrown into a full-fledged diplomatic negotiations all of a sudden. We sort of groped our way through. I don't remember the specific content or the words, but I do remember it was extremely difficult and we had a hard time. On top of it, the meeting lasted until late at night, to maybe 10. It was a lot of work. Well, I think you could say this was my first interpreting in diplomatic negotiations. It was around 1964, I think.

In 1965, Muramatsu and Kunihiro, already back in Japan, established a professional conference organizer, and named it "Simul," taken from the word 'simultaneous.' They invited Komatsu to join, which he accepted. This was the beginning of his conference interpreting career in Japan, leading him to various top level conferences and negotiations, including summit meetings. Komatsu was also an interpreter at a dozen negotiations before the return of Okinawa to Japan, involving not only officials from both American and Japanese governments but various scholars, as well as U.S. Ambassador Reischauer. Komatsu remembers that the negotiations included a wide range of topics, such as the Japanese situation, theoretical background for the alliance, and most of all, the problems in Okinawa within the context of security in the Asian region. One thing Komatsu still remembers well is what a Japanese military expert said at one of the meetings:

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<sup>68</sup> Asano Tasuku was a JPC interpreter, who later became a TV newscaster and the editor-in-chief of *Newsweek* Japanese Edition, before his untimely death.

At that time, there was a hit song in Japan called “*Koyubi no Omoide*” (Memory of my Little Finger). There is a line in that pop song which goes, ‘My little finger that you bit still hurts,’ and I was interpreting this. This expert said that Okinawa was like this bitten little finger for the country of Japan. It’s only a little finger, but the hurt is not minor. When your little finger hurts, your entire body hurts. I remember I interpreted this. Soon after this, the return of Okinawa became a reality. Since I had been involved with the negotiations behind the scene all along, it really was impressive.

### **6.2.1 As a member of diplomatic teams**

As an experienced interpreter for countless Japanese missions at international meetings, whether hired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, Komatsu reveals that Japanese interpreters were treated as members of the team in diplomatic negotiations. Unlike interpreters from other countries, who were ‘hired as outside experts,’ Japanese counterparts had far more information from their clients. This, in Komatsu’s view, can be both positive and negative. The positive side is obvious— ‘It is important for any interpreter to receive as much information as possible.’ One of the negative elements he encountered in earlier periods was to be asked to take notes, especially at one-on-one ministerial meetings, and to submit reports after the meeting, which Komatsu and his colleagues made it a rule to refuse, explaining, ‘we get distracted and cannot concentrate on interpreting if we are asked to write a report afterwards.’

Another possible drawback is the potential issue of neutrality. If interpreters are treated as members of the negotiating team, accepted as ‘insiders,’ would this not affect the neutrality that professional interpreters are required to uphold as their work ethic? To this, Komatsu replies:

It's something to be grateful to be treated as '*uchiwa*' (insider) and given much relevant information. We would never interfere with the content in any way, and as interpreters, we know we have to handle information objectively. I think interpreters are fully trained and prepared not to lose objectivity. I don't think neutrality is an issue here.

On a positive note, Komatsu adds that receiving abundant information relevant to the assigned work definitely helps interpreters 'anticipate' what the speaker is going to say:

Anticipation makes it possible for an interpreter to translate the message before the speaker actually expresses his/her thoughts. ... If you try to understand and comprehend the message accurately, it is inevitable that an interpreter anticipates... So in my opinion, anticipation is not something special. In a way, it's an indispensable part of understanding. Or, in other words, it's an inevitable part, almost.

### 6.2.2 Faithful but visible

Komatsu analyzes his own interpreting as putting the 'emphasis on the original message':

Some people talk about interpreting as being a cultural clarifier, or bridging different cultures. I never did this. I have always thought very strongly that that is not something an interpreter should be doing. I think I always tried as best I could to be faithful to the original. So, I didn't even think whether to leave an ambiguous statement as ambiguous or not. The only thing I was conscious of was to translate it as '*kichitto*' (properly and

accurately) as I could.

Komatsu used the English phrase ‘cultural clarifier’ to mean a new type of business interpreting where an interpreter ‘acts as a bicultural consultant giving advice on what to say and how to say it.’ This, in Komatsu’s view, oversteps the boundaries of the interpreter’s role:

Interpreters interfering in the content, including cultural things, with the exception of community interpreting...For conference interpreters, I think it’s a taboo. In this sense, you have to be faithful to the speaker. What I mean by being faithful is not to the speaker as a person, but to what the speaker said. Of course, in order to understand what was said, ultimately you have to understand the speaker. That’s for sure. Nevertheless, you have to approach the speaker through the source language text that the speaker produced. So, ultimately, you have to be faithful to the source language text.

This definitely is easier said than done, for at one point during the interview, he gave an example of Japanese Prime Minister Obuchi Keizo<sup>69</sup> and his excessive modesty in his talk at a reception of a big international conference:

Komatsu: Obuchi is from the same constituency as Nakasone and Fukuda—Gunma. And so he said, ‘In Gunma Prefecture, I’m just an old man running a tiny *ramen*<sup>70</sup> place around the corner. Nakasone-san and

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<sup>69</sup> Obuchi Keizo was Japan’s prime minister from July 1998 to April 2000.

<sup>70</sup> *Ramen* is Chinese noodles in soup that is cheap and very popular in Japan. You find a small *ramen* shop in any town. Obuchi’s expression introducing himself as “an old man running a tiny *ramen* place around the corner” is a metaphor, probably meaning an ordinary person you meet anywhere.

Fukuda-san are like huge department stores such as Mitsukoshi and Seibu<sup>71</sup>.'

Belittling himself. I was interpreting this and I thought...I mean, he is the Prime Minister of a country, you see. Being too humble. I had to think what kind of impression people from overseas might receive. I was doing consecutive interpreting then, and I softened the original expression somewhat to a 'modest existence' and translated it as 'Compared with these two, I am not yet a big shot.' This could be a kind of difference in culture.

Torikai: Right, because this would be accepted favorably in Japan.

Komatsu: Oh, yes. People would like it here. But you know, I was looking at the audience while I was interpreting, and I noticed people from overseas looked puzzled at times. Their reactions...to a certain degree... That is why gradually I softened the original to alleviate this.

Notwithstanding his belief in the canon of interpreting, Komatsu feels that it is unrealistic for clients, especially in diplomacy, to 'demand interpreters to simply translate the words spoken literally, because you cannot detach words from a person's thoughts. In order to understand words better, we have to know what the speaker is trying to say, what kind of person he is, in what position.' Komatsu realizes the difficulty that an interpreter faces and calls it using an English word 'a pitfall.' Interpreters have to know what the speaker intends to say, but in the process, they 'interpret' the intention of the speaker in their own way. What they think the speaker's intention is solely based on their interpretation. Komatsu thinks the balance between the two criteria, between literal translation and interpreting the speaker's intent, in his case is somewhere around 7:3, or 8:2. With all his insistence on faithfulness, however, Komatsu maintains that interpreters are not transparent:

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<sup>71</sup> Both are famous department stores in Japan.

I'm not quite sure what you mean by being transparent, but I myself have never thought of an interpreter as transparent. It is true that for interpreting work, it is most important to be neutral and objective. However, as for the presence of an interpreter, we are quite conscious of—doing a good job, or aware of the need to contribute to a communicative event. It's natural for interpreters to feel that way. So in this sense, I'd say an interpreter is quite a visible presence. Especially in consecutive interpreting, but in some ways, simultaneous interpreting, too. You can't deny the presence of an interpreter. Sometimes when it went really well, you might go unnoticed, but even so, I would assume that an interpreter has some form of presence one way or another.

For Komatsu, an interpreter cannot be transparent, because 'it's the interpreter who decides the meaning of an utterance.' In fact, Komatsu feels that 'it is necessary for an interpreter to consciously try to interpret the message correctly and express it in the right way,' which would mean psychologically, an interpreter is not necessarily a *kurogo*.

### 6.2.3 The interpreter as a machine

Komatsu's analysis of the role of interpreters is rather complex. On the one hand, there is the ideal interpreter who does a faithful translation, and yet s/he cannot remain transparent, because the interpreter has to try to understand the speaker and his message, the result of which is the interpreter becomes visible. The visibility for Komatsu, then, seems to be more to do with the inner feelings or the psychology of the interpreters themselves.

To prove this point, Komatsu pointed out several times in the interview that an

interpreters' contribution is limited, and he was doubtful that interpreters had any impact on diplomacy. In spite of all the conferences and diplomatic negotiations at which he worked, he maintains, 'I don't think I contributed to U.S.-Japan relations, to be frank with you.' While he admits a meeting may or may not go smoothly depending on the quality of an interpreter, Komatsu feels:

In the long run, to think that interpreters play some big role affecting the relationships between two nations is, in my view, overestimating interpreting. [...] For the interpreter, the important task is to facilitate communication in communicative events, and we surely accomplish that task. But whether this contribution has a long term effect, affecting the relations between nations, I doubt it very much.

Thus, the role of an interpreter is first and foremost language and communication, understanding the language accurately and expressing it well, not going too much into the content of the text, including cultural aspects. In this sense, Komatsu argues, it is definitely true that an interpreter is a *kurogo*, and he even goes as far as to say that an interpreter is a 'machine':

Komatsu: I think I contributed to improving the quality of interpreting in Japan, but I really don't feel I contributed much to things like U.S.-Japan relations...[...] Of course, if you are a professional, it is only natural that you'll make a meeting go smoothly. Otherwise, you can't call yourself a professional. I think I've done good work, but I just happened to be ... In that sense, I can view myself as a machine

Torikai: A machine?

Komatsu: A machine, in my view. Relatively a good one, you could say,

perhaps.

Komatsu, who adamantly denied his contribution to Japan's foreign diplomacy, declared himself a 'machine,' which may be close to becoming what Goffman (1981) calls an 'animator.' Komatsu summed up his own thinking about interpreting by saying that he might be a '*nekkara no tsuuyaku*' (an interpreter from head to foot).

### 6.3 Muramatsu and 'unsinkable aircraft carrier'

Interpreters are indispensable in foreign relations. However, as Roland (1999) points out, 'how seldom are these invisible yet indispensable persons noted by the historians!' (p.7) The only time they are noticed, it seems, is when they are accused of having made an error in translation, or a mistranslation. There were indeed such occasions in Japan's foreign policy after World War II.

One historic case is the translation of Prime Minister Sato's utterance at the 1970 meeting with President Nixon (see Chapter 3; Torikai, 2004a, pp.36-47; Torikai, 2005a, pp.28-31). Another was when Prime Minister Suzuki Zenkō told the U.S. Congress that Japan was going to be like a "*hari-nezumi*" ('a mouse with needles,' meaning 'a porcupine' in English). What he intended to say was Japan would only use arms when attacked, but his interpreter didn't hear the "*hari*" (needles) part and mistook it for '*nezumi*.' He was reminded of an Aesop's story, and translated it as becoming like 'a wise mouse' (see Chapter 3; Torikai, 2004a, pp.48-57). In both instances, the interpreters were officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. One notable case involving a professional interpreter, and possibly the most widely known, is the case of the 'unsinkable aircraft carrier' (Torikai, 2004a, pp.58-76; Torikai, 2005a, pp.31-36).



### 6.3.1 What happened

In January 1983, Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro visited the United States for a summit conference with President Reagan, and was invited by the publisher of *The Washington Post*, Katherine Graham, to a breakfast meeting at her residence, where he talked about his views on defense, and stressed the need to make the Japanese archipelago an unsinkable aircraft carrier so that it can serve as a gigantic fort to defend the country from an invasion by Soviet bombers. The statement was consecutively translated by his official interpreter, Muramatsu Masumi.

Don Oberdorfer<sup>72</sup> of *The Washington Post*, who reported Nakasone's remark, gave his account of the story in a lecture he delivered at the International House of Japan Foreign Relations Dinner on April 10, 1997 (Oberdorfer, 1997, pp.18-19):

The next visitor was Yasuhiro Nakasone in 1983. He had just become Prime Minister. [...] the Japanese Embassy, with its usual efficiency—Ambassador Yoshio Okawara was ambassador at the time—came and looked into the most exquisite details of this breakfast, where each person was going to sit, etc. The only thing they couldn't figure out was what Nakasone might say.

When he got there, Mrs. Graham said, 'It's very nice to have you here. We'd like to have this meeting on the record. Is that okay?' He said, 'Yes.' As soon as he agreed, I, as the reporter doing the story, took out my tape recorder, walked over to his place, and put it right in front of him and turned it on.

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<sup>72</sup> Don Oberdorfer was a *Washington Post* diplomatic correspondent until 1993, when he joined John Hopkins University's Nitze School of Advanced International Studies as a resident scholar.

The meeting started out discussing the automobile problem, but after a while, Oberdorfer decided to bring up security and military matters and asked, ‘Suzuki<sup>73</sup> told this group you’re going to protect out to one thousand miles. What is your policy?’ Nakasone replied, through his interpreter, ‘My own view of defense is that the whole Japanese archipelago should be like an unsinkable aircraft carrier, putting up a tremendous bulwark of defense against infiltration of the Backfire bomber<sup>74</sup>. To prevent Backfires from penetrating through this wall should be our first goal.’ Nakasone went on elaborating his ambitious military objectives for Japan, which went far beyond any of the statements made by previous prime ministers.

According to Oberdorfer, everyone was most impressed, and on the way out Donald Graham, the son of the publisher, said, ‘You know, we really ought to carry some text of the remarkable things he said.’ Thus, he wrote his story, ‘very carefully, following exactly what had been said in the English translation.’

Oberdorfer remembers how the Japanese press corps reacted when they read the first copies of *The Washington Post*. In his words, ‘they went absolutely crazy: (A) They had never heard these statements before, but (B) they fastened on the phrase ‘unsinkable aircraft carrier.’ According to Muramatsu, it was the Japanese journalists who translated the word back into Japanese:

They are really clever, those newspaper people. They consulted a dictionary, and found the word in Japanese ‘*fuchin-kûbo*’ for ‘unsinkable aircraft carrier’ in English. Really they were good at finding a good word. The word ‘*fuchin-kûbo*’ existed even before the war. In English, it’s the same thing. When you are talking about a huge warship, you say

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<sup>73</sup> Suzuki Zenkō was Nakasone’s predecessor as Japan’s prime minister.

<sup>74</sup> The Soviet Union plane.

‘unsinkable.’

Muramatsu remembers that initially, before it became an issue, Nakasone liked the determined tone of the English translation, as did others present, such as the Japanese ambassador to the U.S. and officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who were all pleased and said ‘Very good.’ Muramatsu himself felt he had done a good job and was ‘quite satisfied with my own translation,’ until the remark was reported in the newspaper the next morning, and the Soviet Union ‘barked and said, are you implying we are an enemy?’

Faced with the Soviet protests, along with strong criticism within Japan, the media asked Nakasone if he had said ‘*fuchin-kûbo*.’ Oberdorfer (1997) testifies that at a press conference for the American press, ‘he said, yes, he did say it. He also had a press conference for the Japanese Press in which he said, no, he didn’t say it.’ This is a typical case of politicians “*nimai-jita*,” speaking with forked tongue. On one hand, Nakasone certainly didn’t want to antagonize the Japanese public—hence, he denied the remark to the Japanese press. Nevertheless, Nakasone wanted the American press to carry the story, because as Michael Schaller (2001) notes:

When Ronald Reagan became president in 1981, he pledged to enhance U.S. military strength, challenge Soviet influence, and prod Japan into protecting its sea-lanes out to distance of at least 1,000 miles. Between 1982 and 1987, Congress several times demanded that Japan either expand its military capacity and take on a larger mission or pay the United States the cost of protecting its interests. Some of this anger reflected genuine concern over equitable defense cost sharing. But it also revealed growing frustration over Japan’s expanding trade imbalance, especially that caused by massive automobile exports.

Japanese-American economic and security frictions during the 1980s would have been worse except for the strong personal bonds that Reagan established with Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro, who took office in November 1982. An outspoken nationalist who echoed many of Reagan's anti-Soviet themes, Nakasone endorsed the big American buildup and applauded Washington's policy of challenging Soviet influence [...]. (p.58)

In addition to accommodating American demands, it is possible to assume that Nakasone envisaged this opportunity as '*gaiatsu*' (foreign pressure)<sup>75</sup> to realize his long-held political belief on Japan's security. Nakasone himself admits later that '*fuchin-kûbo* was a metaphor for waterproof defense' (Torikai, 2004a, p.73) and that he 'went to the States and talked about *fuchin-kûbo* or *unmei kyodoutai*'<sup>76</sup>, which many in Japan criticized, including newspapers, TV and scholars, but I persuaded them every time' (Nakasone, 1997, p.9).

Notwithstanding, Nakasone at first denied his remark because, in Muramatsu's view, Nakasone was already regretting what he had said, and thus, he took issue with the word *fuchin-kûbo* and declared 'I didn't say it.' Muramatsu argues that what he should have said was 'I used a different word, but what I meant was the same.' Instead, Nakasone denied his entire remark to the Japanese press, leading people to think, 'Oh,

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<sup>75</sup> Japanese leaders at times used "*gaiatsu*," literally meaning pressure from outside, to achieve their political goals. Michael Armacost, U.S. Ambassador to Japan, 1989-93, was nicknamed "Mr. *Gaiatsu*" by Japanese media (Oberdorfer, 2001, p.78).

<sup>76</sup> Nakasone made another remark at the *Post* meeting saying that 'Japan and U.S. share the same destiny (*unmei kyodoutai*) across the Pacific' (*Asahi Shimbun*, 1983, January 20), which too became an issue in Japan. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs took pains in explaining to the public that the statement in no way implied that Japan would do whatever was told by the U.S., but when Nakasone described the meaning as the U.S. and Japan being in the same boat, the situation became even worse (Torikai 2004a, pp.74-75).

he didn't say it. Well, it must have been mistranslation.'

A day or two later, according to Oberdorfer, the Japanese press attaché came to his office and after listening to the tape of the breakfast meeting said, 'He didn't say it in Japanese. His interpreter said "unsinkable aircraft carrier" in English.' Oberdorfer then had this tape analyzed in detail in Japanese, and found that what Nakasone had said in describing the Japanese position was an '*ookina kōku bōkan*' (a big aircraft carrier) and it was translated as 'unsinkable aircraft carrier.'

### Big or unsinkable?

In Muramatsu's memory, Nakasone's remark in Japanese went something to the effect, 'I will make the Japanese archipelago like an "*ookina kōku bōkan*" (big aircraft carrier), and defend the U.S. and its allies from the Soviet SS21 and SS22 missiles.' If Nakasone had indeed used the word '*ookina*,' why didn't Muramatsu translate it as 'big'? His answer to this question was:

The way he said it was "*kakko-yoku*" (flashy)... I was doing consecutive interpreting at that time, and I translated it as "making the Japanese archipelago like an unsinkable aircraft carrier." That was the keyword. When you try to describe an island using a ship metaphor, I think there are many examples of idiomatic expressions with an adjective "unsinkable."

There are two things Muramatsu mentioned which prompted him to select the word 'unsinkable.' One was 'how Nakasone said it, his tone. He was in a way showing off.' The other point was linguistic usage. Muramatsu argues that an expression 'big aircraft carrier' is 'nonsensical in English. All aircraft carriers are big anyway. They aren't just tiny boats.' He gives further information on the usage of 'unsinkable' in English:

By the way, do you happen to know a Broadway musical called *Unsinkable Molly Brown*? Molly Brown is the name of the heroine. [...] She was famous when I was in the States. But what I am trying to say is, Molly Brown is somebody full of energy and vitality. She never gives up, and never gets depressed. Full of guts. That's "the unsinkable Molly." So, the word "unsinkable" is used in ordinary situations to mean very strong and invincible.

### The aftermath

Oberdorfer, who was coming to Japan in a few days with Secretary of State Shultz, decided to take the tape to Japan, talk to Nakasone's people and the interpreter, and write a story about the issue:

So I came to Japan, I confronted the interpreter who I thought, when he heard what I was going to say, was going to commit *seppuku*<sup>77</sup> right on the spot. He pleaded with me not to write an article about it. I said, 'We must. We've got to straighten this thing out. We just can't leave this like this.

On this, Muramatsu has a different story to tell:

Do you know Don Oberdorfer of *The Washington Post*? ... He wrote about me, but you know, he first invited me to tea at the Hotel Okura, and we had tea together as old friends. And then, suddenly he started to write, so I asked, 'This is not an interview, is it?' And his answer was, 'Sorry, I've got

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<sup>77</sup> *Seppuku*, sometimes called *harakiri*, is a formal and honourable way for a *samurai* to kill himself to take responsibility for his action.

to write. I asked, and you talked, didn't you?' 'That's not true. I didn't mean it that way,' I protested, but he just went ahead and printed his story in his newspaper.

[...] But you know, I really think it's betrayal if you have tea with an old friend of yours and turn it into an interview. I said, 'This concerns my professional life, so please don't write about it.' He said, 'No. I will write it.' He just went ahead and wrote his article.

It turns out that, in Muramatsu's recollection, what Oberdorfer wrote was 'not bad,' because in the editorial, he wrote 'a big aircraft carrier doesn't mean anything,' and that 'unsinkable aircraft carrier, if anything, sounds elegant,' praising it as a good translation. Unfortunately, the correction 'was not a big story in the Japanese press' (Oberdorfer, 1997, p.19). By that time, people had lost interest in the details of the story, leaving the phrase 'unsinkable aircraft carrier' firmly in their minds as a 'mistranslation.'

### **6.3.2 What Nakasone intended to say**

After the media reported Nakasone's 'unsinkable aircraft carrier' remark, labeling it an error in translation, Muramatsu never again served as an official interpreter for Japanese prime ministers<sup>78</sup>. There wasn't any chance for him to discuss the issue with Nakasone, and the whole issue seemingly went into oblivion. Muramatsu did not talk about it in public until after he semi-retired. He explains his long silence:

I don't think interpreters should give excuses or explanations. Even

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<sup>78</sup> The Williamsburg Summit Conference immediately afterwards (May 28-30, 1983) was the last summit meeting for Muramatsu, where he was asked not to be seen nor heard by Prime Minister Nakasone.

when we are accused of mistranslation, we should not blame anybody. We shouldn't try to explain why we translated something in the way we did. Maybe this is out of vanity, or as I see it, it's sort of aesthetics in life, but I also believe that the history will prove us correct eventually.

Nakasone, on the other hand, published a memoir in 2004 in which he gave a 4-page account of 'the truth about the "unsinkable aircraft carrier"':

I would like to make clear what I really meant in my statement at this breakfast meeting. [...] What I intended to say was—Japanese defense concept includes the issue of straits and sea lanes, but my thinking is that the basic thing is for us to cover the skies over the Japanese archipelago, so as not to permit infiltration by Soviet Backfire bombers. Backfire bombers are powerfully equipped, and if they were actively deployed, in case of emergency, over the Japanese archipelago and the Pacific Ocean, then we would be obliged to foresee that the defense system of Japan and the United States would be severely compromised. Therefore, as a precaution, the Japanese archipelago should be made like a ship surrounded by high walls to prevent foreign aircraft from infiltrating our territory. This is what I meant. [...]

The interpreter interpreted it as an 'unsinkable aircraft carrier' meaning in Japanese, '*fuchin-kûbo*.' It was what is called '*iyaku*,' a free translation, not a literal translation. As a result, Washington's mistrust of Japan, which had been accumulated since Prime Minister Suzuki, was completely gone. I don't think it made any difference who translated my words, because my statement itself was expressed in a very strong and determined manner. The U.S.-Japan relationship had been deteriorating over security issues, and we



needed an intentional shock treatment. The one term ‘unsinkable aircraft carrier’ was worth more than one million words: its outcome immediate and effective. (pp.112-113, my translation, emphasis added)

Nakasone’s account of the episode inadvertently indicates the double-bind situation interpreters are placed in. When interpreting work is successful it is the speaker who is given credit, not the transparent interpreter. If things go wrong, however, it is the interpreter who suddenly comes to the fore and is blamed. Moreover, Nakasone’s blunt statement that it would not have made any difference who translated it, clearly shows his lack of understanding about what translation and interpreting entails. It is very likely that had there been a different interpreter there, no matter how strong and determined Nakasone sounded, his words might have been translated as simply a ‘big aircraft carrier.’ Ironically, after more than two decades, Nakasone agrees with Muramatsu that translating the word as ‘unsinkable’ was a ‘valid decision.’

### **6.3.3 Interpreter’s choice**

It is clear from Nakasone’s writing that what he intended to say was what his interpreter understood it to be. To use Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969), whereas the locutionary meaning of Nakasone’s remark was ‘big aircraft carrier,’ the illocutionary force of the utterance possibly was ‘unsinkable aircraft carrier.’

Nevertheless, as with many alleged mistranslations, the attention in this case was focused on the legitimacy of a single word choice and its equivalence to the source text. To this traditional accusation, Eugene Nida as early as 1964 proposed two categories of ‘equivalents’ in translation: formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. While formal equivalence is basically source-oriented, a dynamic equivalence translation focuses attention toward the receptor response and aims at naturalness so that a bilingual and bicultural person can justifiably say, ‘That is just the way we would say

it' (p.166). This is in accordance with what Muramatsu said of his criteria in interpreting:

I've been saying this all along—my belief in interpreting is, whether you are interpreting from Japanese to English or vice versa,...translate in such a way that it is what the speaker might say if he were able to speak the target language. So, if Nakasone speaks militantly and macho-like, I think the interpreter should translate it that way, with a militant tone. If somebody speaks in a roundabout way, then, you should translate it in a roundabout way. That's our job.

In order to render interpreting in a way the speaker might say it in the target language, what is crucial, Muramatsu believes, is context: 'When I interpret, what I pay attention to is the context, and the tone of the speaker. And his personality. This is because in interpreting, the speaker's tone or his personality should be reflected in the way the interpreter speaks.'

Katan (2004, pp.99-101) acknowledges that the speaker's tone is part of the context, and Nida, in discussing dynamic equivalence, states 'a natural rendering of translation must fit (1) the receptor language and culture as a whole, (2) the context of the particular message, and (3) the receptor-language audience'(pp.166-167).

The immediate context of Nakasone's remarks was a journalistic meeting in the U.S. with a Japanese prime minister, known for his hawkish political stance, speaking on Japan's defense, at a time when the U.S. had been 'criticizing Tokyo for spending too little on its own defense' (Schaller, 2001, p.58). In Muramatsu's view, the tone of the speaker as well as his personality constituted the 'context,' as in Nakasone trying to 'show off' his militaristic stance being reflected in the way he spoke and his tone.

What Muramatsu explained is reminiscent of a translation principle proposed by a

16<sup>th</sup> century translator Etienne Dolet, stating that, ‘through his choice and order of words the translator should produce a total overall effect with appropriate “tone” ’ (Nida, 1964, p.16). Nida (1964), however, warns of the dilemma the translator is caught in, and says that ‘in being faithful to the things talked about, he can destroy the spirit that pervades an original communication. At the same time, if he concentrates too much upon trying to reproduce the original “feeling” and “tone” of the message, he may be accused of playing loose with the substance of the document—the letter of the law’ (pp. 2-3).

Clearly, it is no easy task for an interpreter to recreate the original tone. And yet, the original tone is something which cannot and should not be overlooked in understanding the speaker’s intent. As Bakhtin points out in discussing speech genres, ‘slight nuances of expressive intonation (one can take a drier or more respectful tone, a colder or warmer one; one can introduce the intonation of joy, and so forth) can express the speaker’s individuality (his emotional speech intent)’ (1986/2002, p.79).

Muramatsu emphasizes the importance of background knowledge to enable the interpreter to read from the speaker’s tone:

In order to grasp the intent of the speaker’s utterance, you have to have quite a lot of background information... I had known Nakasone prior to the meeting as somebody who likes a militant posture. If you had that knowledge, it is natural for me to translate it as I did then.

Consequently, Muramatsu, who had prior knowledge of Nakasone as a former Imperial Navy officer during WWII and a politician known in Japan for militaristic views, inferred from his statement that Nakasone was trying to impress the American media with his idea about making the entire country of Japan like a big ship, which was not just a ship big in size, but a warship that cannot be sunk no matter what.

Judging from the narrative of Muramatsu, we can surmise that in this particular communicative event, his original aim was to act as ‘animator’ in Goffman’s (1981) sense, by reproducing ‘Nakasone’s tone’ when he spoke. In trying to accomplish this, he based his decision of the choice of a keyword on his knowledge of the context, language, culture, as well as his prior knowledge about the speaker. He did this on the spur of the moment when he was rendering consecutive interpreting, taking notes and remembering the message, and came up with the ill-fated word ‘unsinkable.’ This, then, might have pushed him toward the role of ‘author,’ which for many seemed to be going beyond what the interpreter is expected to do as ‘animator.’ Hence, Nakasone’s assertion that it made no difference who translated his words, because he, as the ‘author and principal,’ made the statement ‘in a very strong and determined manner,’ thus pushing back the interpreter to the ‘animator’ status.

#### **6.4 Sohma as the first female simultaneous interpreter in Japan**

Sohma Yukika is the first female simultaneous interpreter in Japan. While the number of female interpreters in Japan increased in the 1970s, such that women account for more than 80% of the market today, ‘until around the 70s, first class professional interpreters were mostly males’ (Komatsu, 2003, p.22, my translation). Komatsu recalls that in 1973, the Japanese Ministry of Finance was initially against hiring a team of three female interpreters to serve at an IMF- sponsored G-5 International Conference on Finance, because ‘the conference is much too important for women to handle’ (p.22). In the 1950s, then, Sohma was a rare species as probably the only woman who worked as a diplomatic interpreter in Japan.

##### **6.4.1 Gender bias**

Sohma and Nishiyama attended an MRA conference in Caux, Switzerland, in 1950

(see Chapter 5), and on the way back, they traveled to the U.S. and visited the State Department. Sohma recalls that while they were in the States, Nishiyama handled most of the interpreting for Japanese Diet members and others, disappointing Sohma: 'I was crushed with envy... I thought, why won't they let me do it? Just because I am a woman...'

Sohma remembers that in the post-war period, men would not take women seriously. Their reaction to women who wanted to do any kind of work was, 'Oh, only a woman,' because 'nobody thought a woman could do any proper work like men do.' She was able to overcome this gender bias, thanks to Chiba Saburo—the only Dietman who treated her properly at a time when nobody treated women seriously: 'Rep. Chiba Saburo was different... he thought I resembled my father, and said, "Look at this face. Doesn't she look like Rep. Ozaki?"' and he introduced me to people.'

In 1965, when Representative Chiba established the Asian Parliamentarians Union, Sohma was there to help with interpreting, which eventually led her to work for Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke<sup>79</sup>, whom she regards as 'very different from self-centered politicians nowadays.'

#### 6.4.2 Interpreting as a 'calling'

There is a recurring message that Sohma emphasized, represented by two words she reiterated throughout the interview: '*jonetsu*' and 'calling.'

The Japanese word '*jonetsu*' appeared repeatedly when discussing interpreters' role. To Sohma, interpreting endeavours have to be supported by the interpreters' enthusiasm or passion to try to make the listener understand the speaker's message. In

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<sup>79</sup> Kishi Nobusuke (1896-1987), a powerful politician since before the war, became Japanese Prime Minister in 1957, signed and forcefully passed a controversial new Japan-U.S. Security Treaty in 1960. Abe Shinzo is Kishi's grandson, and former Prime Minister Sato Eisaku is Kishi's brother.

fact, Sohma thinks interpreting itself becomes meaningless without this passion. This enthusiasm, then, is prerequisite in trying to interpret somebody's message:

[...] what's important is for you to want to make this idea understood by the other side. You've got to have this '*jonetsu*' (passion or enthusiasm). Otherwise, interpreting is meaningless. [...] the most important thing is empathy. And how you can make others understand what's being said. This '*jonetsu*' is the most important, don't you think? So, in the end, it comes down to why you interpret. For what purpose? This, I think, is fundamental.

In discussing the interpreters' responsibility, Sohma used another word 'calling' in English. While this is not a common word in Japan, it seems to come naturally to Sohma. You could use the Japanese equivalent '*ten-mei*' (order from God), but it does not have the same connotation that the English 'calling' has, and this may be why Sohma used the English word without translating it into Japanese. What is even more striking is that Sohma firmly believes interpreting work is a 'calling' from God. For Sohma, it is not just work. It is a special mission that is entrusted to her by God.

#### **6.4.3 Mother and daughter**

Sohma's insistence on empathy is typically reflected in one instance when her daughter Fujiko was doing simultaneous interpreting in 1975. Sohma suddenly stood up, walked to an interpreter's booth, and scolded her daughter. Fujiko (Hara, 2004) recounts the episode:

It was in 1975. Ten years had passed since I was first paid for my interpreting work, and I was just beginning to think I had become a professional. The Asian Parliamentarians Union invited a congressman from

South Vietnam to their meeting in Japan. It was right before the fall of Saigon, and this congressman talked about the plight of his home country. When I was interpreting his speech simultaneously, all of a sudden, my mother rushed towards me with a furious look on her face, and started to bang on the booth where I was doing interpreting. I gave the microphone to my booth mate, and went outside the booth. My mother was there fuming. Apparently, I was speaking in a nonchalant manner, saying something like, “Well, as for Vietnam...” and she criticized my interpreting for lacking empathy.

“Vietnam is on the verge of collapse, don’t you see? You are interpreting just to show off your skill,” she said. “This man came to Japan to ask people to understand the situation in his country. He came to persuade people. You don’t even think about the feelings of the speaker. If you don’t feel the speaker’s passion for his own country or share his sense of crisis, quit interpreting work altogether!” She was trembling as she scolded me. (p.32, my translation)

The author happened to be near the scene, listening to the skillful interpreting performance, when Sohma came rushing to the booth where Fujiko was working. The mother was furious, and the daughter started to cry—the situation was most unusual at an international meeting, quite extraordinary and unforgettable. Sohma remembered clearly that she was angry:

Yes, I was angry. I remember. Fujiko was interpreting, thinking she’s doing a great job. She was almost too proud of herself. You know, it was during the war in Vietnam, right before the U.S. lost in Vietnam. Somebody from Vietnam was there speaking to the Japanese people—somebody whose country is on the verge of collapse. But Fujiko’s interpreting didn’t convey

any of the feelings this speaker tried to express. No sad feeling or hurt...

“Stop interpreting if you don’t feel the hurt that the speaker is feeling,” I told her. If you cannot convey the speaker’s feelings, whether joy or sadness or hurt, it’s useless. I believe that’s the basics of interpreting.

In order for an interpreter to have empathy, s/he has to know the speaker well. Therefore, Sohma believes that unless you know somebody well, you are not able to render proper interpreting. In her words, ‘you need room in your heart.’ At the same time, Sohma adds that an interpreter has ‘to be well versed in international affairs, and grasp the position of each country in the world.’ This is why Sohma thinks that ‘interpreting is not a business,’ but rather, a ‘calling.’

#### **6.4.4 Interpreters’ responsibility**

Sohma asserts that interpreters have to understand the message of the participants within the context of the international situation:

Sohma: In my case, when they set up this Asian Parliamentarians Union, I used to interpret between Prime Minister Kishi and Go Din Diem of Vietnam—people who shoulder the future of their countries. I myself may not have the ability to do it, but at least, I can try to understand them.

Torikai: In such situations, which side is more important for you as an interpreter?

Sohma: Both are important.

Torikai: Both. The other party as well.

Sohma: Certainly. You can’t interpret if it’s only for one side. Usually people in diplomatic negotiations, like Prime Minister Kishi, they watch the whole of Asia and speak, so...



Torikai: When you interpret, do you feel you become transparent? Or do you sometimes add something, like making it sound more natural in English?

Sohma: Add something, and make the other side understand. That's interpreting. So, we have to always think how we can make the other side understand how the speaker feels. It's difficult, but we have to keep trying...  
[...] Whoever interprets has to think in terms of the whole context of the world. That would make interpreting entirely different. How interpreters feel and think when they are interpreting, that's what counts. Do you do interpreting thinking it's just your job? Or is it your calling? [...] What is important is whether you do your interpreting with a mission in mind...

Sohma argued that an interpreter should work for both sides in diplomatic negotiations, understanding the 'feelings' of the speaker and the 'context' of the meeting, as well as trying to make the listener understand the message.

In her narrative, however, there was one episode where she clearly shifted her 'footing' (Goffman, 1981) toward the receptor, the listener. It was in 1950, when Sohma interpreted for two MRA people who met Ichimada Hisato<sup>80</sup>, then president of the Bank of Japan, who was so powerful at that time that he was nicknamed the 'emperor of banks.' Sohma interpreted consecutively what the MRA people said into Japanese:

I can assure you I had never learned so much about interpreting as on this occasion. You say something without sufficient thinking, and he just looks up at the ceiling. He gets bored...

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<sup>80</sup> Ichimada Hisato (1893-1984) was the 18<sup>th</sup> President of the Bank of Japan. He was one of the Japanese representatives at the San Francisco Peace Conference.

So, I took care to always look at his face when I was interpreting. No matter how hard I try when I interpret, with all my zest, ... if the listener gets bored and looks away, that's no use. So I remember I interpreted to keep him interested...Nobody was so severe as this guy was. When I was interpreting, I was scared stiff...Mr.Ichimada, was terrifying... Oh, it was some work.

Sohma explained that 'it was very important to attract and hold his attention,' because the purpose, or '*skopos*' (Vermeer, 1989), of the meeting was for MRA to solicit support from Ichimada. As such, Sohma 'did a lot of thinking about what kind of words were best to use,' and tried to 'select words he would understand.' Sohma admitted that some people might think this is way beyond the responsibility of an interpreter and that Sohma should not have made the kind of decision she did. Her answer to this criticism is simple—'but if the listener doesn't understand you, you are in trouble, right?'

#### **6.4.5 Motivation for an interpreter**

For Sohma, the issue of interpreters' frustration is not a problem. Her motivation to do interpreting work is crystal clear. It comes from her strong desire to help people in Japan understand the situation in the world, of which Japan is a member:

What was uppermost in my mind when I was working really hard in interpreting was my wish to make the Japanese understand what other people overseas were thinking. That was the strongest. How we can make Japanese understand international thinking—that was my strongest motivation. Japan has to be a country in the international community. You shouldn't go to war like we did in the past, so we shouldn't be isolated. We have to be a member of the world. That is why even to this day, I continue to say, 'Japan, as a

member of the international community...'

Therefore, people who want to be interpreters have to be motivated to serve a cause for their country and for the world. Not to think of interpreting as simply your job or profession, but to consider it as your 'calling.'

From what Sohma said about interpreting, her notion of the interpreter's role seems to be a visible intermediary, who is motivated by a strong wish to educate her fellow Japanese. In Sohma's view, an interpreter is somebody who tries to understand the message of the speaker and conveys it to the other party, and this would have to be carried out with a sense of 'mission,' while at the same time, you have to make efforts to become 'a decent human being' in order to become an interpreter.

### 6.5 Kunihiro and his *keren* interpreting

Very few people, most likely no one, would acknowledge the role of an interpreter as 'principal' in Goffman's (1981) notion of *speaker*, because after all, what an interpreter does is to speak words that have been uttered by someone else in a different language, and the words uttered by an interpreter never contain his own ideas and thoughts. An interpreter is generally understood to function as 'animator,' and 'author' under some circumstances, but never 'principal.' However, there are exceptional cases when an interpreter functioned as 'principal.' André Kaminker, the legendary interpreter in modern times, is one such example. At one occasion he interpreted, the speaker complained to Kaminker, 'That is not exactly what I said,' to which he replied, 'No, sir, but it is what you ought to have said' (Longley, 1968, p.4, as cited in Roland, 1999, p.167). Another time at the UN, when Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov kept on talking when everyone was eager to leave, and when finally it was Kaminker's turn to interpret, he summed up the entire speech in French and simply said, '*M. Molotov dit*

*non* (Mr. Molotov says no)' (Trevelyan, 1973, P.81, as cited in Roland, 1999, p.167).

When Japanese Prime Minister Miki<sup>81</sup> visited the United States in 1975, his interpreter acted as 'principal,' reminiscent of André Kaminker. The interpreter was Kunihiro Masao.

### **6.5.1 Prime Minister Miki's press conference**

Kunihiro explains that any new prime minister had to give a talk at the Press Club in Washington DC, and Miki followed suit. What was tricky about this talk, according to Kunihiro, was that the press conference usually ended with a humorous question, meant to be a joke, but actually to evaluate and assess the personality and capacity of the speaker as a politician. Kunihiro claims he knew this practice; 'a whole bunch of expert wolves in Washington making judgments about a prime minister depending on how well he manages this sort of question.' Therefore he warned Miki about this beforehand telling him, 'Mr. Prime Minister, for the last question, I will translate freely, so please don't say anything about it.' He gave prior warning of his decision to translate 'in the way I feel appropriate,' because Miki understood English, and 'if he started to say something like, oh, I didn't say anything of the sort, I'd lose face.'

At the end of the press conference, an anticipated humorous question was posed, asking the Prime Minister to sell the strongest and by far the most popular baseball team in Japan then, the Yomiuri Giants, to the United States to make American baseball stronger.

To this facetious question, Miki gave, not unexpectedly, his typical sincere, honest,

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<sup>81</sup> Miki Takeo (1907-1988) became a member of the Diet at the age of 30, and all through his life, he pursued peace, democracy, and ethics in politics. Dubbed "Clean Miki," he became Japan's Prime Minister in 1974, after Tanaka Kakuei resigned over his money scandal.

but ‘too serious’ answer, and Kunihiro wondered, ‘why on earth does he have to say something so uninteresting and boring.’ As Kunihiro and many others testify, Miki was an extremely serious person, and worse, he didn’t know much about baseball. Kunihiro immediately thought ‘here it comes—this is the question to test Miki’s ability.’ The initial answer that came to his mind was to say, ‘Sure, I’ll be happy to give away the goddam Yomiuri Giants,’ since personally the Giants was not his favorite. However, as he was contemplating this, he noticed Watanabe Tsuneo sitting right in front of him. Watanabe, who later became a dominant figure in the Yomiuri Group and the owner of the Yomiuri Giants, was then the Yomiuri bureau chief in Washington DC, and Kunihiro thought, ‘Uh-oh, I shouldn’t make an enemy of him. That could be detrimental to Miki’s future.’ With ‘quick thinking,’ remembering the state of the U.S.-Japan negotiations those days as being not exactly on friendly terms, he said in the end something to the effect:

Professional baseball now has become a national pastime in Japan.

It’s not a national pastime only for the American people.

It’s almost like a national sport in Japan. Don’t think we will say yes to everything you ask for. It’s the same with U.S.-Japan negotiations.

When he said this, ‘everybody roared and applauded,’ except for Miki who ‘looked bewildered.’ The only person who worried Kunihiro at the time was Miyazawa Kiichi, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, known for his fluency in English. Kunihiro was so concerned how Miyazawa would evaluate the translation that he kept peeping at him from time to time while he was doing consecutive interpreting. He was ‘really relieved’ and felt as if he ‘passed the exam’ when even Miyazawa ‘roared with laughter.’

To make him even happier, a major newspaper in Japan reported on Miki’s press

conference in an article entitled ‘Interpreter’s “beautiful art” saved Miki’ (*The Asahi Shimbun*, Friday, August 8, 1975, p.2), although Kunihiro felt that it wasn’t really Miki who was saved but it was himself that was saved by the commentary, praising his ‘intentional “misinterpretation” ’ (p.2) as a ‘fine play by Mr. Kunihiro, who believes translation is “Traduttore (translator) , traditore (traitor)”<sup>82</sup> ’ (p.2, my translation).

In the United States, the *New York Times* columnist James Reston lauded the Japanese Prime Minister’s visit, which was coincidentally on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, and commented, ‘Mr. Miki is not a dramatic world figure [...] but he has come to this country with a philosophy, almost a yearning for understanding and cooperation, and this is both a change and an opportunity. [...] he had some thoughts and insights about how to reconcile the differences between the United States and Japan, and how to bring the industrial nations into discussion with Moscow, Peking, and the poor and hungry nations[...].’ (*The New York Times*, Friday, August 8, 1975, p.27). Kunihiro found this article in the morning paper, when he was staying at the Waldorf Astoria with the entourage, and he rushed to Miki telling him, ‘Mr. Prime Minister, Reston wrote such a nice story. Just think, Reston wrote it—the best columnist in the States.’ He remembers that ‘Miki-san was real happy.’

### 6.5.2 *Keren* interpreting

While Kunihiro was grateful that his interpreting performance at Miki’s press conference was appreciated, he was frank to admit that ‘as an interpreter, what I did was sort of a “*keren sumo*” if you will.’ The word ‘*keren*’ originates in *kabuki*, as in ‘*keren ga ooi*’ meaning ‘play to the gallery.’ According to Kodama (2000), ‘Kabuki

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<sup>82</sup> Italian aphorism, punning on the words ‘translator’ and ‘traitor’ (Seleskovitch, 1978, p.18). See also José Ortega y Gasset (1973/1992, p.94).

performances sometimes offer extravagant spectacles for visual appeal. A show using real water is called *keren*' (p.85), as well as various stage tricks, which 'used to be looked down upon as not being worthy of true drama, but now it is widely accepted as one of the enjoyable features of kabuki' (p.85). Kunihiro explains his use of the term in analogy with sumo:

What '*keren*' means is that it's beautiful, fancy and gorgeous, but not legitimate. For example, in sumo wrestling, in what's called '*tottari*' or '*ashitori*' you win, that's for sure, but it's not an orthodox sumo move like '*uwate-nage*' or '*shitate-nage*.' It's not part of the sumo canon. It's almost like trickery. That's what '*keren*' means. So I admit what I did was '*keren* art' of interpreting. There's no question about that.

When pressed about the 'role of an interpreter,' Kunihiro was quick to admit that he didn't consider himself an interpreter: 'So you see, I am not an interpreter. Never. I did all of that for Prime Minister Miki. It's almost like loving somebody too much and you go overboard.' Kunihiro explains that he continued interpreting for Miki, when he was foreign minister, only because he wanted to help him become prime minister:

[...] to be honest with you, I really didn't like interpreting, but it is true I did my best for Miki... What I wanted to do was somehow to make Miki, you'll have to excuse me if I sounded arrogant, but to make him a man, a prime minister. I wanted him to be the Prime Minister. And what I could do for him was foreign affairs; my expertise was in dealing with foreign countries, and to help him in this respect as one of his staff.

Among the five pioneer interpreters interviewed, Kunihiro was the only one who

confessed to not liking interpreting. It actually is a surprising confession from a man who was deemed the ‘God of Simultaneous Interpreting’ (*dôji-tsûyaku no kamisama*) throughout the country, receiving such comments as the one below by Edwin O. Reischauer, a Japan-raised bilingual U.S. Ambassador to Japan:

What caught my attention first was his unparalleled skill as an interpreter between English and Japanese. He was always careful to translate ideas correctly and not just get by with a literal translation, which often confuses as much as it clarifies. He would seek out *le mot juste* (to slip into French) to be sure to convey the exact meaning. And his skill at that miraculous and arcane art of simultaneous translation always left me in awe. (1982, pp.289-290)

In a book he co-authored with Nishiyama in 1969, Kunihiro describes the role of an interpreter:

Some people insist that an interpreter should act as a machine, but I do not agree with this. After all, it is a human being who does interpreting. That being the case, it is only natural that a message goes through a filter which is the individual character of the interpreter. An interpreter is not a robot, nor a machine. [...]

On this point, I often use the analogy of the relationship between a composer and a player. Among professionals in music, a composer receives by far the greatest respect. After all, he creates new music out of his brain. Nevertheless, a first-class player should also be respected. To be sure, he has to play a piece based on the note presented by the composer. He is not permitted to deviate from it. Interpreters are the same. If a speaker said,



‘When a dog faces the east, its tail faces the west,’ you cannot tell a story of a cat or change the east-west to south-north. That would be going too far.

However, is it really the case that a player is not allowed to have creativity or originality? That is not the case. Paderewski, Gieseking and Serkin all might play the same Beethoven’s piano concerto, but their performances will be all different. Each is unique and appealing in its own way. (pp.88-89, my translation)

In the same essay, Kunihiro warns of the frustration that an interpreter might feel:

‘An interpreter is often bothered and frustrated by the feeling that his work lacks ‘*shutaisei*’ (autonomy). This feeling occurs because we label our work as menial, far from the joy of creation or self-actualization [...]’ (1969, p.89, my translation).

His advice to prospective interpreters is for them to study hard, not only professional skills but the adjacent areas for background knowledge, just as pianists do, to enrich oneself as a human being and an artist, and learn the art to perfection (ibid., p.89). These efforts, Kunihiro argues, are indispensable so that interpreters themselves are able to ‘regard the work highly, maintain psychological security, take pride in their work,’ and ‘establish conference interpreting as a profession’ (ibid., pp.89-90).

When Kunihiro mentioned ‘frustration’ in interpreting, because the work lacks ‘*shutaisei*’ (autonomy) and is far from the ‘joy of creation or self-actualization,’ and there is a need to ‘maintain psychological security,’ it could be that what he wrote expressed his own inner feelings. He was around 39 years old then, already a well established scholar, writer, TV personality, and advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. At about the same time, the God of Simultaneous Interpreting advised a young novice interpreter (the author) not to consider interpreting as her life-long career, warning her that ‘eventually, you’ll want to sing your own song.’ In the interview, Kunihiro confided that when he said this, he was talking about himself, that it was

‘really myself who wanted to sing my own song.’

Psychologist Maslow (1970) distinguishes five classes of needs in hierarchy: physiological needs, safety, love, esteem, and finally, self-actualization. A researcher on motivation Zoltán Dörnyei (2001) explains that among early studies on human motivation focused on basic human needs, Maslow’s classification is the most important, adding that in current research, ‘the concept of a “need” has been replaced by the more specific construct of a *goal*, which is seen as the “engine” to fire the action and provide the direction in which to act’ (p.25, emphasis in original).

In Kunihiro’s case, by the time he was in his late 30s, his needs for esteem had been satisfied as a versatile simultaneous interpreter and it could be that the final category of ‘self-actualization’ was what he needed, which he obviously felt difficult to achieve in his interpreting work. Instead, he found for himself another goal— ‘the engine to fire the action’ in a future prime minister, Miki Takeo.

### 6.5.3 Comradeship with Miki

In his own assessment, it was Miki’s presence as a statesman that kept Kunihiro motivated to continue as an interpreter. Notwithstanding, the relationship between Miki and Kunihiro evidently was beyond the usual politician-interpreter, or minister–aide relationship for that matter, and to cite Kunihiro’s own words, the relationship was ‘in a way, interesting.’

Chikushi Tetsuya, a widely respected anchorperson on TBS <sup>83</sup>describes this relationship in his essay ‘Kimyo na Hishokan’<sup>84</sup>:

When Mr. Miki Takeo was appointed the Minister of Foreign Affairs, he

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<sup>83</sup> Chikushi used to be with *The Asahi Shimbun*.

<sup>84</sup> Can be translated as ‘a strange and unusual aide.’

came to Kasumigaseki<sup>85</sup> with an unusual aide. That was the first meeting between Mr. Kunihiro Masao and myself, then a political journalist reporting on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The strangeness of 'Kunihiro, the aide' was most exemplified in the way he behaved. Not in the least did he have an air of being a '*jiboku*,' a servant, to his superior Mr. Miki. Rather, it came across very strongly that he was helping Mr. Miki based on a union, close to comradeship. This was totally out of the ordinary from the way usual ministerial aides are. Whenever Kunihiro came to the Press Club within the Ministry, he spoke on diverse subjects entirely in his own words, speaking his thoughts. [...]

In a word, I think Mr. Kunihiro is a '*jiyuu-jin*' (free person), an unusual type of person in this country. [...] A good illustration of this is the aforementioned relationship with Mr. Miki.

Mr. Kunihiro played an important role in international affairs, including U.S.-Japan relations, as a brain and a personal aide to a statesman who eventually became prime minister. This, however, never diminished his 'freedom' in his relationship with Mr. Miki. When at times Mr. Kunihiro did not agree with Mr. Miki over policy choices and decisions, he did not contain himself. Mr. Kunihiro worked alongside Mr. Miki for many years, and yet, I doubt very much that he ever voted for the party to which Mr. Miki belonged<sup>86</sup> [...]. (1982, pp.297-298, emphasis in original, my translation)

As Chikushi observed, Kunihiro as an aide to the Foreign Minister did not act like

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<sup>85</sup> Kasumigaseki is the central part of Tokyo, where all the government ministries are located.

<sup>86</sup> Miki Takeo belonged to the ruling Liberal Democratic Party.

an aide, and he certainly did not act like an interpreter either. When he sidestepped his role as an interpreter for Prime Minister Miki, he did this with a conviction that his priority was decidedly on his responsibility as a partner or a political comrade with Miki. This is understandable when you realize that they both shared the same political beliefs, especially on the issue of Japan's Peace Constitution. While Miki belonged to the conservative Liberal Democratic Party, he was known as a liberal, sympathetic to the views of the opposition Socialist Party, which Kunihiro joined later and for which he won a seat in the Upper House.

Kunihiro's partnership with Miki started when he first received a phone call from Miki, then Liberal Democratic Party secretary general during the Ikeda administration. Miki called Kunihiro, a lecturer at Chuo University at the time, to ask him to have weekly study sessions on international affairs reading *Time* or *Newsweek*. Kunihiro bluntly replied, 'That would be fine, but I have never voted for the party you are a member of and I probably never will.' What Miki said to this, partially using English, moved Kunihiro profoundly. Kunihiro remembers Miki saying: 'That isn't a problem at all. The act of voting is to "vote one's conscience" and whether that is in favour of the political party I am with or not, does not matter at all. What's important is, to "vote one's conscience." ' Miki never asked Kunihiro which party he voted for, and this impressed him even further. Kunihiro reveals:

He never asked a stupid question like, "So, which party do you vote for?" I think he knew. He probably thought, "I know, this guy votes for the Socialist Party." My guess is that even Miki himself never voted for the Liberal Democratic Party. He might have reluctantly put down "LDP" when he was prime minister...

One time, his wife Mutsuko-san asked him, "Why are you still a member of such a party as LDP?" I was right there with them... Then

Miki-san answered sadly, “If I leave LDP, they will probably change everything, including Article 9 of the Constitution.”

In the interview, Kunihiro reiterated his own political stance of staunchly adhering to the Peace Constitution, based upon his bitter wartime experiences, and as such, it is easy to imagine he was deeply moved and attracted to this seasoned LDP leader who actually held similar views on peace and the Constitution.

His intention, or to use Vermeer’s (1989) term, his ‘*skopos*’ or a purpose, was clearly to serve for the good of Miki Takeo, whom he admired as a statesman and considered his comrade. Consequently, he compromised his ethical consideration as an interpreter, or to put it more bluntly, overruled the interpreter ethics, as well as the canons of translation, in favour of making Miki a success in the U.S. Thus, Kunihiro’s criteria for making choices in interpreting were based not so much on interpreting but on what was best for the prime minister. He was far from transparent in this respect, but his extreme ‘domestication’ (Venuti, 1995) ironically made his interpreting so transparent at the press conference that people, including a leading American columnist, were impressed by Miki, thereby achieving Kunihiro’s ultimate goal—to make Prime Minister Miki known, appreciated and respected in the United States. In a way, Kunihiro’s *keren* interpreting is a testimony to Angelelli (2004a)’s claim about the interpreter as a ‘powerful, visible individual who has agency in the interaction. As such, the interpreter would be capable of exercising power and/or solidarity. The interpreter would be considered as someone who is capable of either maintaining or altering the status quo’ (p. 89). Undeniably, Kunihiro changed the status quo for the Japanese prime minister.

## 6.6 Discussion

It is truly a challenge to try to analyze the interpreting practice of the five pioneers and categorize them into some easy-to-understand framework. They are all distinctly different individuals with diverse backgrounds, working in varied communicative settings with multiple-faceted interpreting practice and their comments and opinions do not present a coherent profile of an interpreter. As Angelelli observes, 'it is risky to believe that all interpreters perform their jobs equally [...] because interpreters' work settings exert a powerful influence on their behaviors in practice, as well as their beliefs about their roles' (2004a, p.83).

For example, they all agreed on the importance of 'rapport,' understanding and feeling empathy toward the speaker, as a prerequisite for successful interpreting. The ideal, and constant, 'rapport' can be seen between Nishiyama and Reischauer, or between Kunihiro and Miki. However, these two pairs portray quite different kinds of relationships between interpreter and speaker, in terms of psychological distance and power relations, exemplified in the way Nishiyama addressed Reischauer as '*sensei*,' compared with Kunihiro acting as a 'comrade' with Miki, who called Kunihiro '*sensei*.'

Another example to illustrate the complexity is the answers they gave to the question: have you ever felt tired of interpreting and wanted to quit? The two people who admitted not liking interpreting work were Nishiyama and Kunihiro. In Nishiyama's case, his expertise was in electrical engineering, and circumstances forced him to become an interpreter. Later in his career, however, he interpreted for something he was really interested in, the Apollo broadcasts, which made him known to the public as 'Nishiyama, the Apollo interpreter.' He gave a detailed account of an elderly lady who courteously thanked him for his interpreting for the Apollo moon landing. He concluded that it was the first and the only time he felt rewarded as an interpreter. Significantly, Nishiyama expressed the strongest opinion about the role of interpreters as definitely *kurogo*, totally transparent and invisible.

Unlike Nishiyama, Kunihiro became an interpreter out of his own choice and was dubbed the ‘God of Simultaneous Interpreting,’ but it was Kunihiro who was most outspoken about not liking interpreting. Not that he was sorry he became an interpreter, but he was determined he would not do it any more, admiring Muramatsu for his continuing enthusiasm in interpreting. He made it very clear that he would rather ‘sing his own song,’ defying a *kurogo* role, although fully aware that his *keren* interpreting for Miki was something out of the ordinary, not to be permitted as an interpreter.

Nishiyama and Muramatsu were the two people who believed in the role of interpreters as *kurogo*, although with a slight difference. Whilst Nishiyama emphasized the importance of becoming totally transparent and invisible, Muramatsu felt a little adjustment could be in order, such as arranging the hem of the actor’s *kimono* on stage.

Muramatsu, whom Kunihiro considers ‘a born interpreter,’ and popularly known as ‘Mr. Simultaneous Interpreter’ once gave up interpreting and worked as an economist in the U.S., although he soon realized that what made him not want to continue was working as an escort interpreter on the road, and that he enjoyed interpreting practice itself.

Two people who denied ever thinking of quitting the interpreting work were Sohma and Komatsu. Sohma answered she never became tired of interpreting because she does interpreting with a mission. To Sohma, interpreting is her ‘calling,’ not simply a job. When asked if he ever felt tired of interpreting, Komatsu readily denied it. Ironically, someone who never liked to talk became ‘an interpreter from head to foot.’ He restrains himself to the role of an interpreter, never deviates from it, and is never ambitious to exert influence. Komatsu is the only one among the interviewees who admitted that he did not quite understand what ‘transparency’ meant in relation with the role as *kurogo*. He does not believe interpreters are invisible. On the contrary, Komatsu feels an interpreter is bound to be a visible presence. And yet, he is very much against the notion of a mediator, or a ‘cultural clarifier.’ An interpreter should be

'a machine,' he maintained, 'but a good machine,' as he described himself.

In Goffman (1981)'s 'participation framework' (see the beginning of this chapter), the notion of *hearer* is distinguished between a 'ratified' participant and a not ratified 'eavesdropper' or 'overhearer.' The presence of an interpreter becomes rather ambiguous in this framework. In the two-party conversation, the interpreter acts as a ratified 'unaddressed recipient,' but at times gives the impression of being an 'eavesdropper' listening to the conversation with a purpose to translate. Nishiyama, for instance, mentioned that he made it a rule to look away from the speaker so that the speaker would talk to the 'addressed recipient.'

The task of the interpreter is further complicated when s/he becomes the *speaker*, which Goffman analyzes into three roles: 'animator,' 'author' and 'principal.'

Nishiyama, as an interpreter, might fit the 'animator' role in Goffman's term, clearly speaker-conscious, especially when he was translating for Reischauer. From what he narrated, we can surmise his goal to be transparent and invisible.

Komatsu likewise can be considered 'animator,' with his insistence on faithful, 'objective and neutral' translation. However, his focus on immediate communicative events at times forces him out of invisibility. And although he considers himself as a 'visible machine,' faithful not necessarily to the speaker as a person but to the 'original text,' at times he played the 'author' role, as in the case when he 'softened' the excessive modesty of Prime Minister Obuchi.

Muramatsu, despite his claim of invisibility, in his interpreting practice in the case of the 'unsinkable aircraft carrier' was not strictly an 'animator.' To be sure, he intended to act as 'animator,' to speak as Nakasone would if he were speaking in English, but when he made the decision to choose the word 'unsinkable' instead of 'big,' inadvertently he shifted his footing to 'author.'

Sohma, too, shifted her footing between 'animator' and 'author' when she interpreted. She did not hesitate to admit that she would 'edit' when necessary, clearly



focusing on the receptor, as when she interpreted for Ichimada Hayato, to have the listener understand the message in order to achieve the purpose of interpreted events. At the same time, however, she placed utmost importance on 'empathy' with the speaker, feeling what the speaker feels as the interpreter's own, which implies an interpreter acting as 'animator.'

Kunihiro is an unusual case of an interpreter acting as a 'principal' in his '*keren* interpreting,' very much visible, and clearly listener-oriented, but for the benefit of the speaker. Notwithstanding his unorthodox performance, Kunihiro is fully aware of the canon of interpreting and admits the norm should be that of the interpreter acting as *kurogo*.

Clearly, interpreters shift the role, depending on the context or the situation where the interpreting practice takes place. To use Goffman's term, they shift their 'footing.' According to Goffman (1981), 'footing' entails participant's 'alignment, or set, or stance, or posture, or projected self' and a change in footing implies:

A change in the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance. A change in our footing is another way of talking about a change in our frame for events. [...] participants over the course of their speaking constantly change their footing, these changes being a persistent feature of natural talk. (p.128)

The narratives of the five interpreters, it seems, are a testimony to the reality of interpreting, where interpreters constantly change their footing, and these changes might be a feature of interpreting as a socially situated practice.

## 6.7 Conclusion

This chapter on the interpreting practice of the five pioneers illuminated the gap between interpreters' perception about the role of interpreters and its reality. With some variations, the narratives of the pioneers showed that they believed in the traditional norms and ethics about the role interpreters are expected to play. And yet, careful analysis of their narratives revealed that for each interpreted event, the interpreter was clearly an autonomous presence, making decisions from a number of choices and options on his/her own.

An important revelation was that the pioneers' narratives demonstrated that, notwithstanding their belief in the canon of interpretation ethics and norms, their perceptions about the interpreters' role vary with significant shades and degrees. There is clearly a need to differentiate usages of clichés that are so often associated with interpreting, such as 'transparent,' 'invisible' and in Japanese context, '*kurogo*' or '*kuroko*.' These common descriptions tend to be used as meaning virtually the same, and yet, the pioneer interpreters distinguished among these words, positing that these words are not necessarily synonymous but that there might be some differences in meaning between 'transparent,' 'invisible' and '*kurogo*.' An invisible *kurogo*, for example, may not be 'transparent,' and words 'visible' and 'machine' are not contradictory when used for interpreters.

Based on these new insights offered by the five interpreters, in Chapter 7, attempts will be made to look into interpreting practice from differing dimensions, namely, its relationship and comparison with written translation, its orality, cultural aspects of interpreting, and finally, the role of interpreters.

## Chapter 7 Insights

The life stories of the five pioneer conference/diplomatic interpreters offer us insights into diverse dimensions of interpreting as a practice and the interpreters as professionals as well as human beings. What probably is the most significant is their diversity. *Habitus* for each one of the five interpreters differs distinctly. The field of their interpreting likewise varies, with some overlap of course. The practice of each interpreter varies considerably hence their perception of the role of the interpreter is distinctive. Angelleli (2004a) draws on Bourdieu and contends that interpreting, like other things in the world, does not happen in a ‘social vacuum’ and that interpreting is definitely a ‘socially-situated practice.’ The narratives of the five pioneers, both implicitly and explicitly, demonstrate that interpreting is indeed a communicative event reflecting the persona of not only the speaker but also the interpreter, as well as their relationship.

This chapter will attempt to synthesize the life stories in several areas. Section 1 explores the difference between interpreting and translation to see if there is indeed a fundamental distinction between the two. This is followed by brief discussion on the orality of interpreting in Section 2, followed by Section 3 on the meaning of ‘culture’ as perceived by interpreters. Finally in Section 4, the perceptions of the role of interpreters is studied.

### 7.1 Interpreters and translators

The five pioneer interpreters seemingly believe the popular stereotype of what interpreters are like. Sohma, for instance, suggested in the interview that some people are suited to become interpreters and others are better as translators. She was not sure whether there was any gender involved in this, but thought that women were more

likely to be ‘better talkers,’ implying more potential as interpreters. More than gender, what is important, in Sohma’s view, is that an interpreter ‘must have a quick mind’ and ‘needs to think fast and talk fast.’ For this reason, Sohma feels that people who are not good at thinking fast might be better suited for translation.

Sohma admits that she herself is ‘not good at translating’ and better suited to interpreting, because she ‘can’t think slowly.’ Sohma reveals that when she was interpreting, words just came ‘flowing out’ of her mouth or simply ‘pop out’ and that when ‘you really have the passion to tell something to someone, the words are given to you.’

In a symposium held in 1985, Komatsu, acting as moderator, began the session by stating that although both translators and interpreters are language professionals, the two are markedly different in some respects, particularly in their personalities. While translators are introverts who like to read and write, not wanting to speak, interpreters are ‘impatient extroverts, daring, and generally don’t like written translation’ (as cited in Muramatsu, 1986, pp.233-234). At the same symposium, Muramatsu agreed with this, mentioning several qualities needed for an interpreter—quick response, boldness, verbosity and extroversion (pp.250-251). In the interview, however, Komatsu confided that he was by nature not verbal and rather shy.

As for writing, Sohma is the only one who admitted not liking to write. Muramatsu, Komatsu and Nishiyama have written and published more than a few memoirs and essays on language study, with Kunihiro writing and translating extensively on a wide range of topics.

Although Sohma claimed she did not like to think slowly, she pointed out that ‘interpreters have to think and make judgments. And when you do, you need to have a very critical mind. Perhaps in that sense, interpreters find it difficult to be accepted in society.’ This statement is indeed significant. The stereotypical view of interpreters, as opposed to translators, is that they respond quickly and talk fast. They are not

necessarily perceived as people who ‘think’ deeply. However, Sohma contends that interpreters have to be equipped with ‘a great degree of critical mind’ and that is why interpreters have difficulty being ‘accepted in society.’

To show that interpreters do possess critical-thinking minds, the five interpreters at times inadvertently expressed their criticism about the way diplomatic negotiations proceeded, which they would usually keep to themselves. One example is Komatsu, always neutral and never critical, admitted being frustrated by Prime Minister Obuchi downgrading himself. Sohma likewise expressed disappointment at the way politicians behaved sometimes in diplomatic negotiations. Kunihiro without mincing words stated outright that he had felt indignant to see some politicians acting contrary to Japan’s national interest in foreign relations.

There is no denying that interpreters in their practice think and analyse critically before they make judgments about the way the message should be translated. They do it quickly, yes, but what they do is never parroting or verbatim copying. What is essential is that they have to ‘interpret’ the message in order to render interpretation. This applies to both consecutive and simultaneous modes.

Seleskovitch (1978) gives three essential elements needed for interpreting: (1) understanding, (2) knowledge, first in the subject matter, followed by languages, and finally (3) expression. Among the three elements, discussion of understanding comes first, because for Seleskovitch, ‘To interpret one must first understand’ (1978, p.11).

Seleskovitch compares the work of an interpreter to that of ‘a musician or an actor whose art does not merely involve reproduction or repetition, but successful interpretation,’ adding that ‘the interpreter is subject to greater constraint, since in order to say “the same thing” as the speaker has said in another language, he must comprehend the total message’ (1978, pp. 30-31). It is true that people generally expect an artist to ‘interpret’ a piece to perform, and yet for some unknown reason, they do not seem to realize that an interpreter, in essentially the same way, has to

understand the message in order to perform interpreting practice.

Robin Setton (1999) states that ‘Speech communication involves interaction between three dimensions: the communicators’ intentions, their representations of the world, and the tool of language. Simultaneous interpretation brings the processing of intentions, content and language together in a type of cognitive activity probably not seen before this century’ (p.267).

According to Setton, translation (including interpretation) is characterized by three factors: first, comprehension ‘oriented to production,’ secondly its ‘external sourcing,’ with the task of expressing the product of someone else’s thoughts, and finally, its aims ‘to maintain both the propositional content and intentionality (together, the ‘Message’) while changing the code’ (1999, p.2). In his view, what makes oral interpretation different from written translation is its ‘external pacing’— the stimulus-processing-response cycle is externally regulated. And the uniqueness of simultaneous interpreting lies in its ‘overlapping (simultaneous) listening and speaking’ (p.2).

Setton (1999) concludes that despite the appearance of technical constraints specific to simultaneous interpreting, such as the condition of simultaneity or input characteristics like information density, ‘these factors may be offset by *cognitive mobilization* (the quality and coherence of the knowledge and awareness base for representation), and *pragmatic competence* for both comprehension and production’ (p.276, emphasis in original). This may explain why the pioneer interpreters did not single out simultaneous interpreting as particularly demanding, although the uniqueness of simultaneous mode is yet to be fully studied.

### 7.1.1 Interpreting as ‘interpretation’

According to the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (2003), the word ‘interpret’ means: (1) to translate one language into another, (2) to believe that

something someone does or something that happens has a particular meaning, (3) to explain the meaning of something, and (4) to perform a part in a play, a piece of music etc. in a way that shows your feelings about it or what you think it means.

George Steiner (1998) states that 'Every understanding is actively interpretive' and even the most literal statement has a hermeneutic dimension, meaning 'more or less or something else other than it says' (p.295).

The interpreter, therefore, is not just someone who changes spoken words from one language into another, but is someone who understands and explains the meaning of something. An interpreter, as such, must first comprehend the meaning of the original message, and then create a new message in a different code. In this regard, an interpreter is not simply an 'animator' in Goffman's (1981) term for somebody else, but an 'author' if not a 'principal.' Komatsu in the interview claimed that he tried to be faithful to the 'text' of what the speaker said, not the speaker as a person. This in a way informs us that interpreters understand and comprehend the text in their own way in order to render the explanation in a different language. Strictly speaking, the terms 'explanation,' 'understanding' and 'comprehension' as well as 'text' are in themselves issues of philosophy, phenomenology and hermeneutics, as evidenced by Paul Ricoeur (1991, pp.105-124). However, this is beyond the scope of the present study, and the discussion henceforth will be focused solely on 'interpretation' (understanding and comprehension) in translation and interpreting.

Umberto Eco (2003/2004) notes that 'translation is a process that takes place between two texts produced at a given historical moment in a given cultural milieu' (p.26) and citing Hjelmslev explains that 'a natural language (and, more generally, any semiotic system) consists of a plane of expression and a plane of content which represents the universe of the concepts that can be expressed by that language. Each of these planes consists of form and substance and both are the result of the organization of a pre-linguistic continuum' (p.21). This is somewhat reminiscent of what Kunihiro

reiterated as necessary components for interpreters to comprehend a message:

*'koto'* and *'kotoba'* of the universe. When Kunihiro says *'koto'* in Japanese, he is referring to the content, and *'kotoba'* is words or language. Kunihiro's idea is tantamount to what Hjelmslev said about 'a plane of content' and 'a plane of expression.'

Eco maintains that:

In order to understand the text, or at least to decide how it should be translated, translators must figure out the possible world pictured by that text. Often they can only make a hypothesis about that possible world. This means that a translation is also the result of a conjecture or of a series of conjectures. Once the most reasonable conjecture has been made, the translators should make their linguistic decisions accordingly. Thus given the whole spectrum of the content displayed by the dictionary entry (plus all the necessary encyclopaedic information), translators must choose the most suitable or relevant meaning or sense for that context. (2004, p.20)

As Eco aptly explains about translators, interpreters likewise resort to their 'world knowledge and infer' (2004, p.18) to make sense of the text, as Muramatsu recalled how he relied on the context and his common sense to interpret a speech without knowing the English word 'agenda.'

Mikhail Bakhtin (1986/2002) does not distinguish oral from written in discussing texts. To him, 'the text (written and oral) is the primary given' of all thought in the human sciences, and 'Where there is no text, there is no object of study, and no object of thought either' (p.103). In his view, every text has a subject or author (speaker or writer), and the text is defined as 'an utterance by its plan (intention) and the realization of this plan, whose dynamic interrelations and struggle determine the nature



of the text' (p.104). Each text, although with a language system behind it, is an utterance, and as such, is 'individual, unique, and unrepeatable' (p.105). Thus, he argues that 'the text (as distinct from the language as a system of means) can never be completely translated' (p.106), since the text forms a complex interrelation with the framing context in a special kind of dialogue. Bakhtin further defines comprehension and understanding:

To see and comprehend the author of a work means to see and comprehend another, alien consciousness and its world, that is, another subject ('Du'). With *explanation* there is only one consciousness, one subject; with *comprehension* there are two consciousnesses and two subjects. There can be no dialogic relationship with an object, and therefore explanation has no dialogic aspects (except formal, rhetorical ones). Understanding is always dialogic to some degree. (1986/2002, p.111, emphasis in original)

For Bakhtin, utterances cannot be reproduced (1986/2002, p.128) or 'cannot be completely translated' (p.106), and understanding entails dialogic aspects. This notion is crucial to both interpreting and translating alike.

Drawing on Bakhtin, Wadensjö (1998) distinguishes between a monological 'talk as text' view of language and a dialogic, interactionistic 'talk as activity' view (1998, p.21). If applied to interpreting in face-to-face interaction, Wadensjö notes, '*monologism* would include the idea of *two languages and two cultures* ('source' and 'target') as existing, and existing separately from one another, while *dialogism* would foreground *actions and interactions* taking place *in a concrete situation* which represents a mixture of linguistic and social conventions and personal preferences' (1998, p.44, emphasis in original). In Wadensjö's view, actual interpreter-mediated

conversations need to be explored from both approaches combined, because the occasional conflicts between seeing talk as text and talk as activities are part of interpreters' everyday practice (p.44).

Although Wadensjö (1998) focused her study on interpreting as interaction in community settings, Bakhtin (1986/2002)'s well known concept of dialogism and interaction is not confined to dialogue or interpreting. Rather, it covers a wide range of 'speech genre' with 'dialogue' at the root of human beings (see 7.5). In that sense, translation and interpreting are both potentially dialogic, involving understanding and comprehension, with all its complexity, possibilities and conflicts.

Homi Bhabha (1994) claims that 'The pact of interpretation is never simply an act of communication between the I and the You designated in the statement' (p.36). In order for the meaning to be produced, these two places must be mobilized in the passage through what Bhabha calls 'a Third Space,' which represents 'both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance' (p.36). And this Third Space, the ambivalent space of enunciation, is where translators and interpreters act, bridging 'the gap between the signifier and the signified' (Kelly, 2005, p.31) to realize meaningful exchanges.

The only difference between translators and interpreters, then, lies in the different nature of communication they work on, literacy in translation and orality in interpreting, both involved in the act of interpretation.

## **7.2 Orality**

What makes interpreting decidedly different from written translation is its orality. Seleskovitch describes this as 'evanescent' nature of interpreting (see Chapter 1). Walter J. Ong (1982/2002) likewise notes that sound 'exists only when it is going out of existence. It is not simply perishable but essentially evanescent, and it is sensed as

evanescent' (p.32). In accordance with the view of Ferdinand de Saussure on the primacy of oral speech, Ong declares that 'language is an oral phenomenon' (2002, p.6). Language is so overwhelmingly oral, notes Ong, that of all the many thousands of languages spoken in the course of human history only around 106 have ever been committed to writing, and 'of some 3000 languages spoken that exist today only some 78 have a literature' (Edmonson, 1971, pp.323, 332, as cited in Ong, 2002, p.7).

### **7.2.1 Primary orality**

In his study, Ong (2002) calls the orality of a culture untouched by any knowledge of writing or print, 'primary orality' (p.11), in contrast with the 'secondary orality' of 'present-day high-technology culture, in which a new orality is sustained by telephone, radio, television, and other electronic devices that depend for their existence and functioning on writing and print' (p.11). Needless to say, Ong is well aware that primary oral culture in the strict sense hardly exists today. He argues, however, that although admittedly every culture knows of writing nowadays, even in high-technology environment, 'many cultures and subcultures preserve much of the mind-set of primary orality' (p.11).

Based on this premise, Ong elaborates on the characteristics of primary oral culture. For example, thought in an oral culture is tied to communication, with a listener to stimulate and sustain thought, and above all, the problem of retaining and retrieving thought is solved by thinking memorable thoughts, shaped for ready oral recurrence, in mnemonic and in rhythmic, balanced patterns. In other words, formulaic expressions help discourse to become rhythmic and also act as memory aids (Ong, 2002, p.35). Proverbs, for one, are 'constantly heard by everyone so that they come to mind readily and which themselves are patterned for retention and ready recall' (p.34).

Although by Ong's definition, Japanese culture, with its long tradition of writing, is definitely a highly literate culture with secondary orality, some of the elements listed

as characteristics of primary oral culture in a way relate to what the interpreters narrated in their life stories, themselves oral in nature. One illustration is *rakugo* which Muramatsu and Komatsu both enjoyed and felt relevant to interpreting skills. Ong (2002) explains that despite the formulaic and redundant nature, oral cultures do not lack originality:

Narrative originality lodges not in making up new stories but in managing a particular interaction with this audience at this time—at every telling the story has to be introduced uniquely into a unique situation, for in oral cultures an audience must be brought to respond, often vigorously. But narrators also introduce new elements into old stories. (Goody, 1977, pp.29-30, as cited in Ong, 2002, pp.41-42)

Interestingly, this is exactly what happens with *rakugo* storytelling. The stories are usually old, have been told many times for many years, handed down to disciples of narrators, and stories in *rakugo* begin with a formulaic expression, usually followed by a new element introduced by a storyteller before narrating an old story. The audience, who already know the story, nevertheless respond actively, if not vigorously.

Muramatsu, who grew up in an older part of downtown Tokyo, knew *rakugo* well, and remembers performing it when he was in the first grade in elementary school: ‘When the teacher asked me, “Muramatsu-kun, why don’t you perform something?” I readily answered, “Yes,” and went up to the podium and told a *rakugo* story that I was familiar with, imitating the ritual way of storytelling, “Well, here I am with an old story as usual. Once upon a time...” ’

Granted that *rakugo* storytelling was only indirectly relevant to interpreting performance, possibly in terms of delivery, there are other features of orality that have

direct bearing on interpreting, such as redundancy in oral speech.

It is insightful that redundancy is mentioned as one of the characteristics of orally based thought and speech (Ong, 2002, p.39-41). It is particularly revealing that before a large audience redundancy is more marked than in most face-to-face conversation, because ‘not everyone in a large audience understands every word a speaker utters, if only because of acoustic problems’ (p.40). This is precisely one of the elements which helps make simultaneous interpreting possible. It is unavoidable for conference interpreters to miss a word or two here and there, and yet, in most cases interpreters are able to maintain continuity in their interpreting with educated guesses, as Ong points out, ‘If you miss the “not only” you can supply it by inference from the “but also ...” ’(p.40). These inferences are made possible because of the interpreter’s prior knowledge about a topic, cohesion and coherence in a speech, and also thanks to the redundant nature of human speech and the resulting tendency of a speaker to repeat the same thing two or three times, especially something important he wishes to convey.

Another element Ong (2002) elaborates on as a salient feature of oral culture is the way orality is used to help restore and retrieve memory. The interpreters in the present study offer some interesting accounts in this regard. Muramatsu, when praised for his incredible memory, answered simply, ‘I talk, and that’s why I don’t forget,’ which supports Ong’s argument about orality as mnemonic aids ( p.35) and sustained thought in oral culture tied to communication (p.34).

The story of Kunihiro growing up reading Chinese classics by *sodoku*, a traditional read-aloud method (see Chapter 4), is close to what Ong found about writing and orality: ‘Reading a text means converting it to sound, aloud or in the imagination, syllable-by-syllable in slow reading or sketchily in the rapid reading common to high-technology cultures. Writing can never dispense with orality’ (p.8).

Sohma’s comments that, unlike translators, ‘interpreters have to think fast, and talk fast,’ is better understood when you take orality into consideration in comparison with

handwriting, which is 'physically such a slow process—typically about one-tenth of the speed of oral speech' (Chafe, 1982, as cited in Ong, 2002, p.40).

It is also revealing that Sohma emphasized 'empathy,' which is listed as one of the features of oral culture. Citing Havelock (1963, pp.145-6), Ong contrasts the emphatic and participatory nature of oral culture with writing, in which objectivity is established by personal disengagement or distancing (2002, p.45). It would be hasty, however, to assume that interpreting, unlike written translation, does not aim at objectivity.

Komatsu, for instance, reiterated the importance of objectivity and neutrality, distancing himself from his clients, which he considers an 'ethics' for interpreters. Rather, the major difference between speech and writing stems from the fact that 'The reader is absent from the act of writing; the writer is absent from the act of reading' (Ricouer, 1991, p.107), hence no communication between the two, whereas orality is closely tied to communication (Ong, 2002, p.34), words used 'here and now' (p.46).

### **7.2.2 Orality and literacy**

One thing worth mentioning at this point is that with consecutive mode of interpreting, orality is augmented by literacy, in the form of 'note-taking' to help memory and recall. Nishiyama gave a lucid account of how in the beginning he tried to 'drum everything into his brain,' until he learned to 'take notes' properly.

This necessarily leads us into the issue of the relationship between orality and literacy in interpreting. Notwithstanding the similarities found and discussed so far of interpreting with features of primary orality, the reality in the present society makes it obvious that it is secondary orality, a new orality sustained by electronic devices in high-technology culture, that interpreters deal with, and their practice cannot be dissociated from literacy. A good example would be broadcast or media interpreting, mostly on television, where interpreters oftentimes translate written news stories beforehand and 'interpret' at the time of the news broadcast.

Although Ong does not discuss oral history, he contemplates history both in oral and literate cultures, and mentions narrative as the most studied in terms of the orality-literacy shift from primary oral cultures into high literacy and electronic information processing (2002, p.136) . In addition, Ong calls attention to the fact that narratives or stories of human action in a totally oral culture are used to ‘store, organize, and communicate much of what they know’ (p.137). This underlines the significance of narratives, although of course the situation is not necessarily the same in literate culture.

The present study has been undertaken in a highly literate culture, making full use of technology, such as tape-recording interviews, with transcribing and putting the narratives in a written form. The oral memory of the interpreters is organized and stored in such a way to be functional in a literate day and age, aiming at objective analysis which is characteristic of literacy. Clearly, orality in this study is secondary orality. Still, the study is fundamentally oral—it is a study about oral interpreting, using oral history as a method, in an effort to recall and revive the memory of interpreters in an oral form.

### **7.3 Cultural issues for interpreters**

Samovar, Porter and Jain (1981) note that ‘Culture is an intriguing concept’ (p.24), because when we begin to think about the definition given and consider what it implies, culture becomes ‘a prodigious and commanding notion’ (p.24). Komatsu is probably right when he said that he thought culture was ‘elusive.’ To be sure, it is something everybody knows, but it is also true that everyone has a different idea of what culture is. American anthropologists Alfred Louis Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn in 1952 (p.181) compiled a list of 164 definitions of culture (as cited in Katan, 2004, p.25). It is no exaggeration to say that the definition of culture itself has long been a topic for

academic debates.

### 7.3.1 The definition of culture

One of the oldest definitions is said to be that offered by the English anthropologist Edward Barnett Tylor in 1871: ‘Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society’ (as cited in Katan, 2004, p.25). Since then, multiple definitions appeared regarding the concept of culture. One example is Fons Trompenaars who defines culture in three layers; the outer layer of artefacts and products, the middle layer of norms and values, and basic assumptions as the core (1997, pp.21-22, as cited in Katan, 2004, p.38). Geert Hofstede uses the metaphor of ‘skin of an onion’ to define culture, because in his view, there are superficial and deeper layers of culture, with values at the center (1991, pp.7, 9, as cited in Katan, 2004, p.25). Edward T. Hall (1952) popularized ‘The Iceberg Theory,’ explaining that the most important part of culture is hidden and what can be seen is just the tip of the iceberg. Hall (1982) later presented an extended model of a ‘Triad of Culture,’ dividing culture into technical, formal and informal or out-of awareness culture.

From a post-colonial perspective, Bhabha (1994, p.38) warns of ‘the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures’ (emphasis in original) and proposes instead an ‘*international culture*’ based on the ‘inscription and articulation of culture’s *hybridity*.’ This ‘*inter*’ is important, because for Bhabha, ‘it is the ‘*inter*’—the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between* space—that carries the burden of the meaning of culture’ (p.38). The *in-between* space is what Bhabha terms a Third Space, which has led scholars in different disciplines to explore the third space approach, despite its ambivalent and complex nature, in language teaching and intercultural communication studies (Kelly, 2006, pp.31-34). Kramsch (2005), for instance, talks about ‘cultural third space’ in her discussion on cultural literacy (more



on this later in the section).

Notwithstanding the academic debates on the definition of culture, one striking thing noticed in the interviews was that the five interpreters did not respond as enthusiastically as was expected when asked how they learned cultural literacy and how they tackled cultural differences when they were interpreting. Except for Komatsu who was articulate in his opposition to interpreters acting as ‘cultural clarifiers,’ the other interpreters showed not the least interest in the topic, a striking contrast with their enthusiasm in talking about language and language learning. This was puzzling in light of the fact that interpreters are considered to be bicultural (Snell-Hornby et al., 1997), and translation has long been regarded as ‘cultural assimilation’ (Martin Luther, as cited in Eco, 2004, p.89). Eco (2004), discussing whether a translation should lead the reader to understand the linguistic and cultural universe of the source text, or transform the original by adapting it to the reader’s cultural and linguistic universe (p.89), proposes the notion of ‘translation as negotiation’ (p.100). However, not one subject in the study took the initiative to discuss negotiating culture in interpreting, even Kunihiro, who introduced Edward T. Hall to Japan by translating his seminal work *The Silent Language* (1959, trans. into Japanese in 1966) and who translated the term ‘intercultural communication’ into Japanese.<sup>87</sup> When asked about difficulties in bridging cultural differences, Sohma denied that she had experienced any difficulty in filling in cultural gaps, since she grew up in an environment where she ‘did not feel the difference between Japanese and English.’ Likewise, Nishiyama had little to say on culture except for the fact that he learned it from living in two cultures, which is an amazing contrast with his lengthy account of his experiences of learning the two

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<sup>87</sup> Kunihiro, in translating Hall (1966), used the term ‘ibunka-kan ni okeru komyunikeishon’ for intercultural communication. Kato Hidetoshi, one of the earliest scholars to introduce the field in Japan, recalls that Kunihiro discussed with him how the term ‘intercultural communication’ should be translated into Japanese and settled on ‘ibunka-kan komyunikeishon’ (Torikai, 2006a, p.24).

languages. Just like Sohma, Nishiyama responded that since he had lived in both societies, becoming 'bicultural sort of came just by experience.' He did add, however, that he learned much about Japanese culture from his colleagues who used to take him out for walks during lunch break, to 'explain things like Japanese legends and society.'

Also, Nishiyama remembers being taught the Japanese way of behaving in a Japanese workplace, although he didn't perceive it as learning culture. When Japanese-American Nishiyama started to work, he was assigned to the library to study the Japanese language (see Chapter 4). After a few months, Nishiyama started to feel uneasy and asked one of his colleagues, 'I am very worried, you know. I feel guilty receiving a salary for doing something like this.' And the reply was, 'Don't worry. Just do whatever you are told to do. That's the Japanese way.'

When asked how he reconciled cultural differences or overcame cultural barriers in interpreting, Nishiyama simply answered, 'Well, I cannot say I recall such an incident. Fortunately, I did not encounter such difficult situations' and although he admitted he had several occasions where he made misinterpretations in this regard, he was not able to come up with specific examples.

One plausible reason for this is that the meaning of 'culture' in the question was too broad. As Komatsu commented, they might have felt culture was something 'elusive'—not specific enough to discuss.

Another possibility is the words 'cultural differences' or 'cultural barriers' were not conceived as such and what the interviewer meant was subsumed as a problem of 'language and communication.' It could be that for interpreters, 'culture' is so much a part of their life that it cannot be treated as a separate issue. This is understandable, since 'Culture is communication' (Hall, 1959/1973, p.97), and 'what we talk about and how we talk about it is for the most part determined by the culture in which we have lived' (Samovar et al, 1981, p.25). It can be surmised that when the subjects talked about language and communication, culture was already a part of it, without being

explicitly mentioned.

In order to look into this somewhat puzzling phenomenon seen in the narratives of the five interpreters, it is necessary here to attempt to see culture and its relationship with language, particularly in terms of interpreting, from different perspectives. For this purpose, Milton Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, Michael Byram's notion of 'intercultural competence,' and Claire Kramsch's 'intercultural literacy' will be introduced as the basis for discussion.

### **7.3.2 The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity**

Katan (2004) applied The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), created by Milton Bennett (1993), to translators and interpreters in the hope of understanding beliefs about translation, and also so that 'the introduction of culture for translators and interpreters can be more usefully organized in accordance with trainees' levels of intercultural sensitivity' (p.329). Bennett's DMIS model charts the change in one's reaction to 'the other' in six different stages, each representing a change in fundamental beliefs about self and the other. The six stages are categorized into two parts: ethnocentric stages (denial, defence, minimization) and ethnorelative stages (acceptance, adaptation, integration).

Stage 1 'Denial' is the initial reaction to the 'other' acting as if the 'other' did not exist as a separate world, and in Katan's view, 'there are no competent translators at this level' (2004, p.332).

Then in Stage 2 'Defence,' we react to the gap between our expected world and the world we are dealing with, and 'the most natural reaction to difference in others' behaviour, discourse patterns and value systems is to defend our own, particularly because the threat is felt at the level of core beliefs regarding what is "right", "normal" and "correct" ' (Katan, 2004, p.332). Applied to translation, Katan lists Lawrence Venuti and Peter Newmark at this stage in their wish to 'intervene to help the more

vulnerable through translation' and viewing the "'other'" from a Defensive position' (p.333).

Stage 3 'Minimization' is divided into physical, based on biological and ethological considerations, and transcendent universalism, a belief in a single guiding plan for the universe. In translation, Katan lists Danica Seleskovitch at this stage for her belief in general universal similarities despite obvious cultural differences, and Andrew Chesterman for his understanding of Grice's Maxims to be universally applicable, with due respect to particular cultures (2004, p.334). Katan points out further that 'One particular entrenched universal norm in the translating habitus is that meaning can be "transferred" from one language to another, and that meaning is immanent in the text. This norm [...] is actually unconsciously encoded at the European Union: translating and interpreting=copying' (2004, p.334).

The narratives of the five pioneers give the impression that they are at this stage, judging from their belief in the universal norm of transferring the meaning of the original text into another language. However, in practice, they are at Stage 4, being aware of the differences in communication styles.

In Stage 4 'Acceptance,' a major conceptual shift is seen from reliance on absolute, dualistic principles to an acknowledgement of non-absolute relativity and people begin to recognize differences in communication style. According to Katan (2004), this is where 'the translator begins to perceive that his/her ethnocentric model of the world is not the only one, and that text-based copying, though possible, will not communicate the same message across cultures' (p.334), prompting the translator to include local contexts of situation and culture in their model of the world, consequently leading to possible indirection, experimentation, and at times indecision.

At Stage 5 'Adaptation,' new skills to adapt to different world views are acquired and people now use knowledge to intentionally shift into a different frame of reference, from empathy to pluralism. In Katan's view, this is where the discussion on the

translator's (in)visibility starts, and the translator or interpreter 'can be said to be bicultural, with a minimum set of two maps in one mind' (2004, p.337). Here again, the narratives of the five interpreters exemplify that they are at this stage with two sets of maps making them bicultural, especially Nisihiyama and Sohma.

Finally, at Stage 6 'Integration,' people do not simply have culture but they engage in it, and as the first step to integration, they attain the ability to analyze and evaluate situations from more than one cultural perspective. According to Katan, the translator/interpreter at this stage is 'not only able to mindshift and associate with both the source text and the virtual target text but is also able to take a third perceptual position' (2004, p.337). What this entails is that translators are now in a meta-position, fully aware that they are able to choose from multiple alternatives, and also, with a definite identity change at this level, the translator/interpreter is 'now a cultural interpreter or mediator and has a supra-cultural mission: to improve crosscultural cooperation' (Katan, 2004, p.337).

It is difficult to ascertain whether all five of the pioneers are at this final stage of integration. It is hard, because with the exception of Sohma, who acknowledged the need for interpreters to edit, other interpreters hailed the traditional interpreting ethics of non-intervention. However, casting a close look at their practices, we can see they have made decisions in their choice from a number of alternatives, and they were keenly aware of their mission to help with improving intercultural communication. They were certainly not in favour of the notion of cultural interpreter, as we shall discuss later, and they may not have been conscious of their role as mediators. Nevertheless, there is no denying that they were at this final stage in their actual practice. Based on their narratives on their beliefs, they seem to be at Stage 3, and yet, the analysis of their practices shows that they are at the rest of the stages as well. It could be that the DMIS model is not quite suitable in analyzing professional interpreters, but is more suited for screening interpreting students and in their training.

### 7.3.3 Interpreters' view of culture

According to Wadensjö (1998), the very question of culture, separated from language issues, represents monological, talk-as-text view of interpreting. It may be that without even realizing it, the five interpreters took a dialogic view of language and culture, and treated culture not separately but as part of communicative interactions taking place in interpreting practice.

To prove this point, the narratives of the pioneers demonstrate their life stories rich with cultural experiences, as Nishiyama's learning Japanese culture. Many of the stories told were none other than the reflections of complexity of cultural issues in the interviewer's mindset, as in the case of Nishiyama not having been able to detect the anger that was contained in Kono Ichiro's statement vis-à-vis American Secretary of Agriculture Freeman (see Chapter 6).

Nishiyama (1979) cited another example as the issue of 'prior knowledge' which the author would categorize as an issue of language and culture:

When U.S. Ambassador to Japan Robert Ingersoll (1971-73) went on an inspection tour, some Japanese said, '*Watashi-tachi wa 8 nin kyodai desu,*' which I translated as 'We're eight brothers.' As the conversation went on, this Japanese started to talk about '*watashi no imouto*' (my younger sister) or '*watashi no ane*' (my elder sister). I had to ask, then, 'I thought you said eight brothers, but do you also have sisters?' The answer was, 'Among the eight, I have one elder sister and two younger sisters.' The Japanese word '*kyodai*' (brothers) includes sisters, too, which makes it confusing to interpreters. Not very many Japanese say '*kyodai shimai*' (brothers and sisters). I had to quickly change the gender of my translation into English. Naturally, the Ambassador harbored some doubts about my interpreting.

Therefore, I had to add some explanation about the Japanese language.

That evening, at a dinner party, the Ambassador started to talk about ‘My brothers in New York,’ and I had to ask him, ‘Is this “brother” younger than you are? Or older?’ The Ambassador rebuffed and said, ‘What difference does that make?’ Thus, I was obliged to explain to him that in Japanese, you have to specify ‘*ani* (elder brother)’ or ‘*otouto* (younger brother).’ (pp.67-68)

Muramatsu recounted an anecdote which happened the year Tokyo Telecommunications Engineering Corporation became Sony. Ibuka, one of the founders, and Muramatsu went to Silicon Valley, when it wasn’t called that yet, invited by an American electronics company. After touring the factory, the owner asked, ‘So what do you think, Mr. Ibuka? Why don’t we form a partnership?’ Ibuka, in a typically Japanese way, didn’t give a definite answer on the spot and replied, ‘*Yabusaka dewa nai*,’ which is not a flat refusal, but not an active commitment either, leaving some ambiguity. Muramatsu recalls:

When I interpreted this ambiguous expression, with a kind of double negative, I translated it into English literally; ‘I would not be unwilling to consider your proposal.’ Then that man...I still remember clearly...asked me, “What does he mean by that? What does he mean?” There were only three of us at the time, so I replied, “I don’t know. That’s what he said.” And I had no choice but to tell Mr. Ibuka, “He is saying that he doesn’t really understand what you mean.” Mr. Ibuka, then, looked at my face, grinned, and said, “Just tell him *yabusaka dewa nai*.” He probably didn’t want to say anything more, I think. So I said, “I repeat. Mr. Ibuka says, I would not be unwilling to consider.” He (the American) shrugged like this.

It was clear that the listener found it hard to understand Ibuka's statement, but in this case, Muramatsu adhered to a foreignizing, or source-oriented strategy, keeping the ambiguous statement as ambiguous. This is another example of culture reflected in language and communication. Muramatsu himself noted on the American who proposed a business partnership to Ibuka:

Had he read Ruth Benedict or the like, he would have realized, "He is just avoiding giving an immediate answer, but it doesn't mean there is no hope." And he could have said something like, "Thank you. I will get in touch with you by writing." And send him a letter later, or depending on the situation, say "I'll be happy to come to Tokyo to talk further," then who knows, he may have gotten a business deal. He knew too little. Mr. Ibuka used a vague expression, and so I reproduced his intent by interpreting it in a vague way. He (the American) had it coming for not studying Japanese ways. That's what I think.

Among the five, only Kunihiro majored in cultural anthropology. Asked what motivated him to study this particular field, he started to talk about his first travel overseas to Hawaii as a delegate to the America-Japan Student Conference:

For one thing, Hawaii is a unique place, as you know. So many different cultures, different races, different ethnic groups, different languages—Japanese is also widely used. It's a place where many differences meet and cross— 'heterogeneity.' [...] The fact that different cultures coexisted, and furthermore, rather peacefully, without much violence. I think it's a place where they co-existed. Therefore, cultural



anthropology, or comparative sociology and the like...I wanted to study these things in connection with Japan.

Although Kunihiro was not particularly enthusiastic about answering cultural questions, he summed up his experience of traveling around the United States with productivity teams as something akin to ethnography of the American society.

The only time Komatsu associated 'culture' with his work was when he was talking about his interpreting for too modest Obuchi (see 6.2). He commented, 'This could be a kind of difference in culture,' adding that if the audience were Japanese, people would have appreciated this kind of modesty and humbleness.

Notwithstanding, Komatsu was doubtful about the issue of culture throughout the interview. For instance, when asked how he became interested in American culture, he responded that he was never consciously aware of 'culture' or 'the study of culture' as such, although he was certainly interested in and learned about specific areas like American industry and management, politics, or music. He added, 'You could sum up and call them "culture" I suppose. Nevertheless, I have never been aware of it as "culture." In my opinion, culture is something quite elusive [emphasis added], and it is not always productive to perceive things as "culture".'

Later on, Komatsu revealed why he was so doubtful about culture, when he started to talk about what he called 'cultural clarifiers.' According to Komatsu, 'cultural clarifiers' are business interpreters and cultural consultants combined. Rather than simply acting as interpreters, they give advice to their clients on what to say, or how to express things, and in Komatsu's view, 'This is where the pitfall is, for an interpreter to be stepping deeply into culture, and that's part of the reason I say that you shouldn't be too concerned about culture.'

The notion of 'cultural clarifiers,' as introduced by Komatsu, is close to what

Katan (2004) calls ‘cultural interpreter’<sup>88</sup>. In Katan’s view, the interpreter’s role has been shifting from a discreet black box and a ‘walking generalist translator of words’ to a ‘cultural mediator,’ a visible third party and ‘a specialist in negotiating between cultures.’ The issue of culture and interpreting, as such, is directly connected to the discussion of the interpreter’s role—a linguistic conduit, a communication facilitator, or a bilingual/bicultural mediator, which will be discussed later in the final section of this chapter.

### 7.3.4 Intercultural competence/literacy

Notwithstanding the seemingly indifferent or negative feelings about culture on the part of the pioneers, the reality of their interpreting practice calls for a need to shed light on the intricate relationship between language and culture. For as Claire Kramersch (1998) states: ‘Language is the principal means whereby we conduct our social lives. When it is used in contexts of communication, it is bound up with culture in multiple and complex ways’ (p.3).

On the multicultural frontier, where many interpreters today work, the relationship between language and culture carries even greater weight, and the work of interpreting has to be revisited beyond the linguistic sphere, or even beyond Hymes’s ‘communicative competence’ (1972), and has to be placed in a wider context of culture. And ‘culture’ here is not confined to what Hirsch (1987) calls ‘cultural literacy,’ but is closer to the concept of ‘intercultural competence’ advocated by Michael Byram (1997, 2001, 2003) or the ‘intercultural literacy’ proposed by Kramersch (2005).

According to Byram et.al (2001), ‘intercultural competence’ is defined with the following components:

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<sup>88</sup> See also Mesa (2000) for the notion of cultural interpreter.

- 1) *Intercultural attitudes (savoir être)*: curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own.
- 2) *Knowledge (savoirs)*: of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction.
- 3) *Skills of interpreting and relating (savoir comprendre)*: ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events from one's own.
- 4) *Skills of discovery and interaction (savoir apprendre/faire)*: ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction.
- 5) *Critical cultural awareness (savoir s'engager)*: an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries. (pp.5-7)

Not surprisingly, all five subjects in the present study are equipped with the five components of intercultural competence that Byram (2001) presented. The pioneers are open and full of curiosity, are well versed in the two cultures, have excellent skills to interpret and relate, to discover and interact, and are endowed with critical cultural awareness. In sum, it can be safely assessed from their narratives that they are truly intercultural as professionals and mediators.

In trying to explain the need for 'intercultural literacy,' Kramsch (2005) defines modern society in three phases, namely (1) a bureaucratic society, (2) an entrepreneurial society, and (3) a global networked society. In a bureaucratic society, texts and authors are respected, and the efforts to discern authors' intentions are valued. Literacy is seen as 'internalization of history, the memory of a tradition to be passed on

orally and in writing from generation to generation,' and translation is considered 'the search for equivalences from one language to another' (p.19).

An entrepreneurial society is a society oriented toward the international market, where tensions between national and international interests take place in the technological, economic and cultural areas. In such a society, language is seen as interpersonal communication, as 'information to be exchanged in individuals, cross-cultural encounters,' and literacy is defined as 'a set of cognitive and social skills which operate in the expression, interpretation and negotiation of meaning between two interlocutors or between a text and its readers' (Kramsch, 2005, p.21). While cultural literacy was the internalization of a native speakers' knowledge and competence, 'intercultural literacy is the ability to make comparisons between the native and the foreign culture, to not only seek and identify differences, but to examine them critically [...]' (p.21).

Kramsch articulates neither mode would be adequate to the global networked society, where 'symbolic, historical, cultural and ideological values' (p.23) are assuming more importance. In such an age of global culture, intercultural literacy has to be understood in different ways, with ecological as well as transcultural perspectives. Intercultural literacy from an ecological perspective, according to Kramsch, focuses on relativizing and contextualizing different people's perceptions of history, including such elements as understanding how the connotations of words reflect the historical conditions in which they were used (p.25).

Kramsch admits that the notion of intercultural literacy raises more questions than answers, and suggests, in conclusion, the need to find a 'cultural third space,' outside the domination of markets and national/ ethnic communities (p.31).

The concept of intercultural literacy proposed by Kramsch sheds new light on the interpreter's practice. While the evidence offered by the pioneer interpreters is basically consonant with what Kramsch describes as 'bureaucratic mode,' a great deal

of their stories reflect interpreting in the ‘entrepreneurial society,’ at times revealing further a glimpse of ecological and transcultural views for global networked society. It can be envisaged that this new outlook would have to come into play in future interpreters’ endeavours in intercultural encounters. This will be studied further in the next section on the role of interpreters.

#### 7.4 The role of interpreters

The discussion of the role of interpreters is a complex one, involving issues of ethics, norms, accuracy and even the problem of identity (see Hale, 2005; Mason, 2005; Cronin, 2006). As early as 1976, Anderson pointed out the ‘ambiguities and conflicts of the interpreter role’ (as cited in Pöchhacker & Shlesinger, 2002, p.211), and Inghilleri (2005a) identified interpreters as somebody placed in what Bourdieu called ‘zones of uncertainty in social space’ (2000, p.160, as cited in Inghilleri, 2005a, p.70). According to Pöchhacker (2004), the issue of role has become an integral part of professional code of ethics and practice (p.147).

Nishiyama, in his narrative about the Minister of Agriculture (see Section 6.1), stated that he would have translated his ‘*tanka*’ as it was, close to an ultimatum, had he realized it was Kono’s intention, despite the double-bind situation he was placed in where he ran the risk of being blamed for having made the other side angry.

Kondo Masaomi<sup>89</sup>, a Japanese-English conference interpreter, basically holds a similar view:

Even if the two parties failed to agree or, in the extreme case, started a

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<sup>89</sup> Kondo Masaomi is professor of economics at Daito University, and the founding president of the Japan Association for Interpretation Studies (JAIS).

war, if this was based on the full understanding of the discussion on both sides, it would be in the end much better than false peace based on misunderstanding, because when the false impression is corrected, the result would be worse. As such, the interpreter should not be blamed for the initial, undesirable consequences. (personal communication, March 25, 2006)

On the other hand, Nagata Sae<sup>90</sup>, explains that for interpreters in Chinese, ‘the *raison d’être* for the profession is clearly to become a bridge for the friendship between the two countries’ such as Japan and China:

Interpreters, often called ‘Xiaowaijiaoguan (little diplomats)’ in China, are deemed professionals who serve the ultimate goal of promoting friendly international relations. Hence, if an interlocutor said something which might undermine this ultimate cause, interpreters are not expected to translate faithfully to the original, since achieving the overall objective of friendly relations is more important than individual expressions. (personal communication, March 25, 2006)

On the interpreters’ role, Muramatsu (1986) listed as one of the qualities of an interpreter, the ability ‘to be content to work backstage as a *kurogo*.’ In principle, all five pioneer interpreters agreed that interpreters should be *kurogo*, the supposedly invisible help in *kabuki* (see Chapter 1). However, in practice, subtle differences appear depending on the context, and more importantly, the understanding of the meaning of *kurogo* is not necessarily uniform (see Chapter 6). For Komatsu, *kurogo* is

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<sup>90</sup> Nagata Sae is assistant professor at Dokkyo University, a Japanese-Chinese conference interpreter, and a JAIS executive member.

not synonymous with 'invisibility.' In his view, interpreters should act as *kurogo*, and yet they cannot escape from visibility. Komatsu took issue with such terms as 'invisibility' and 'transparency,' pointing out he was not sure how they tie in with the concept of *kurogo*, while Nishiyama and Muramatsu seemed to take it for granted that interpreters should be *kurogo* and become transparent. Kunihiro basically agreed that an interpreter is an invisible *kurogo* existence, acknowledging that his *keren* interpreting was by no means the norm. Sohma did not seem to be interested in the debate over visible/invisible issue. What weighed more to her was her belief that interpreting is not simply a job, but a 'calling.' To Sohma, whether an interpreter is *kurogo* is not so much an issue as the interpreter's perception of the purpose of the work. The crucial question for Sohma is why you interpret, for what purpose: As long as interpreters are aware of the objective of their mission, they are able to decide for themselves how they interpret.

These seemingly contradictory statements, in the final analysis, could be considered a reflection of the discrepancy between the prescribed norm or ethics and the reality of interpreters at work, as Angelelli in her research reported.

#### **7.4.1 Interpreter Interpersonal Role Inventory**

In this section, findings by Claudia V. Angelelli (2004a) on the role of interpreters will be analyzed contrasting them with the evidence obtained from the Japanese interpreters in the present study.

Angelelli (2004a) notes that the chief concern of most interpreter organizations has always been 'accuracy' and that training programs set an 'unattainable goal' (p.13) for interpreters to relay accurate renditions of a message, resulting in a tension 'between the prescribed and the actual role of the interpreter' (p.13). This prompted her to design the Interpreter Interpersonal Role Inventory (IPRI), with the aim of exploring interpreters' perceptions of their role, and to measure their attitudes towards the

visibility/invisibility of their role (2004a, p.50).

It is deemed worthwhile at this point to examine the result of IIRJ and juxtapose them against the narratives of the five interpreters in Japan.

### **1. Is there a relationship between interpreters' social backgrounds and their perceptions of visibility?**

Angelelli selected five factors for this question: self-identification with the dominant or subordinate group, gender, age, education and income, each of which will be studied below.

#### Self-identification with dominant or subordinate group

Angelelli confirms 'interpreters' aversion to blatant alignment with one of the parties' (2004a, p.69), which corresponds with four of the five interpreters in the present study. With the exception of Kunihiro, who later in his career clearly aligned with Miki Takeo, the pioneers expressed the need for impartiality, as exemplified by Sohma's statement, 'Both sides are important.'

However, 'self-identification with the dominant or subordinate group' is, in reality, difficult to look into. The five people represent different social backgrounds, such as Sohma born as a daughter of a prominent statesman, marrying a viscount, or Muramatsu born in the old downtown area of Tokyo where people didn't have baths at home, speaking 'commoner's language,' to use his own description. And it is not easy to see if they perceived the speakers and listeners as belonging to dominant or subordinate groups.

In most cases, the parties involved both belonged to dominant groups, prime ministers talking to presidents, or business leaders talking to each other. The reality with the pioneer interpreters in this study is that they are conference/diplomatic interpreters, not community interpreters, and if there was any power relationship



involved in their interpreted communicative events, it was to do with defeated Japanese communicating with Americans in the immediate post-WWII period. Yet, even under such circumstances, the narratives of the interpreters show they did their best to stay neutral as is exemplified in Nishiyama interpreting between the Occupation Forces and the Japanese government (see Chapter 6).

### Gender

On gender, Angelelli found that 'male and female interpreters do not perceive their role differently' (p.69). None of the four male interpreters in the study brought up the issue of gender, although Komatsu in his book wrote about the increase of women in the profession, overcoming the gender bias held by some government officials.

Sohma, as the first female simultaneous interpreter in Japan, admitted having faced gender bias, and recalled her frustration when she was not even given a chance to interpret, or was not allowed to go inside a meeting place in Korea, all because of her being a woman. Aside from Sohma's passing remark about women possibly being more suited for interpreting, the question of gender in relation with the perception of the interpreters' role was never taken up, and no difference was detected in this regard between the male interpreters and the female interpreter in this study, although of course more in-depth research is in order in this area.

### Age

On the factor of age, Angelelli (2004a) discovered that the older participants perceived themselves as being less visible, which is consistent with the invisibility tendencies identified in the five interpreters. The pioneers all belong to the oldest age bracket of over 69 in Angelelli's study, their ages at the time of the interview being 92 for Nishiyama and Sohma, 73 for Muramatsu and Kunihiro, and 69 for Komatsu. The five interpreters under study are first-generation simultaneous interpreters in Japan,

and as such, none of them received formal training. As Kunihiro described it, they are virtually ‘self-made carpenters’ who acquired the skill on the job. In addition, Nishiyama and Sohma were both heavily influenced by the first-generation conference interpreters in Europe, who interpreted so naturally that ‘you feel as though the person is really speaking that language’ (Sohma).

As Angelelli notes, ‘only in the last fifteen years has a school of thought emerged which characterizes interpreters as co-participants to the interaction and problematizes the notion of neutrality’ (2004a, pp.69-70), and the results of her study, possibly an indication of this newer trend, show the beliefs of younger interpreters different from senior interpreters who were trained under the old school of thought that prescribed invisibility. The situation may not be the same in Japan where the invisibility norm is still prevalent even in community interpreting. This will be discussed in Question 3.

#### Education and income

On education and income, Angelelli (2004a) reports that ‘the level of formal education (not limited to the field of interpreting) was not related to the interpreter perception of visibility,’ but the participants with higher incomes tended to perceive themselves as being less visible (p.70).

The element of income was not addressed in the present study, although admittedly, as high-profile interpreters who publish and lecture extensively, it is easily imagined that they enjoy higher incomes than do average interpreters. As for education received, Nishiyama has a master’s degree in electrical engineering, and Kunihiro majored in cultural anthropology. Muramatsu took an undergraduate evening course in English and American literature at a private university in Tokyo, while Komatsu graduated from a national university specializing in foreign languages. Sohma is the only one who did not attend university, because ‘universities would not accept women back then,’ and she ‘absolutely had no intention’ of entering a women’s college, which was

what women were supposed to do before the war.

In summary, on the first question of whether a relationship exists between interpreters' social backgrounds and their perceptions of visibility, as far as the five interpreters under study are concerned, no significant relationship was observed between their social backgrounds and their perceptions of visibility, except for their age and for their being pioneers in the field.

## **2. Where do interpreters from different settings fall on the continuum of visibility/invisibility for interpreter perception of role?**

Angelelli (2004a) found 'medical interpreters ranked highest in the continuum of perception of visibility, followed by court and then conference interpreters' (p.71).

What is of special interest, in her analysis, is that although conference interpreters perceived themselves as the least visible, the high end of the range extends beyond the mid-point of the scale, demonstrating that 'not all conference interpreters perceived themselves as invisible' (p.71).

In accordance with Angelelli's findings, the five conference interpreters in this study varied in their perception of visibility, although most of them believed in the prescribed invisibility as the basic principle of conference interpreting. This is understandable when you think that conference interpreters, especially when rendering simultaneous interpreting in a booth, are physically remote and invisible from participants.

However, conferences are not the only settings they work in—they do consecutive interpreting of lectures or speeches at press conferences, or in face-to-face communication for diplomatic negotiations, which is all part of the work of 'conference interpreters.' In other words, conference interpreters deal with both monologues and dialogues, simultaneous mode as well as consecutive, remote (invisible in a booth) and close (visible beside the speaker), public in most cases but at

times private, as in secret meetings between politicians. As is shown in the life stories of the five interpreters, it would be a mistake to assume that conference interpreters are always in a booth, working solely on monologues. Indeed, the communicative situations they are involved in can be quite varied, encompassing conference, diplomatic and even broadcast/media interpreting, as in the Apollo space broadcasts which all except Sohma experienced.

It is not surprising, then, that they varied in their perceptions of visibility. A careful look at the narratives of the five interpreters showed differences in their perceptions of visibility, in order of perhaps, highest with Kunihiro, followed by Sohma, Komatsu, Muramatsu, and the lowest with Nishiyama. Nevertheless, this ordering is based on their statements about their perceptions on the role of interpreters, and their actual performances might vary, as in the case of Komatsu ‘softening’ the prime minister’s talk, or Nishiyama, at times acting with his speaker, the U.S. ambassador, in what he called a ‘duo stand-up comedy’ (see Chapter 6).

### **3. Do interpreters from different settings differ in their perception of role?**

Angelelli (2004a) discovered that the differences in perception of visibility were most significant between medical and court/conference groups, while the differences between the conference and court groups were not significant. She attributes this result to the private and public nature of the settings, explaining a doctor-patient encounter would be more of a private nature with no audience present and with fewer regulated behaviors (pp.72-73).

This result, along with the findings on the previous question that medical interpreters<sup>91</sup> ranked higher on the continuum of perception of visibility than court or

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<sup>91</sup> For the study of medical interpreting, see Angelelli (2004b), Bot (2003), Wadensjö (2001) and Mesa (2000), among others.

conference interpreters, differs from what community interpreters in Japan have to say.

The concept of interpreters as co-participants or their possible role in ‘advocacy’ is a radical notion in Japan, with the norm of neutrality taken for granted in community interpreting, as testified by Mizuno Makiko<sup>92</sup>. According to Mizuno, since community interpreting in Japan has been strongly influenced by the United States code of ethics in court interpreting, the impartiality norm is considered a given, not yet an issue in professional sphere, with academic discussion just emerging<sup>93</sup>. As a practising interpreter and a researcher specializing in community interpreting, Mizuno considers neutrality of paramount importance as the basis for accuracy (personal communication, March 23 and 29, 2006).

Oshimi Takayuki<sup>94</sup>, a medical interpreter, also asserts that in addition to medical knowledge, ‘ethics such as confidentiality and neutrality’ are crucial for medical interpreting, arguing that the basis for medical interpreting is ‘add nothing, subtract nothing, change nothing’ (Yamamoto, *The Asahi Shimbun*, January 24, 2006).

However, the notion of professional ethics varies in different settings, as suggested by a body of current research (Angelelli, 2004a, 2004b; Hale, 2005; Harris, 1990; Hyang-Ok Lim, 2004), especially noticeable between court and business interpreting (Pinkerton, 1996). According to Nagata Sae, for interpreters in Chinese the ultimate purpose of interpreting is more important than the ethics of neutrality or faithfulness,

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<sup>92</sup> Mizuno Makiko is associate professor at Senri Kinran University, chief of the JAIS special interest group for community interpreting, and president of Nihon Eigo Iryo Tsûyaku Kyokai (J.E.=Japan Association for Health Care Interpreting in Japanese/English), established in 2006.

<sup>93</sup> For example, JAIS, the only academic association in Japan devoted to the study of interpreting and translation, held a series of symposia on community interpreting in 2005 and 2006.

<sup>94</sup> Oshimi Takayuki studied medical interpreting in Canada and the U.S., and became a medical interpreter and trainer in Japan. He helped establish J.E. as an executive member.

and for in-house staff interpreters in Japanese-Chinese, it is imperative to give advice on cultural or social matters to facilitate better communication among participants, if necessary, editing inappropriate statements to avoid conflicts, and the criteria for evaluating an interpreter is not based on linguistic competence or interpreting skills, but on the successful outcome of the negotiation (personal communication, March 25, 2006; see elsewhere in 7.5). This is close to what Komatsu introduced as a new type of business interpreters—‘cultural clarifiers.’ With the study of community interpreting fast developing in Japan, it will be interesting to see if shifts occur in the expectations of the role of interpreters.

Also, it would be important to examine if Angelelli’s findings about medical interpreters have anything to do with the amount of professional training received. Hale (2005) argues that ‘studies have been conducted, for the most part, on the practice of untrained interpreters and therefore can only tell us what is happening but not what should be happening’ (p.26). Unlike conference interpreters who are usually educated in training programs, community interpreters ‘are not required to be appropriately trained, registered or in some countries even accredited’ (Hale, 2005, p.16). Respondents in Angelelli’s research likewise show lower percentage of education among community interpreters (5.5% for court and 11% for medical) as compared to conference interpreters (26%). It is true that the issue raised by Hale (2005) could affect the result of the study on interpreters’ perceived notion of their role. In Hale’s view, what is crucial in any argument about role definition is ‘the consequences of the chosen role’ (2005, p.26). Oshimi likewise warns of the consequences, explaining that editing the utterances of patients to make them more logical and easier to understand, for example, might run the risk of doctors overlooking some psychological malaise (Yamamoto, 2006).

In the final analysis, Angelelli (2004a) notes that ‘interpreters in all settings perceived themselves as having some degree of visibility.’ She sees this as meaning to

some extent interpreters perceived that they play a role in building trust, facilitating mutual respect, communicating affect as well as message, explaining cultural gaps, controlling the communication flow, and/or aligning with one of the parties to the interaction in which they participate (p.82). As we have seen, the five pioneers do not necessarily fit this overall picture Angelelli portrayed, although their narratives showed that ‘the settings in which interpreters work place constraints on their behaviors and practices’ (p.82).

#### **7.4.2 Conference interpreters**

Among the findings in Angelelli’s research, of particular relevance for the present study would be the unsolicited comments in the responses to the questionnaire, mostly from conference interpreters who felt the questionnaire did not apply to them (2004a, p.77). Angelelli categorized the data based on three topics: invisibility and neutrality, differences according to settings, and lack of power differential.

##### Invisibility and neutrality

On the question of invisibility and neutrality, Angelelli (2004a) notes that ‘comments underscored complete neutrality on the part of the interpreter’ (p.78), exemplified by such comments as: ‘A conference interpreter has the duty to be completely neutral;’ ‘A consecutive interpreter, doing political work, has to be very careful to be neutral;’ ‘An interpreter at whatever level is invisible’ (pp. 78-79). Citing such comments, Angelelli maintains that the myth of the invisibility and neutrality of the interpreter ‘appears to be real’, and that ‘Even though empirical research in interpreting studies has demonstrated flaws in the conduit model, many practitioners continue to live by unfounded rules’ (2004a, pp.78-79). Alex Krouglov (2004), a diplomatic interpreter and instructor at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in UK, substantiates this view in his description of diplomatic interpreting as observing

‘impartiality,’ ‘invisibility’ and ‘confidentiality.’

It is true that the five interpreters in the study share the general feeling of their counterparts that ‘interpreters take neutrality for granted, seeing it as their duty’ (Angelelli, 2004, p.79). The question here is how they came to feel that way.

In Angelelli’s view, the comments reflect ‘the professional ideology that remains unchallenged and is shared between professional associations and practitioners’ (p.79), implying the interpreters’ perceptions have been dictated by the professional organization’s code of ethics. However, in the case of the five pioneers, they did not receive full-fledged training in interpreting, let alone in professional ethics. Nishiyama and Sohma first tried simultaneous interpreting in 1950, three years prior to the founding of AIIC in 1953. Although all five of them knew about AIIC, they are not members.

More importantly, AIIC presents a code of ethics including confidentiality, but does not discuss the role definition or neutrality (see 2.2). Kondo Masaomi lectures on the professional code of ethics, especially on confidentiality, at least once a year in the post-graduate conference interpreting program he established, and yet he testifies that as a member of AIIC, he does not recall having received any specific instruction from this international professional body on the code of ethics such as neutrality, the role of interpreters or interpreting norms, and remembers hardly any discussion on the issue with European colleagues (personal communication, March 23, 2006).

Nishiyama was impressed observing European interpreters at work, finding that their interpreting principles were basically the same as his own: ‘We don’t listen to the words. We listen to the information.’ Sohma was likewise impressed with the naturalness of interpreting by European conference interpreters, and remembered their advice given mainly on her interpreting performance. Yet, neither of them recalled discussing professional ethics.

The three interpreters trained at the U.S.Department of State testified that the



nominal training they received was either very basic exercises or general knowledge on the United States. Many of their trainers were not even interpreters themselves. In fact, the only professional Muramatsu recalled was a diplomatic interpreter in French, who mainly told them about delivery and performance.

Kondo, who was trained later in the same program, from the summer of 1963 to the autumn of 1964, likewise did not recall any instructions given on impartiality or neutrality during the 3-week training at the U.S. Department of State. Notwithstanding, in his interpreting at ILO conferences, what was utmost on his mind was to convey the speaker's message as best as he could, accurately conveying the points of the criticisms when the Japanese government was criticized, believing it his duty to serve Japan's ultimate interest, if not to its immediate benefits (personal communication, March 22-24, 2006).

Kondo's statement is fundamentally in accordance with the evidence in the study. Without explicit instruction or mandate from professional institutions, the pioneers uphold neutrality and impartiality as the guiding principle for their interpreting. The narratives of the pioneers in Japan suggest, then, that there should be something more involved in formulating interpreters' beliefs, and that their perception of the professional norm of neutrality is not simply imposed by a code of ethics prescribed by professional organizations. The interpreters' role, including professional ethics and norms, is certainly much more complex than it seems.

#### Differences according to settings

Angelelli reports that conference interpreters 'seem to feel that the booth shelters them from the three-party communicative process and that they are not actually an essential participant to this process' (2004a, pp.79-80), which in her view is contradictory to what they state about their job 'to facilitate communication' (p.80), and she wonders, 'How can an interpreter facilitate communication without interacting

with clients?’ (p.80). To this, the probable answer from most of the conference interpreters would be, ‘How can we interact, when we are interpreting simultaneously in a booth?’ The problem here seems to be that the term ‘interaction’ is conceptualized differently by the researcher and the respondents.

To many simultaneous interpreters working in a booth, separated from the speaker, it is almost natural for them to feel that it is physically impossible to ‘interact’ with their clients. In the simultaneous mode of interpretation, they cannot afford the time, for example, to ‘interrupt an interpretation to educate the parties on cultural differences’ (Angelelli, 2004a, p.104) or ‘to present my own voice during the interaction’ (p.105). This does not mean, however, that conference interpreters do not try to facilitate communication. They do, as was testified by life stories of the five pioneers. However, as Komatsu stated, even though he and his team of interpreters were treated as ‘insiders’ by the Japanese delegation, participating in briefings, ‘interacting with clients,’ once they started interpreting, they did their best to stay ‘objective’ and ‘neutral’ with the aim of facilitating communication between the two parties. While Komatsu added that in community interpreting, some kind of intervention might be called for, he made it clear that in conference interpreting, ‘it’s a taboo,’ and that conference interpreters must be faithful to the ‘source language text.’

#### Awareness of power differentials

On the final point of lack of awareness regarding power differentials between interlocutors, Angelelli (2004a) notes that some conference interpreters appear to be unaware of power differentials between the interlocutors with whom they work and that to them, heads of state are heads of state, regardless of whether the country is in the first or third world, concluding that ‘communication does happen in a social vacuum for these respondents’ (p.80).

With the pioneers in Japan, they were clearly aware of the social factors or power

differentials taking place in communication, as was demonstrated in the strong reaction of Sohma when she scolded her daughter for her interpreting of a speech by a delegate from South Vietnam. When Komatsu was interpreting for the negotiations aimed at the return of Okinawa, or when Nishiyama was interpreting for an agricultural meeting between the two countries, Japan obviously had less power, confronting the powerful United States, and it is hard to imagine that Japanese interpreters were unaware of the power differentials, practising their interpreting work in a 'social vacuum.' The reality, judging from the narratives, would be, they were well aware of the power differentials, and yet despite their awareness of social factors, they tried their best to remain neutral.

#### Conference and court

One final issue is worth studying here, which is to do with the difference between conference and court interpreters. Angelelli (2004a) found that statistically significant differences existed between the two in 'communication rules' and 'culture.' The results are attributed to the differences between the dialogic or monologic nature of settings, assuming that court interpreters, with 'more frequency of interactions' than conference interpreters, 'may have to set more communication rules and take into account interlocutors' cultural backgrounds' (p.73).

This raises a fundamental question of what is meant by the word 'dialogic.' As cautioned earlier in Section 7.1, it is necessary to remember that when Bakhtin discusses dialogism, he is not simply talking about dialogues between interlocutors as in conversation. Dialogism for Bakhtin is 'a constant interaction between meanings' (1981, p.426), the speech experience of each individual in the broadest sense, something that is in 'continuous and constant interaction with others' individual utterances' (1986, p.89), and therefore, our speech, or our utterances, are 'filled with others' words, with varying degrees of otherness or varying degrees of

“our-own-ness” ’ (p.89).

In other words, when the dichotomy proposed by Wadensjö (1998) is discussed, differentiating monologic ‘talk as text’ from dialogic ‘talk as social activity,’ drawing on Bakhtin’s dialogism, we should not confuse it with monologic nature of conference interpreting as opposed to dialogue interpreting.

Rather, it can be argued that even when conference interpreters are interpreting for a speech or a lecture, a monologue, not a dialogue, it is not isolated from dialogism in Bakhtin’s sense, that however monologic the utterance may be, it is filled with ‘dialogic overtones’ (1986, p.92), related to the past utterances by others, at the same time affected by subsequent and anticipated responses by addressees, carrying ‘*dialogic reverberations*’ (p.94). Bakhtin notes that what is written or what is spoken, by one individual ‘reflects not just this person’s consciousness, but it invokes also the perspectives and voices of the diversity of other consciousnesses, from different cultures and times’ (p.18). If that is the case, we can surmise that interpreters in any setting, whether at conferences or courts, are placed in the middle of such complex interaction of people’s stories, texts, and utterances, working on the ‘multiple voices by which languages live and develop’ (p.18).

## 7.5 Conclusion

This chapter studied interpreting as a practice from four different aspects, synthesizing what has been learned from the narratives of the five interpreters with theoretical considerations.

Firstly, the distinction between written translation and oral interpretation was revisited, and it was argued that in terms of ‘interpretation’ (understanding and comprehension) of the source text, there is no fundamental difference between the two, and that interpreters ‘interpret’ the message as a text in the same manner as translators

do, the only difference being the orality of interpreting.

Orality as a salient feature of interpreting, then, was discussed in the second section, drawing on Walter Ong. It was indicated that some of the characteristics of orality help interpreting practice, such as the redundancy of orally based thought and speech, and orality as mnemonic aids to help restore and retrieve memory.

When viewed in terms of orality and literacy, vast differences were found between interpreting and translation. While literacy distances the writer from the reader, oral speech occurs here and now, with communicative interaction between the speaker and the listener. In this respect, it is concluded that interpreting is by and large an oral phenomenon, with obvious proximity with literacy in the secondary oral culture which we inhabit today.

It was also confirmed that the present project is fundamentally oral, studying oral interpreting, using oral history as a method, trying to recall and revive the memories of interpreters, in the hope that interpreting will be studied further as an oral form of human phenomenon.

The third consideration was the cultural issues for interpreters, and Milton Bennett's cultural sensitivity model, adapted by David Katan, was used for analysis, which turned out to be more suited to trainees than to established professional interpreters. On the other hand, the analysis of Michael Byram's list of components to form intercultural competence showed that the five subjects in the study are indeed intercultural specialists, despite their outward reluctance to discuss culture as a distinct topic. Both models should be useful in assessing the cultural readiness and awareness of interpreters and there is clearly potential for using the models in interpreter training.

Finally, in-depth analysis was carried out on Claudia Angelelli's Interpreters Interpersonal Role Inventory, leading into some inherent issues concerning the role of interpreters. Angelelli challenged the language conduit-invisible model of the interpreter, and argued that all parties to a conversation work together to construct and

generate the meaning. Although the pioneers perceived their roles as more or less invisible, with different shades of opaqueness, their narratives testified that, in practice, they were indeed essential partners in intercultural communication. When they did not step in to overtly mediate as co-constructors of the interaction, it was their autonomous decision based on their own judgment. Perhaps Muramatsu best summarized the pioneers' sentiments when he said that the interpreter as *kurogo*, 'should not dance himself in the limelight. He can, however, help an actor on stage, by adjusting the hemline.'

The discussion in this chapter on the critical issues of interpreting, weaving the oral evidence of the pioneers with theoretical implications, will be followed by the final chapter to conclude the thesis. Chapter 8 will explore some future perspectives, based on the insights gained in the previous chapter, in an attempt to obtain an enhanced understanding of interpretation as a profession, and as a field of study.

## Chapter 8 Perspectives

The present study was undertaken to explore the presence of pioneer interpreters in Japanese contemporary history as individuals, feeling their own feelings, saying their own words. For this purpose, life-story interviews were conducted to listen to their voices—their own voices, not somebody else’s—and to see them for what they are, not as somebody ‘slipping into the skin of the man who was speaking, feeling his feelings saying his words’ (Mydans, 2005), but as somebody with his/her own determination, will, and aspirations.

In the final chapter to conclude the study, the findings will be reviewed, particularly the remaining questions, generated in the previous chapter, concerning the role of interpreters, suggesting areas for further exploration.

The narratives of the five interpreters revealed that their respective *habitus* was indeed varied, as well as their field of interpreting. Their practice of interpreting as socially situated communicative events, not surprisingly, differed significantly from one person to another, from one interpreted event to the other. As a consequence, their perceptions about their interpreting work varied with subtle individual differences. While Nishiyama was firm on the importance of the ‘transparency’ of interpreters, Komatsu was not so sure about their invisibility, and felt interpreters were more like ‘visible machines.’ Muramatsu, on the other hand, insisted interpreters remain ‘*kurogo*,’ possibly permitted to adjust the hem of the main players, but nothing more, and try as best as they could to feel the speaker’s feelings and say his words. To Sohma, what was of utmost importance for interpreters was to do the work as ‘calling’ with empathy with the speaker. Kunihiro admitted having acted as ‘principal’ in Goffman’s term, which he labeled ‘*keren* interpreting,’ making it clear that it was by no means orthodox, and that he deviated from the norm. Although the pioneers invariably expressed the need to conform to the prescribed norm, their perceptions of

what the norm entailed varied, and their narratives testified that each interpreter in each interpreted event engaged in a unique practice, adjusting to varied social constraints and settings.

Here, what Gouanvic (2005) states about translation can be applied to interpretation as well:

Translation as a practice has little to do with conforming to norms through the deliberate use of specific strategies; in other words, it is not a question of consciously choosing from a panoply of available solutions. Norms do not explain the more or less subjective and random choices made by translators who are free to translate or not to translate, to follow or not to follow the original closely. If a translator imposes a rhythm upon the text, a lexicon or a syntax that does not originate in the source text and thus substitutes his or her voice for that of the author, this is essentially not a conscious strategic choice, but an effect of his or her *habitus* [...]. (p.158)

Interpreters unintentionally testified in their narratives that notwithstanding their perceived norms, in practice, they made their own creative strategic choices, sometimes foreignizing, at times domesticating, changing their footing in their role as animator, author, and even principal, depending on the nature of the communicative event they are involved in. The interpreters made seemingly 'subjective and random choices' in their interpreting strategies, which, according to Gouanvic (2005), is 'an effect of his or her *habitus*.'

While their perceived role of interpreters varied, one thing is clear. There is no denying that the place of an interpreter is that of a third party, 'the man in the middle,' or an 'in-between' presence. Wadensjö thus proposed a 'dialogic, interactionistic perspective' (1998, p.80) in interpretation studies, because as a third party, the



presence of an interpreter always exerts some influence and affects the communication process (ibid., p.64). At the same time, as a third party, it is almost inevitable that an interpreter participates in an interaction, becoming part of 'triadic exchanges' (Mason, 2001) or a 'communicative *pas de trois*' (Wadensjö, 1998), in a cultural Third Space (Bhabha, 1994). We have seen from the narratives of the interpreters that the practice of interpreting as interaction is never self-contained, and as a socially situated practice, interpreting cannot be considered in isolation from the constraints of the settings in which it occurs (Angelelli, 2004a p.83).

It seems unrealistic, then, to try to find some universal criteria for interpreting practice or to envisage some sort of a model for the interpreter's role. There are, however, three questions that need to be addressed here.

Firstly, granted the importance of considering the interpreter's role as a co-participant in triadic exchanges, how do we actually introduce this theoretical framework into the field? To analyze and study the interpreter's role as a co-participant in an interaction is one thing. To materialize it in actual performances or in interpreter training is quite another. As Hale (2005) aptly points out, the studies conducted can tell us what is happening, but 'not what should be happening' (p.26). Undoubtedly, interpreting as a profession, just as any profession, needs some basic point of reference for the interpreters' role. What, then, would be a fundamental standard of behaviour for interpreters, if any? Is the unquestioned 'honest spokesperson' (Harris, 1990) the only universal norm for the profession?

The second question is related to the first one, only more difficult to answer. How do interpreters come to perceive and internalize invisibility and neutrality as their norm in the first place? Shlesinger (1989) similarly poses a basic question and asks: do interpreters (whether for a given language combination, or in a given country, or universally) attempt to follow some shared model of performance shaped by a set of norms which they have internalized (p.114)?

In the field of translation, Lawrence Venuti (1995) documented the historical invisibility of translation and translators, and Michael Cronin (2003) found that the invisibility of translators has changed and translators have become more visible in recent decades (p.43).

In the interpreting field, the situation is somewhat different. Although similarly the active presence of the interpreter has been at issue recently, in earlier days, the norms and ethics in current use did not exist. For example, in the case of interpreters in the New World in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, their performances were far from being invisible or neutral. Doña Marina, sometimes called Malinche, is a case in point. It is reported that Malinche was always in the company of Hernán Cortés, interpreting for his benefit, acting as his informant, which in the end led her to be perceived as ‘the ultimate traitor, the collaborator who betrayed the indigenous peoples of the New World to the Spaniards’ (Karttunen, 1994, p.2; Baker, 2001, xv), to such an extent that in Mexico the word ‘Malinchista’ is a term to abuse and used to refer to someone who sells out or betrays a cause (Baker, 2001, xv). To be sure, Doña Marina, as ‘La Lengua (‘the interpreter,’ literally meaning ‘the tongue’)’ (Karttunen, 1994, p.4), is an exceptional case—given away to Cortés, becoming his mistress, posthumously appearing in Mexican dance-dramas, sometimes fusing with Cortés, or in other dances becoming one face of a two faced-mask, the other side that of Cortés. Clearly, there is no professionalism in her interpreting in the modern sense, hence not exactly an appropriate case to consider as an example.

Then what about the Nagasaki *tsūji*, who were professional interpreters and translators? As we have seen in the history of interpreting in Japan (see Chapter 3), neutrality was never the norm for interpreters in Nagasaki. They were first and foremost government employees and their ethical and professional norm was to be loyal to the Tokugawa Shogunate.

On the contrary, the pioneer conference/diplomatic interpreters in post-war Japan

evidently value neutrality in their interpreting. How did they come to perceive neutrality or impartiality as their professional norm? Shlesinger likewise asks whether the norms have been ‘learned through the observation of colleagues’ performance or through the assimilation of prescriptive writings and the teachings of mentors (1989, p.114). Partly in answer to this question, Kondo remembers a U.S. Department of State training session, where a veteran Japanese-English interpreter acting as an instructor recounted an episode in his career. At a bilateral meeting, the Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs made a long statement, and when it was translated into English, the chief U.S. delegate glared at the interpreter and shouted, ‘What the heck is he trying to say?’ The interpreter did not respond to the American delegate but rendered his words calmly into Japanese. He explained to his trainees that ‘It’s his job to “interpret” the message of the Japanese Minister. I am not going to do that for him.’ Kondo has taken this to be an abiding principle to observe (personal communication, March 29, 2006).

With the five pioneer interpreters, it is clear they did not receive any explicit instruction on professional ethics and norms (see Chapter 7). The only possibility then would be what Shlesinger (1989, p.114) suggests, that they either learned through the observation of colleagues’ performances, as did Nishiyama and Sohma, or through the teachings of mentors, as was verified by Kondo, or simply learned it on the job.

Wadensjö (1998) offers an insightful observation that it is ‘in the self-interest of interpreters to be impartial’ (p.64). It is true that interpreters today generally avoid siding with one or the other party, trying to stay neutral, which might substantiate Wadensjö’s claim. Kondo, for one, comments that remaining impartial and staying more on the linguistic plane is a way of saving himself as a freelancer, since offering his own interpretation of the speaker’s intention might be too risky (personal communication, March 30, 2006).

Toury (1995) explains that the act of translation (and supposedly interpreting as well) is interactional in its very nature, involving environmental feedback (p.248), and

this ‘feedback that a translator receives is normative in essence’ (p.249). Toury reminds us that ‘the notion of norm involves that of *sanctions*’ (1995, p.249, emphasis in original). According to Toury, under normal circumstances, translators as human beings would wish to avoid negative sanctions on improper behaviour as much as obtain the rewards which go with a ‘proper’ one (p.249). The novice, thus, as emerging translators (and interpreters), undergoing such socialization process, gradually internalize norms (p.250).

The third point at issue is, if interpreters, as Wadensjö noticed, ‘sometimes pride themselves on “disappearing” in the background’ (1998, xi), the question arises as to how they come to value invisibility. For as Sohma confided, ‘becoming an interpreter is difficult,’ because you have to ‘abandon yourself.’ Undoubtedly, it can be painful for highly motivated and intelligent people to compromise their identity and let one’s self disappear. While none of the five pioneers mentioned having experienced identity crisis, three admitted having wished to give up the profession at some stage in their life. Most notably, Kunihiro confessed that in the height of his career, he started to feel a strong urge to ‘sing my own song,’ a cry for his own identity.

Cronin (2003) points out that ‘translators are generally accorded the grace of invisibility but whether this is necessarily sanctifying is a question that translators and theorists have asked more and more’ (p.64). Would the situation be different, then, if interpreters were freed from the prescribed norms and ethics and became visible co-constructors in an interaction? If in some situations as in community settings visibility is called for, invisibility may not be something innate, or an inevitable prerequisite to the profession. If so, would the projected and perceived identities of interpreters be different?

The questions raised are certainly not easily answered. Nevertheless, they merit attention, indicating the need for further study. In the meantime, I shall introduce Goffman’s notion of the ‘front’ and revisit the Japanese theatrical presence of *kurogo*,

in the hope of finding some clue in defining the role of interpreters.

Goffman (1959) talks about the mask which represents the conception people have formed of themselves as 'the role we are striving to live up to' (p.19) and notes that 'in the end this becomes second nature and an integral part of our personality' (pp.19-20). Goffman here discusses the presentation of self in everyday life, and yet his argument offers us an invaluable insight into the interpreter's presentation of their role, and their 'front,' another of Goffman's terms, referring to the part of the individual's performance which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion in a given setting. It is significant also that Goffman makes dramaturgical references in his discussion of participant's presentation of the activity (1959, p.15) or makes an analogy with a theatrical performance in explaining performances in everyday life (pp.73-74.). It is particularly interesting when reminded that, in Japan, the interpreter's performance is usually described as that of *kurogo* (see Chapter 1), and the pioneers mentioned it often in their discussion of the interpreters' role. Hence, it might be worthwhile here to revisit the role of *kurogo*, and think that when interpreters act in interpreting, they put on their black gear or 'front' and perform the part of *kurogo*, a stage coordinator.

As indispensable participants in *kabuki* theatre, *kurogo* appear on stage, fully versed in the drama, assisting the actors with props or costumes. They are not supposed to be seen. And yet, what is important and oftentimes overlooked is that they are not exactly invisible; and never transparent. They do not assert their presence, and yet, their work is very much visible to the audience. Interpreters likewise are indispensable participants, not meant to be seen, but they are certainly not transparent nor invisible. There is no denying that their presence is visible, with some possible effect on communicative interactions. At the same time, it is also true that interpreters are never principal actors or dancers themselves. Just like *kurogo*, interpreters are there not to dance in the limelight, but to help the dancers perform their dance beautifully and successfully.

Indeed, the role of interpreters is a sensitive one. So what are we to do? To help define the role of interpreters in the future, Cronin's view on translators is essential for interpreters as well. Cronin argues:

Thus, it is by revealing, not disguising, their identity as translators that translators can make a legitimate bid to make more central interventions in culture, society and politics. To do this involves, of course, changing purely restrictive and instrumental views of translation practice and educating wider society as to what translators both know and can do. There is little chance of this happening, however, if translators and their educators do not also embrace a broader conception of the task of the translator. [...] Translators like any other group of professionals in the social and human sciences are distinguished among each other not by what they must do but what they can do. (Cronin, 2003, p.67)

Cronin (2003) states elsewhere that foresight and imagination are two attributes of human language that make change possible (p.27), and different languages provide human beings 'with access to many different kinds of understanding and these are likely to be the basis for more complex, flexible responses to challenges and opportunities' (p.74). We should always remember that translators and interpreters, as experts in human language, are able to 'offer the potential for access to these varieties of understanding' (p.74). Positioned in-between, articulating the 'betweenness' (Maier, 1995, p.23), interpreters are there to contribute in a 'Third Space' (Bhabha, 1994, p.36), in the act of communication between two people, between I, the self, and You, the other. This by no means is an easy task, but one that is critical for diversity to be sustainable in a truly multicultural and multilingual world.

To conclude, the narratives of the five pioneers demonstrated that an interpreter is

not simply an invisible linguistic conduit, but is an intercultural communication specialist and coordinator, facilitating and mediating intercultural encounters. Interpreters play the role of *kurogo*, but their role is quite an autonomous one, ingenious and creative, with their own insight, judgment and decision-making, with their individual empathy, passion and determination. In that sense, it may well be concluded that the interpreters' presence as *kurogo* is definitely beyond invisibility, and beyond anonymity.

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