



A fair-trade translation of David Epston in Tokyo: Reminiscing about the vision-clouding typhoon

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The only certain thing is that translating for David Epston's two-day workshop in Tokyo (March 25/26, 2017) was like a vision-clouding typhoon. It arrived without warning and out of nowhere in the middle of a peaceful, sunny afternoon. It stirred up everything around me, including seemingly-settled sediments, without giving me sufficient time to understand what was exactly clouding my vision.

Then the typhoon disappeared, allowing my peaceful, sunny afternoon to resume. Immediately afterwards, I was asking myself, "What just happened? Was that even real?" Although I still haven't been able to put that typhoon-like experience in to a presentable perspective at all, David encouraged me to "reminisce about the stages" that I ended up going through in order to somehow achieve our shared vision of what we came to refer to as 'Japanesing a workshop' and also to share my 'journey so far.'

So, I would like to begin with my sincere forewarning that the story I'm about to tell now won't have any extraordinary climax or conclusion. Just as there are multiple versions of story-telling in *Rashomon*¹, this is nothing more than my version of the story and not 'the fact' or 'the truth' of it. In doing so, my hope is that this story-telling can contribute in some small ways to generating further conversations about re-imagining and re-inventing more socio-politically-fitting *local* versions of narrative therapy, outside the box of the more familiar Auckland/Adelaide versions.

It all began in the middle of the night on December 31, 2016. I was walking up the steep snow-covered hiking trail on a mysteriously beautiful mountain. My heart was full of excitement and hopes for what I was about to encounter because seeing *hatsuhinode*, the first sunrise of the year, from the summit of a mountain had been my small-scale dream that I had been somehow procrastinating doing for the last several years. Seeing *hatsuhinode* from the summit of any mountain is also culturally associated with bringing good luck in the coming year.

The *hatsuhinode* was more mesmerizing than just beautiful. What also welcomed us on the top of the mountain were 200 bowls of hot delicious *ozouni* (the traditional soup dish prepared for New Year's celebration) cooked and served by a small group of mountain-lovers in their 50s and 60s.

It blew my mind when I learned that they had carried on their backs all of the heavy pots and fresh ingredients required to make this soup; and did so in the middle of a cold and dark night to feed the hikers who were strangers to them. But what made us not too 'strange' to each other was that each of us had our own particular hopes and anticipation for what witnessing *hatsuhinode* might possibly bring to our new year. I was

¹ Rashomon is a Japanese film directed by Akira Kurosawa in 1950. The film depicts the rape of a woman and the murder of her samurai husband through the widely differing accounts of four witnesses, each of who provides subjective, sometimes self-serving, and mutually contradictory versions of the same incident. (Rashomon, n.d.)





touched and inspired by the humble and unspoken manner of the mountain-lovers in the way they undertook such a caring act of sharing. It made me feel truly glad about my decision to repatriate myself in May 2015 after living in Canada for the previous twelve years.

After descending from our long *hatsuhinode* hike, my friend and I decided to take a late morning nap in a parking lot of a friendly convenience store in the countryside. Being hugged by the morning sunshine, I delightfully began snoozing.

‘Ding!’ here comes my email. The sound of my smartphone brought us right back to the everyday, electronic reality. My friend joked, “Who could possibly be typing on a computer on New Year’s morning!” I lazily tapped my smartphone, with my eyes still half closed. “Holy shit, it’s David Epston!” I exclaimed with my eyes wide open. Why in the world would David contact me on New Year’s morning seemingly out of nowhere? The last time we had met was in Adelaide in 2014 when I was finishing up my MA in Narrative Therapy and Community Work.

To my amazement, he was asking me if I might be willing to translate for his upcoming workshop in Tokyo. During my remaining sleepless nap hours, I thought about a million reasons to say ‘Yes, of course!’ and another million excuses to politely say, ‘Ohhh I wish I could but unfortunately...’ After all, I knew nothing about translation and I certainly didn’t want to mess up the very first workshop David would have ever given in Japan! That would just be too much weight to bear on my shoulders! However, I couldn’t help wondering, “But what if this invitation was a good-luck gift from finally seeing *hatsuhinode*?”

I also had a reasonable suspicion about who might be pulling the strings behind the scene, tempting me to say “No” to David. The name of the problem is the Failure Voice (FV), which sometimes shows up and sleekly talks me out of taking up important new challenges by convincing me that my lack of skills will be exposed and ruin important matters and relationships in the end although FV is usually bluffing.

Since I picked up on some of the familiar tricks of FV, I immediately asked my dear colleague, Amy in Toronto, to interview me on Skype about FV’s recent attempts against me. This resulted in my decision to boldly ‘out’ FV to David. I wanted to be fair to David and workshop participants because I knew that the FV can turn into a major liability. David humorously replied: “FV surely has suffered by you doing so (outing FV)! I am so glad you have entrusted this with me as we will together see to it that FV will be truly unmasked as fraudulent when all this is over.” As to my serious concern about my lack of experience in translation, he repeatedly emphasized that:

“I am not after a seamless translation... I am after you re-creating my words in your language and culture.”

He also mentioned that:

“Only a poet can translate a poet...Did you know that almost all translations of Japanese haiku in English have been translated by poets.....so I needed a poet, not some random prof of English to





translate my poetic misuse of English in what has come to be called an externalizing conversation...”

Although at that time I did not yet understand the significance of what David meant by “*re-creating* my words”, it took enough weight off my shoulders to have me agree to give this a shot together.

Since that New Year’s ‘ding’ on my smartphone, David and I corresponded back and forth every day for the next three months planning our translated workshop together. This correspondence was far from what I might have expected, such as the sharing of PowerPoints and workshop outlines. Rather it was more like the exchanging and merging of each other’s spirits through stories.

Later on, I caught a glimpse, from a distance, of the overwhelming amount of the travels and large-scale presentations that David was engaged in all over the world. I asked him how he can possibly manage all the workload and pressures of presenting in such large-scale workshops, David commented:

“I have a commitment and passion to ‘speak’ and demonstrate narrative therapy as much and as far away as I can with the time and energy I have left to me.”

His words vividly lingered in my heart. Imagining the unimaginable depth of his friendship with Michael White and the unimaginable meaning of what “the time and energy left to me” meant to him. Recognizing the extremely precious weight of what I was just asked to take part in, I remember feeling humbled and making a promise with myself to give *everything I have* to make this workshop as close as possible to the workshop that he envisioned at this particular point of his journey.

To help me better understand what he meant by “*recreating* my words,” David introduced me to Marcela Polanco’s “Language Justice: Narrative therapy on the fringes of Columbian magical realism” (2016) and his “Mumbai plenary address” (2016a) and Re-imagining narrative therapy: A history for the future” (2016b). This was my first introduction to the idea of domesticating and foreignizing translations as well as re-imagining and re-inventing narrative therapy. I started to understand the significance of David’s use of the word ‘*re-create*’, instead of ‘translate’ as his committed refusal to Macdonaldizing² ways of teaching narrative therapy (Epston, 2016a), in other words, striving to make the ultimate right recipe available through manualizing every step and technique so that it doesn’t lead to unwanted diversity and inconsistency. And I saw this as his desire to purposefully leave enough room for learners to re-imagine and re-invent their own *local* versions of narrative therapy. I still vividly remember the shocking moment when I read Marcela’s words:

“I was doing a domesticating translation, which was literal, concerned for fidelity and to remain pure to Michael’s original text. I consumed ‘maps’ like a MacDonald’s burger. I was dismayed to realize

² In Mumbai Plenary Address (Epston, 2016a) David Epston tells a story about a student who completed a degree in Hamburgerology at Hamburger University in the United States, which requires students to successfully learn how to “provide instruction to would be employees on how to make a Macburger, so that a Shanghai Macburger was absolutely identical to one made in New York; a Macburger in Mumbai was absolutely identical to one made in Berlin. And if she faltered or had not memorized her script word for word, she would have been failed.”





that I was engaging in the ‘whitening of my identity’ without any reference to the geopolitics of knowledge and political disparities.”

Even before reading Marcela’s words, I was aware that I had been suffering for some time from an undeniable itchiness but never knew exactly where to scratch. I had been stung in a very covert and unexpected place such as between my fingers or on the sole of the foot. Marcela’s words helped me finally suspect the approximate area that might need more scratching.

My first story: A bitter experience of a self-translation project

At the end of my master’s program, I submitted my dissertation in English about co-researching the ‘*hikikomori*’ problem (Ishikawa, 2014). The ‘*hikikomori*’ problem is especially prevalent in Japan but is an internationally growing social phenomenon whereby people don’t come out of their rooms for months, years, or sometimes even decades with no or little social interactions outside their home. Since I was still living in Canada at the time of conducting this co-research and already planning to move back to Japan, I had collected insider knowledges from *hikikomori* insiders across different geographical, cultural and generational backgrounds in order to question the popular practice of decontextualizing the ‘*hikikomori*’ phenomenon and pathologizing *hikikomori* individuals.

Since I had put my whole-hearted efforts in to this project, I could not wait to translate my dissertation and share it with other *hikikomori* insiders, their families, friends and other professionals as soon as I returned to Japan. However, once I started translating my own paper into Japanese, my native tongue, I could not feel the lively spirit of the writer –in this case, myself! – in the translated version. It was such a disconcerting and even shame-evoking experience. What felt to me to be so genuine when thinking and writing in English, all of a sudden turned into something so distant, foreign, illegitimate and inexplicable in my native tongue. I had this intolerable thought that my knowledge and beliefs written in English might have been possibly a mere product of ‘*seiyo-kabure*’ (a derogatory term for those who have an insatiable desire to assimilate to or admiration for Euro-American culture, practice and knowledge). This left such a bad taste in my mouth that I had no choice but to end my self-translation project rather abruptly in autumn of 2015.

My second story: ‘Yikes... is this still narrative therapy?!’

When I returned to Japan and started practicing narrative therapy in Japanese more actively in February 2016, I remember that the Euro-Americanized part of me was asking my favorite ‘go to’ Euro-American spirited questions, with a superficial flavour of Japanese text. The Japanese part of me was listening to myself asking such questions and shaking her head saying, “You *know* that your Euro-American spirited questions won’t reach Japanese people’s hearts!” I realized that my Euro-Americanized questions in my head had unknowingly turned into a way to assure myself that I wasn’t off the track of an English version of narrative therapy. This realization left me with no choice but to stop translating Euro-American spirited English questions in my head in to Japanese. At this point, the only guiding spirits for me were radical playfulness, mischievous subversion, the love of adventure and narrative therapy’s





uncompromising ethics. This was also where the spirits of narrative therapy meet my own living spirits that are well-grounded in my mother tongue, mother worldview, mother culture, and my history with family, friends and ancestors in my homeland.

Strangely enough, it was no longer a daunting task of having to translate magical English questions into equally magical Japanese text. It was rather like an exciting tightrope act made particularly challenging on account of a fresh wind. My focus was to keep my balance on the tightrope, which was made out of the fine line where the spirits of narrative therapy meet the spirits of my own. As the wind caught the rope and it began to swing, questions were generated spontaneously and creatively in response to my attempt to stay balanced on the tightrope. I sometimes landed on some unheard of but somehow strangely familiar questions that had me questioning my fidelity to Adelaide/Auckland versions of narrative therapy, thinking (to myself with nervous laughs) in company with my nervous laughter, “Yikes! Is this still narrative therapy?!” I was feeling as though I was veering off the right track and creating an illegitimate version of narrative therapy practice.

After reading several more of Marcela’s published papers distinguishing between domesticating and foreignizing translations, I felt like I was finally finding some of the missing key pieces of a giant jigsaw puzzle. Regarding my ‘hikikomori’ thesis, I started wondering to myself, “Maybe I was doing a domesticating translation of my own paper”, Being so concerned about my fidelity to the original text in English, as if the words themselves contained the magic. Because I had been holding on to the English text that I spoke in my own co-research paper too tightly, the guiding spirits of the co-research had ended up slipping through my fingers. I was horrified when I realized that I had, in fact, been applying this domesticating translation to my own Japanese way of seeing, caring, expressing, and crafting narrative therapy questions that centre around moving Japanese people’s hearts and lives. So then how long had I been doing this?

To my second version, I wanted to say to my nervous ‘yikes’ face, “Hey, that might mean that you just re-invented more culturally resonant text within the particular socio-political context of your conversation! I think that’s worth celebrating!”

In our correspondence discussing the possibility of using David’s transcripts in the workshop, he had this exciting idea:

“Can you imagine how different it will be for the audience to ‘see’ NT performed in Japanese by contrast to a subtitled DVDs???? It is so much closer to their experience...”

To experiment with this idea, I embarked on attempting a foreignizing translation of David’s transcripts to be performed by Japanese actors during the workshop.

Although I now had a solid commitment to somehow or other foreignizing David’s transcripts, I was clueless as to how to go about it. I was fumbling in pitch darkness for something without knowing the exact shape of what I was looking for.





However, just as when I did my *hatsuhinode* hike in the night mountain, I had moonlight dimly shining upon my footing, which was: Marcela's spirit of calling for resisting the temptation to stay faithful to the original text as well as Marcela's vision of "language justice" where "the original text doesn't eat up the culture and language" (Polanco, 2016) of imported-knowledge consumers. David's unwavering faith in my quest was like a protective shield to keep me going through the rough and slippery spots.

Reading Marcela also allowed me to start questioning my previous image of a translator whose skills get praised for being able to leave the content untouched while merely switching text between languages. Instead, I started seeing my role as a translator as playing a political role of a 'knowledge-importer' who has considerable leverage over, in Marcela's words, "language justice that maintains a fair-trade relationship with reciprocity" (as cited in Sax, 2017) between the language and culture of the exporter and that of the importer.

Marcela also stressed that "distancing myself from the fidelity of the obedience to the original text allows us to re-imagine the text. Then the original text and the re-imagined new text become parallel texts, instead of one text into two languages" (as cited in Sax, 2017). This inspired me to see the 'text' as a mere 'meaning-carrier' that is context-specific and no longer carries the same meaning once it is taken out of the original context. In other words, when being translated from one socio-political context to another, the new context inevitably requires a reinvented new 'meaning-carrier' that can better preserve the original meaning that was carried by the original 'meaning-carrier' in the original context. As I had a feeling that magic resides in the meaning, not in the 'meaning-carrier,' this helped me focus on freely and creatively reinventing the 'meaning-carrier'. This allowed me to do so without worrying about spoiling the meaning in order to best preserve the original meaning, even though the reinvented text in the end might not necessarily seem equivalent in the sound, words or length.

With this in mind, I, for the first time engaged in translating David's transcripts as a political act, as a 'knowledge-importer.' Unlike my previous experience of the daunting responsibility of having to translate heavily valued text into the exact equivalent in another language, this time I experienced translation as an enjoyable and creative process. If you happened to walk by me translating David's transcripts, you might have noticed me trying to hold back my giggles or having a mischievous 'up to something' look on my face. I think that reading and re-reading Marcela's paper had set me somewhat free from the pressure to be faithful to every word, and instead allowed me to focus on staying faithful to the spirit and ethics of narrative therapy as creatively as possible in search of the most culturally-fitting expressions that can touch/move Japanese people's hearts and lives. This unpredictable quest ended up slowly unfolding itself into four stages, yielding four different and distinct editions of the translation.

First to Third Edition of My Translation

My initial plan was to ask my colleague Keiko, who although unfamiliar with English or narrative therapy, was very enthusiastic about learning narrative therapy, to read my rough drafts and help me edit them to ensure that they were attuned to the particularities of the epistemological, cultural and linguistic experience of





attendees. And in the precise moment that I needed it, David introduced me to Akari, who currently lives in New Zealand and has an extraordinary linguistic talent, speaking five languages fluently after having lived in eight foreign countries over the last twenty years. She happily agreed to check the expressions and sentence structures in my rough drafts and made a number of thoughtful suggestions for alternative ways to translate. As many of her suggestions were far 'smoother' than my own, I appreciatively adopted them. There were other instances where I intentionally chose to keep the unusual expressions as they were in order to keep the spirits of narrative therapy vividly alive and present, such as the spirits of an 'anti-language' (Halliday, 1976) and 'made-up-ness' which is a term from Rushdie (2014) that "unshackles language from the prison house of words in which godly grammatical conventions confines the doings of language to perform only in naturalistic and unimaginative ways" (as cited in Polanco, 2016). At other times, I retained both Akari's version and mine, letting them sit side by side but now awaiting Keiko's fresh feedback.

Keiko happily spent hours going through the second edition of the transcript with me. My understanding of both English and narrative therapy inevitably restricts my ability to imagine the raw experience of imported-knowledge consumers who are unfamiliar with English nor narrative therapy. Such a crucial process of imagining would not have been possible without Keiko's thorough assistance. Considering that these transcripts would eventually be performed in Japanese during David's workshop, I asked Keiko for detailed feedback on any of the following:

- Grammatically unclear subjects and objects (We often omit subjects and objects in informal Japanese conversation, but then too many omissions can make things unclear);
- Disconnection in the flow of conversation (How did the conversation go from here to there?);
- Uncertainty about the intentions behind David's questions (What is David trying to understand by asking this question at this particular point of the conversation?);
- Parts of the conversation in the script in which it was hard to picture the facial expressions and body movements of the characters (This was particularly crucial because this transcript had to have the quality of a *Japanese* play script for the performing actors to re-create the vivid image of the conversation to the audience).

As I filled Keiko in as much as I could on what was going on in the transcripts, Keiko edited accordingly. This process required us re-inventing culturally more fitting body gestures and facial expressions as well as adding supplementary descriptions, as if we were adding extra pictures into a flip book to create more seamless movement. This version became our third edition of the translation. Where I had retained my version and Akari's versions, Keiko either picked one or the other, or came up with her alternative, inspired by the two previous versions.

4th Edition: The Surprise Baby!

I felt quite satisfied with the third version, recreated with the feedback from Akari and Keiko, and thought that it already had the quality of the final version. As David had suggested that the performers rehearse, Kaori and I were now finally ready to give it a quick rehearsal in distance on Skype. Although





there were many more preparations to be done, David was arriving in Japan in three days! Kaori and I started reading aloud a transcript. She played the role of a 10-year-old girl named Kelly. I played the role of David. As we were trying our very best to be genuinely animated with feelings, we both experienced an undeniable sense of awkward artificiality and forced playfulness in our scripted dialogue. I found this awkward artificiality and forced playfulness vaguely but surely familiar, but I couldn't yet identify. Where I had experienced this before.

Several minutes into our rehearsing, I interrupted my other colleague Kaori and suggested that instead of calling each other Euro-American names, we call each other by our real Japanese names. Although I was still conscious of keeping David's friendly, playful and ethical spirits intact, as soon as I started calling Kaori, 'Kaori-chan' ('chan' is a term of endearment, especially for children), instead of calling her 'Kelly', I could see such vivid differences in Kaori's acting. Her facial expressions were much softer, more spontaneous and even came UP with a ten-year-old-like shy and adorable smile! I, too, experienced the act of addressing her 'Kaori-chan' quite differently. I was now directly seeing the eyes of Kaori and her adorable ten-year-old-like smile and spirit.

When I endearingly addressed her, "Neh (Hey), Kaori-chan?" I could feel that my own spirit now 'meant it'. It no longer took any effort for us to spontaneously laugh, express and read each other's meaningful pauses beyond the scripted lines. The act of Japan-ising names of the characters ended up having such a profound impact on the ways we experienced ourselves in our acting. This was well beyond what we could have imagined in the abstract.

At this point, we were mischievously excited and wanted to 'Japan-ese' *everything* we found foreign-sounding/looking/meaning to our sense of the day-to-day life in Japan! For example, we changed Kelly's 'wonderfulness', Irish/Killkenny humour, to Kaori-chan's wonderfulness, and Osaka humour (Osaka is well-known for its humorous culture, both traditionally and today). We asked Nobu, who is originally from Osaka, to perform the role of Kaori-chan's dad with A strong Osaka dialect and Osaka humour with absolute freedom to 'play around' with his scripted lines to which he happily agreed. Also, we changed Kelly's aunt Sara, who possessed a sense of Irish humour, to Miyoko *obachan* (auntie) who possessed an Osaka-style humour (Miyoko is a woman's name) associated with the nostalgic Showa-era (1926-1989) ERA. Combined with Osaka's loud and funny culture, just those words alone: "Miyoko *obachan* from Osaka" could instantly evoke such culturally vivid characterizations. We also changed the book of 'New Yorker Book of Dog Cartoons' in to a Japanese humorous children's book- 'Jimmy to Boku (Jimmy and Me).' The list of changes we made goes on and on.

Once we gave ourselves permission to re-create our Japan-ised version with a wild imagination, it took us no longer than several minutes to come up with all the ideas for Japan-ised names and settings, which was accompanied by considerable fun and laughter. When Kaori and I rehearsed the fourth edition of the translation, we were relaxed and having fun. Keiko and I enjoyed going through a similar process of 'Japan-ising' the names and settings for other transcripts as well, with similar mischievous giggles on our faces.





Somewhat apprehensive, I reported to David about our eye-opening rehearsal experiences and a whole bunch of edits we ended up making on his transcripts without his permission. This was the encouraging response I got from him:

“Great...Great...you did it, Sumie! You ‘Japan-essed’ it!!!! This is exactly what I was not only hoping for but dreaming about...and you are going to fulfill my dream of a ‘re-created’ version of NZ narrative therapy (as undertaken by me!) Sumie, you no longer need my permission... I handed over to you to ‘conduct’ this transcript the same way a composer must hand over to the conductor how their music is played...so from now on, all you are required to do is tell me what you decide on...You are the authority, not me! And I am glad you are ‘there’ to assume the mantle of such ‘authority’ in your country, in your language, and your culture...”

At the end of rehearsal with Kaori on Skype, I ended up sharing a story with her about why the awkward artificiality and forced playfulness mentioned earlier might have felt so familiar and intolerable to me...

My Third Story: Not Playing ‘Meg’, but Being ‘Meg’

When I was ten, my friend and I attended for a year after school English conversation class. Our American teacher told us to pick an English name and call each other by such names even during our break. I remember happily picking ‘Meg’ for my English name which I took from a beautiful young female character in a popular Sunday dinner time animation based on the novel, *Little Women*, written by Louisa May Alcott in 1868. (As I grew up, many popular TV programs during breakfast/dinner hours were based on Euro-American novels about Euro-American lives in the mid/late 19th century, such as *Little House on the Prairie* by Laura Ingalls Wilder, *A Little Princess* by Frances Hodgson Burnett, and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain). So, it was not only easy for me to pick a favorite English name but even to enjoy *being* ‘Meg’.

When I was twenty and decided to live in Canada, my homestay Mom advised all the homestay students in the house against speaking in our mother tongues, neither in nor outside the home. In addition, we were advised not to make friends from our home countries so that our English skills could improve faster without acquiring an ‘incorrect’ accent. I appreciatively followed her advice and chatted with my Japanese best friend, Haruka, in English even when we were alone and unobserved. In no time, I was surrounded by white friends who would tell me that they could not tell that I was Japanese born because I was so proficient at speaking English. At that time, I thought that was simply a compliment on my linguistic skills, but in retrospect I think what they were noticing was my fine art of *being* ‘Meg’ who found it acceptable to mute my Japanese-ness for a greater cause: to learn ‘correct’ English fast and well.

It took me about seven years to start feeling concerned about the price i was paying for *being* ‘Meg’. First of all, *being* ‘Meg’ clouded my sense of connection with and love for my home country’s worldview, mother tongue, my family, ancestors and all kinds of *kami-sama* (animistic spirits). Secondly, I accepted and internalized the disparity in status between the Euro-American-centric ways and the peripherally-located Japanese ways. This was how my journey of un-learning *being* ‘Meg’ started, and eventually





turned into my increasing yearning to repatriate myself after having lived in Canada for twelve years.

After going through this rather unfamiliar and counter-intuitive process of 'Japan-esting' *everything*, Kaori and I were shocked to realize how accustomed we are to carelessly consuming imported knowledge, literature, music, and films that are literally translated into Japanese, without questioning or even imagining what sorts of spirits and values we might be unconsciously importing and consuming through domesticating translations.

Workshop in Tokyo: Day One

On the first day, regardless of my commitment to a decolonizing translation, there was a degree of pressure to be reasonably obedient to the original text that David spoke, which seemed to cloud my judgement. I remember the silent but nevertheless loud presence of bilingual participants including professors, doctors, psychiatrists, etc. sitting in the front rows. In my imagination I could hear their collective expectations being in sync, expecting me to perform a domesticating translation with dictionary-like precision and loyalty to the text so that I should never miss a word that David spoke. Also, I was probably under the influence of the FV which was trying to convince me that bilingual/non-bilingual enthusiasts are wondering, "How did this girl with no name end up translating David Epstein? Why isn't a more experienced translator translating David? She had better not waste this rare workshop!"

To make matters worse, once I began translating David on the spot, this was so all-consuming of my thoughts and my time that there was no luxurious space in my mind for me to be able to tell whether or not I was really doing a foreignizing translation.

Not only that, I had never ever performed a domesticating translation in front of such a large audience. Not only that, I had never translating anything at all before such a large audience.

And here I was, for the first time in my life, trying to perform a foreignizing translation on the spot in front of the large audience who expected me to deliver a high-quality domesticating translation. It would seem that the FV had plenty material to work with.

As the workshop proceeded, I was gradually feeling less overwhelmed by the text David was speaking. I was noticing more moments when I wished I had translated more freely by adding comments or using more 'Japan-ested' expressions but ended up being too hesitant due to the pressure I felt to stay within the 'cage of language'. However, at the same time, I was also noticing that the cage actually had an unlocked small backdoor if I ever decided to escape from it. At the end of the first day, we had a warm reception.

Although a variety of 'should haves' and 'could haves' were still present in my mind, as pointed out by the FV, to my great surprise, many participants came up to me and commented that they appreciated my "character-ful" translation. They explained that the "warm" and "unpretentious" spirits of narrative





therapy reached their hearts in a way that the “highly academic” and “proper” language that is often used to describe narrative therapy previously hadn’t. Such encouraging comments made me regret that I had reserved my spontaneous temptations to be more playful, flexible, and/or culturally specific during the first day, so I renewed my commitment to be more experimental on the second day.

Workshop in Tokyo: Day Two

David was also very encouraging of me and invited me to reminisce on the second day of the workshop:

“No one has ever done anything like what you contrived to do on the second day. Can you please tell us about what you invented? ...of course, I could not really 'tell' as I could not understand you but what I could do was watch how entranced the attendees were by your 'translation'. Perhaps that is also an inexact word. Perhaps we need another term for what you were doing...”

The second day started rather dramatically. It began with an unexpected apology by the workshop organizers for the lack of precision in my literal translation in response to the complaints received from some of bilingual participants the day before. The apology was followed by another unexpected apology for not being able to find a more qualified translator for this workshop. Although I felt quite upset at that time, in retrospect I can put these apologies in the context of the overwhelming pressure on the workshop organizers’ shoulders to satisfy all the participants, including those who are bilingual, associated with prestigious titles, and expecting a high-quality literal translation.

Being ‘lost in translation’ about what just happened, David started the morning portion of the second day. Although the stirred-up emotions were still vibrating in my heart and mind, David’s same old inquisitive and adventurous eyes and spirits had a strange calming effect on me while translating him. However, after such announcements, it was not surprising to notice the undeniably distrustful gaze from the participants, compared to day one. This time, it surely wasn’t the FV trying to trick me! Their disapproving gaze was quite obvious by now. As soon as I intentionally paused in mid-sentence to try to think outside the ‘cage of language’ to reinvent more foreignized text, my intentional pause was immediately interpreted as a sign of another failure in a timely literal translation.

Consequently, I received a flurry of ‘right answers’ and suggestions from the bilingual people in the room to correct my foreignizing attempts for a domesticating translation. Being introduced and positioned as an inadequately qualified translator, it was difficult for me to openly dismiss these loud ‘aids’ from those who are supposedly more ‘qualified’ in literal translation. As I felt I had no choice but to reluctantly take these suggestions, I began to feel incapable lost, shocked and upset. Over lunch time, however, I managed to put the FV in its place by externalizing my upset-ness and pulled myself together, remembering that David had told me that:

“Only a poet can translate a poet...did you know that almost all translations of Japanese haiku in English have been translated by poets....so I needed a poet, not some random prof of English, to translate my poetic misuse of English in what has come to be called an externalizing





conversation..."

He had also tried to reassure me:

"I know 'down deep' you were one of the few with the audacity, bilinguality and poetry to not only assume this responsibility but to revel in it."

I realized that this is what he had entrusted me with, not my ability to match words 'correctly' like a dictionary.

I also remembered his words:

"I have a commitment and passion to 'speak' and demonstrate narrative therapy as much and as far away as I can with the time and energy I have left to me."

"Given all the preparation we have engaged in...25x more than I have ever spent planning a workshop in my career...but so worthwhile and allowed me to 'figure out' what might be most suitable for the occasion... so I am turning to my plenary addresses, those times you 'imagine' what has gone before and 're-imagine' what might now come of this, especially as narrative therapy 'travels' overseas to other cultures, languages and socio-political circumstances"

Putting in this context the enormous amount of time, effort and heart that I had been witnessing David pouring into this workshop in Japan, it was rather easy to realize that staying in solidarity with David's purpose in coming to Tokyo, was far more important for me than tip-toeing around the risks of receiving MacDonalizing suggestions and criticisms.

After the lunch break, I switched gears. I asked myself, 'What do the spirits of narrative therapy mean to me?' The narrative spirits I'm personally drawn to are the spirits of radical playfulness and exciting adventure, as well as uncompromising spirit of questioning and co-resisting the unfair imposition by various forms of power. So, I set myself the task in the afternoon to try to convey these spirits to the hearts of Japanese people by trying to live them out myself through my imperfect attempts at a foreignizing translation. When I let go of the temptation to somehow come up with the universal version of translation that pleases everybody, it unexpectedly revived my own spirits of loving adventure, mischievousness, fearless subversion and outside-the-box playfulness.

In the afternoon, I had on my side: my revived subversive spirit against dominant discourses that reproduce the 'internalized disparity'(described in *My third story* above) as well as my vivid re-realization that staying in solidarity with David's commitment to "speaking and demonstrating narrative therapy as much and as far away as I can with the time and energy I have left to me" was a far more preferable way of struggling than tip-toeing around the risks of receiving criticisms about my literal translation skills.

As a result, I chose to exit through the unlocked small backdoor of the 'cage of language' that I noticed in





the afternoon of the first day but hadn't yet gone for it. Firstly, when I heard MacDonaldizing suggestions and corrections flying towards me, I no longer felt obligated to take them because even if there was a 'text' equivalent in Japanese, it didn't necessarily hold the same effect in moving or intriguing the hearts of Japanese people.

Instead, I intentionally paused for even a longer period to re-focus on taking the original text beyond the 'cage of language' and tried to find more culturally-relevant descriptions that have equivalent effects in moving or intriguing the hearts of Japanese people, even though that might require much longer descriptions than the length of the original English text that David had spoken. I am sure that it must have also involved translations that were incorrect or messy from a literal translation's point-of-view.

Secondly, to hold myself accountable, I developed a shameless way of asking David to pause and go back to the previous points he has already made, to repeat what he just said, to re-explain what he meant, to check if my understanding was correct all of which are not popularly associated with the typical conduct of 'good' translators. Thirdly, I focused on being loyal to these spirits and decided to be a little bit bolder in re-creating the text of David's speaking.

For example, I spontaneously began adding a summary of what David has said so far, making explicit references to the words/stories that David described earlier whenever necessary, for the purpose of tidying up the inevitable messiness created by my attempt to provide a foreignizing translation. Fourthly, I realized that David has a particular way of telling stories with one key element missing, which successfully has the audience on the edge of their seats by keeping them guessing where this story is possibly going. Because I, too, had no clue about where the story was going, even though I did my best to keep the suspense as alive as possible, when David finally pulled out the last missing piece, at times it didn't quite fit with how I had been setting up the suspense up until then.

If such an unfortunate landing had happened on the first day, I would have left it as 'Oh... if I had known that, I could have set it up better!' On the second day, I had a more shameless way of adding extra descriptions to fill in the gap between David's set-up in English and mine in Japanese, so that audience didn't miss out on the laughs or A-ha moments. As I am listing these four examples of escaping from the unlocked small back door of the 'cage of language', I am realizing that what I attempted to escape from, was not only the 'cage of language,' but also the 'cage of what a translator should be capable of and should be ashamed of when not so capable.' I am beginning to speculate that the legitimacy of each cage is strengthened by each other.

I truly believe that my bolder version of re-creations was only possible because David had always gone the extra mile to make sure that I knew that he fully trusted me throughout our email correspondence and face-to-face communication in Tokyo. David also took pains to patiently and repeatedly explain to the workshop participants that he was not seeking a domesticating translation or MacDonaldizing way of teaching, which allowed me to take a chance and be more audacious and experimental.

The disparity in status between the Euro-American-centric way of being/doing/thinking (e.g. definition of





'happiness', 'freedom', 'success', 'beauty', 'independence') and peripherally-located Japanese way of being/doing/thinking can be internalized so potently and prevalently that it comes up in such subtle and taken-for-granted ways in our everyday conversations. For example, I often see narrative therapy and other therapies of western origin being introduced by those who are in the position of knowledge-importers in ways that covertly imply that Japan is so behind that we should learn from these western approaches that are more scientifically and ethically advanced and effective. It is not surprising that such a discourse creates a popular demand for domesticating translations, especially from enthusiastic learners who are eager to learn therapies of western origin as 'correctly' as possible.

On another occasion, there was a narrative therapy transcript that had been translated with a google-translation-like quality. To me, the translated words were as if Euro-American thinking had been sprayed with an artificial Japanese flavor. I asked my Japanese colleague why there had been no complaints about the hardly understandable quality of such Japanese text. My colleague told me that when learning therapies of western origin, this happens so often that enthusiastic learners inadvertently grow accustomed to such a hardly understandable quality of Japanese in the translated version and are even willing to take on the responsibility of trying to figure out the cultural and linguistic discordance and to fill in the gaps that a domesticating translation could not.

At the end of the two-day workshop, many workshop participants came up to me and mentioned that the quality of my translation culminated on the second day afternoon. Some people even mentioned that they ended up becoming more drawn to narrative therapy after witnessing the spirits of narrative therapy through witnessing the way I rose up from the morning of the second day.

As I am telling this story to you, I am noticing myself putting both the FV-evoking experience of receiving criticism on my lack of literal translation skill as well as my hesitation to *re-create* David's words in the particular socio-political context of the dominant demand for domesticating translations and a MacDonaldizing way of teaching. Moreover, now I see such a dominant demand within the socio-political context of 'internalized disparity' that was in the colour-less and smell-less air that I was breathing in and out on a daily basis while living in/outside Japan. What I breathed in gradually turned into some sort of seemingly-settled sediments in the water, allowing the water to *seem* clear and calm... until this typhoon stirred up all the *seemingly*-settled sediments and instantly clouded my vision and judgements.

Although I do wish that the quality of my foreignizing translation culminated a bit earlier than the afternoon of the second day, in retrospect, I think I needed that excruciating experience in the morning of the second day to set my subversive spirit on fire enough to generate the necessary 'foreignizing momentum' that allowed me to stand back up after lunch. With a still-half-clouded vision, I woke up to my revived subversive spirit to resist tip-toeing around the dominant demand for domesticating translations that is fueled by the 'internalized disparity'. Moreover, my subversive, fearless and uncompromising way of questioning and co-resisting unfair imposition of power is a precious gift handed down in my family transgenerationally.

This means that I can freely tap into the transgenerational accumulation of know-how that are woven





into my history, in my mother tongue and in my mother culture. Similarly, I needed to re-experience that familiar and uncomfortable feeling of *being* 'Meg' while rehearsing the third edition of the translated transcript on Skype because, it, too, generated a 'foreignizing momentum' that was necessary to revive my spirits of mischievous and bold subversion, as well as to reinvent the fourth edition in which all the names and settings became playfully and radically 'Japan-ised.'

In a recent email conversation, David asked me, "What would you call the translation you left behind? What would you call the translation you had arrived at?"

The translation I left behind was a 'kiss-ass translation' or '*kobiru yaku*' in which the knowledge-importer politely plays along with the exporter-centric assumption that their knowledge has universal value and pretends that their knowledge in English only requires a nice and neat literal translation in order for the contents to be truly understood and fully appreciated. As a result, imported-knowledge consumers have to pick up the slack, being left with two choices: to accept the exporter's worldview as universal (as often implied by the knowledge-importer and their advertisement) and consume the MacDonaldised knowledge; or to hold themselves accountable for not being able to fully appreciate the literally-translated contents despite their purported universal values.

The translation that I ended up arriving at would be an 'equivalent-effects translation,' one which is not concerned with maintaining an equivalence in text between the two languages but is concerned with creating equivalence in the moving/intriguing effects on the hearts of the imported-knowledge consumers, however dissimilar the text in each language may seem. 'Equivalent-effects' translation assumes that re-inventing culturally resonant text is a necessary means to generate such equivalent effects.

The most recent update on my 'journey so far' is that I have been engaged in co-learning narrative therapy through an apprenticeship in English since March 2017, for which I have been able to enjoy translating my own transcripts from Japanese, creating equivalence in the moving/intriguing effects on the hearts of the English-speaking imported-knowledge consumers. This time without muting my Japanese-ness or compromising on the fair-trade relationship with equal reciprocity between both languages and cultures of the importer and that of the exporter.

This is not the end of the story because I feel like I only have scratched the surface of an enormous iceberg. Since I have a feeling that this will be only the beginning of a long and winding journey in search for 'fair-trade translation' and 'language justice' (Polanco, 2016), it would make the journey much more enjoyable if there was some company to share our stories of our 'journeys so far' and continuously co-invent and celebrate together the collection of insider wisdoms and know-how from the holders of diverse non-dominant worldviews, socio-political locations, languages and values in the world.





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