

# A Contrastive Study of English Movie Titles Translated into Japanese

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Generally, it may be difficult for Japanese speakers to speak or write English just like native speakers of English. I seek to find out the cause of this difficulty. It is well known that one's way of speaking is closely related to a way of thinking which is largely connected to cultural practices.

We have a long history of study dealing with the relationships of language, thought and culture. It was Karl Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767 – 1835) who proposed the idea that language has its own *Weltanschauung* i.e. its own world view (see Humboldt.tr.by Okada 1948).

This idea of a world view is known to have had a strong influence at least on German anthropologist Franz Boas (1858 – 1942), who moved to the United States in his thirties. The American linguist and anthropologist, Edward Sapir (1884 – 1939), was working under Boas and they carried out extensive and detailed field work on various American aboriginal languages. They found out that those American languages embody quite different world views from those of English and other European languages (see Ikegami 1978 : 223).

Under Sapir's influence, another American linguist, Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897 – 1941), also tried to prove that SAE (Standard Average European languages) has quite a different world view from those of American aboriginal languages (see Whorf 1956 : 134 – 159). In particular, he observed and illustrated many remarkable differences between SAE and Hopi. This stream of thinking represents an idea that people living in different cultures have a

different world view which not only reflects but also comes to express a particular way of speaking, which Whorf called “*façon de parler*” or “*fashion of speaking*”.

Today, cognitive linguistics and semiotics have taken over this stream of thinking: George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) regarded the metaphor as a linguistic representation of a cultural way of thinking, and marked a new stage of linguistic study called cognitive linguistics. On the other hand, a semiotics scholar, Peirce, has long insisted on the importance of “*interpretation*” represented in any sign, including linguistic signs. From a semiotic viewpoint, we may say that any sign must embody and reflect aspect of the cultural production of interpretation in a given cultural context.

Today we have many varieties of English in the world. In this paper, I would like to choose and discuss American English related to American ways of thinking. We can see that present day Japanese ways of thinking are predominantly influenced by American ways of thinking. This is why I shall focus on American English, one among many varieties of English.

We can give some examples of the Japanese preference for American English rather than for the British English. For example, most English-Japanese dictionaries give priority to American pronunciation, spelling and grammar rather than to British habits of pronunciation, as in what [(h)wʌt /wɒt)], for instance. When we write English, such American spellings as color, center, defense, civilize, skillful and jail are usually preferred to the corresponding British spellings of colour, centre, defence, civilise, skilful and gaol. We also give preference to American vocabulary, such as elevator, gas, bar and movie to the English vocabulary of lift, petrol, pub and film. The same preference is given to such American phrases as first floor, gas station and private school to ground floor, petrol station and public school.

This thesis deals with contrastive characteristics of American English and

Japanese found in the Japanese translation of American movie titles. Movies are a kind of art, along with painting, sculpture, music, literature, dancing, drama, architecture, and others. Any art tends to express a people's typical way of thinking and cultural assumptions in a given age. We may note that the titles of any artistic work are usually designed to attract us to the content of the work. Titles serve as a guide to interpreting and thereby understanding a work of art. As the title is one of the main elements which invite us to the work, it is also expected that it will have some culturally attractive expression for the audience concerned. Thus, English movie titles often have appealing expressions for the English speaking people, while their Japanese versions are appealing to Japanese speakers. This is why I shall examine American movie titles and their Japanese versions as clues to the linguistic preferences of American and Japanese speakers since titles are closely related to their respective cultures and ways of thinking.

We can classify movies into several genres, such as 1) romance, 2) science-fiction, 3) westerns, 4) comedy, 5) historical epics and others. It seems to me to be rather difficult to deal with all of them in a short thesis, so I shall limit my study to only the genre of science-fiction.

Relying on the difference of expressions between American movie titles and their Japanese versions, I shall analyze the characteristic features of American and Japanese culture. As far as I have determined by checking on the Internet, I have not found a previous study concerning the difference of these two languages and cultures through this specific approach, which seems to verify the value of this study.

The data of the movie titles used here originally came from the international science-fiction movie titles found in the home page of *SF MOVIE DATA BANK* (<http://www.generalworks.com/databank/movie/>). From this home page, I have sorted out 1,480 titles of American movies from non-American works

among the international movies that number 3,860. I have limited the data of American science fiction movies to the period of 1900~2006.

In fact, the translated versions apparently seem to have great variety in their usage of expressions, but if we carefully examine these usages, we can find some characteristics pertaining to translation choices. I shall discuss this topic classifying the Japanese translation into the following three types:

1. English titles that are phonetically transcribed into katakana Japanese
2. The meanings of English titles that are translated almost literally into Japanese
3. The meanings of English titles that are culturally much transformed and translated into Japanese

I deal with each of these characteristics respectively in I, II and III. I discuss some characteristic features expressed in the Japanese translation of these American movie titles according to each particular time period concerned.

### I . Katakana-transcribed Japanese Version

First, I shall discuss American science-fiction movie titles phonetically transcribed into katakana-Japanese. The data dealt with in this thesis contain 1,480 works in all, covering the period 1900 to 2006. Between 1900 and 1949, however, we have considerably fewer works than in all other periods. Thus, I have divided the whole period of 1900~2006 into seven periods: 1900 – 1949, the 1950s, the 1960s, the 1970s, the 1980s, the 1990s, and the 2000s.

The Japanese language has three types of transcription: Hiragana, Katakana and Kanji. Western proper names are usually transcribed into katakana-Japanese, and so are some of the English words and phrases familiar to the Japanese.

The total number of movie titles dealt with in the present study amounts to 1,480 as indicated above, and the number of the katakana transcribed versions

is 622. I have examined the distribution of these 622 works over the above-mentioned seven periods. Table 1 shows the rate of translation in katakana transcription in these seven periods.

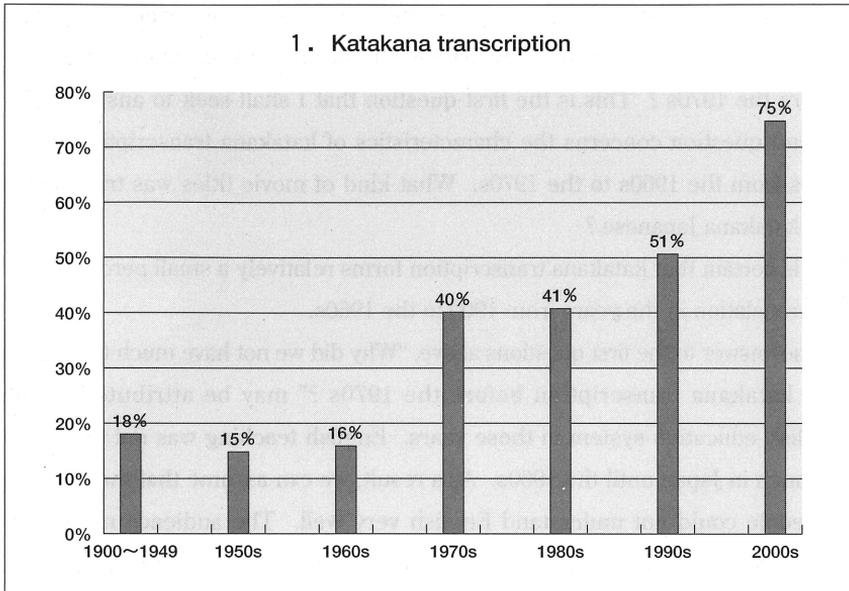


Table 1 . The ratio of katakana transcription to the other two types of translation in the seven periods.

In Table 1, the number of katakana versions has increased from 1900 up to the present time. There are two significant increases in the numbers. The first one is in the 1970s, and the second one in the 2000s. Until the 1960s, the rate of katakana transcription had been less than 18%, and Katakana transcription had been a rather exceptional way of translating English movie titles in those days. However, after the 1970s, the number of katakana transcribed versions increased largely, and in the 1990s it more than doubled. At present, in the

2000s, it has reached 75%. Today, we find many katakana transcriptions of movie titles everywhere, and it has become the most usual way of translating English movie titles into Japanese.

It is a remarkable fact that we find only a very small percentage of this way of translation before the 1970s. The rate of katakana transcription was less than 18% before the 1970s. Why did we not have much translation of this type before the 1970s? This is the first question that I shall seek to answer. The second question concerns the characteristics of katakana transcription in the years from the 1900s to the 1970s. What kind of movie titles was transcribed into katakana Japanese?

It is certain that katakana transcription forms relatively a small percentage of the translation in the years from 1900 to the 1960s.

The answer to the first questions above, “Why did we not have much translation into katakana transcription before the 1970s?” may be attributed to the English education system in those years. English teaching was not promoted so much in Japan until the 1960s. As a result, we can assume that the majority of people could not understand English very well. The audience must have preferred the semantic Japanese translation to the katakana transcription of English titles.

The answer to the second question above about what kind of movie titles had been transcribed in katakana Japanese until the 1970s may be found in such translated examples of *Frankenstein* or *Super Man*. Table 2 shows that only proper nouns or very easy English words are translated using katakana transcription.

| year | The original title | The translated version |
|------|--------------------|------------------------|
| 1923 | RADIO-MANIA        | ラジオマニア                 |

|      |                            |                  |
|------|----------------------------|------------------|
| 1925 | THE LOST WORLD             | ロスト・ワールド         |
| 1931 | FRANKENSTEIN               | フランケンシュタイン       |
| 1933 | KING KONG                  | キング・コング          |
| 1936 | MODERN TIMES               | モダンタイムス          |
| 1940 | DR. CYCLOPS                | ドクター・サイクロプス      |
| 1941 | SUPERMAN                   | スーパーマン           |
| 1942 | CAT PEOPLE                 | キャット・ピープル        |
| 1944 | THE MONSTER MAKER          | モンスター・メイカー       |
| 1944 | THE LADY AND THE MONSTER   | レディ&モンスター        |
| 1949 | KING OF THE ROCKET MEN     | キング・オブ・ザ・ロケットメン  |
| 1951 | FIVE                       | ファイブ             |
| 1953 | ROBOT MONSTER              | ロボットモンスター        |
| 1953 | MESA OF LOST WOMEN         | メサ・オブ・ロスト・ウーマン   |
| 1953 | THE TWONKY                 | トゥオンキー           |
| 1954 | GOG                        | ゴッグ              |
| 1956 | THE MOLE PEOPLE            | モール・ピープル         |
| 1957 | KRONOS                     | クロノス             |
| 1957 | THE CYCLOPS                | サイクロプス           |
| 1957 | THE DEADLY MANTIS          | デッドリー・マンティス      |
| 1957 | BEGINNING OF THE END       | ビギニング・オブ・ザ・エンド   |
| 1957 | THE MONOLITH MONSTERS      | モノリス・モンスターズ      |
| 1958 | MISSILE MONSTERS           | ミサイル・モンスター       |
| 1960 | THE LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS | リトル・ショップ・オブ・ホラーズ |
| 1962 | MOON PILOT                 | ムーンパイロット         |
| 1964 | MARY POPPINS               | メリー・ポピンズ         |
| 1965 | THE GREAT RACE             | グレートレース          |
| 1966 | BATMAN                     | バットマン            |

|      |              |       |
|------|--------------|-------|
| 1966 | SECONDS      | セコンド  |
| 1967 | BARBARELLA   | バーバレラ |
| 1968 | THE LOVE BUG | ラブ・バグ |

Table 2. The examples of proper nouns or very easy English words translated into katakana transcription.

We wonder why katakana transcription was adopted before the 1960s when such transcription was not so popular. I assume that proper nouns usually provide meaningful images, and those proper nouns in the original English titles must have excited curiosity in Japanese too. We can usually easily imagine many things from well-known proper nouns. So, for movie titles, well-known proper nouns must have been considered very effective titles that were appealing to the audience.

However, katakana transcription has become more popular since the 1970s. In the 2000s, the majority of the original titles are translated into katakana transcription. Today, it has become quite usual to have the original English titles translated into katakana transcription. Table 3 shows major American movie titles which are translated into katakana Japanese after 1970.

| year | The original title | The translated version |
|------|--------------------|------------------------|
| 1977 | STAR WARS          | スター・ウォーズ               |
| 1979 | STAR TREK          | スタートレック                |
| 1982 | BLADE RUNNER       | ブレードランナー               |
| 1982 | TRON               | トロン                    |
| 1983 | BRAINSTORM         | ブレインストーム               |
| 1984 | THE TERMINATOR     | ターミネーター                |
| 1985 | BACK TO THE FUTURE | バック・トゥ・ザ・フューチャー        |

|      |  |                                |
|------|--|--------------------------------|
| 1987 | ROBOCOP                                    | ロボコップ                          |
| 1987 | INNERSPACE                                 | インナースペース                       |
| 1992 | BATMAN RETURNS                             | バットマン・リターンズ                    |
| 1993 | JURASSIC PARK                              | ジュラシック・パーク                     |
| 1993 | THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS             | ナイトメア・ビフォア・クリスマス               |
| 1994 | STARGATE                                   | スターゲイト                         |
| 1995 | OUTBREAK                                   | アウトブレイク                        |
| 1995 | CASPER                                     | キャスパー                          |
| 1996 | INDEPENDENCE DAY                           | インデペンデンス・デイ                    |
| 1997 | CONTACT                                    | コンタクト                          |
| 1997 | MEN IN BLACK                               | メン・イン・ブラック                     |
| 1997 | AUSTIN POWERS                              | オースティン・パワーズ                    |
| 1998 | ARMAGEDDON                                 | アルマゲドン                         |
| 1999 | THE MATRIX                                 | マトリックス                         |
| 2001 | THE LOAD OF THE RINGS                      | ロード・オブ・ザ・リング                   |
| 2002 | MINORITY REPORT                            | マイノリティ・リポート                    |
| 2003 | THE MATRIX RELOADED                        | マトリックス リローデッド                  |
| 2004 | THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW                     | デイ・アフター・トゥモロー                  |
| 2004 | I, ROBOT                                   | アイ, ロボット                       |
| 2004 | VAN HELSING                                | ヴァン・ヘルシング                      |
| 2006 | PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MAN'S CHEST | パイレーツ・オブ・カリビアン/<br>デッドマンズ・チェスト |

Table 3. Major American movie titles translated into katakana Japanese.

Table 3 above shows many major American movie titles translated into katakana Japanese. Most of the American movies shown in Table 3 had received a prize, such as an Academy Award, or a Saturn Award, or broke box

office records. That is to say, they were translated into katakana Japanese because the original title had a big impact on the audience and attracted the audience very much, or were already familiar because of advance publicity.

Also, since the 1970s, English education has been much promoted in Japan. As a result, a lot of people have come to understand English rather well these days. Almost everybody can understand at least some easy English words and phrases. Therefore, nowadays, it is not necessary to translate many of English movie titles into Japanese. However, many people still seem to see Katakana transcription as the best way to understand English titles.

## II . Literally Translated Japanese Version

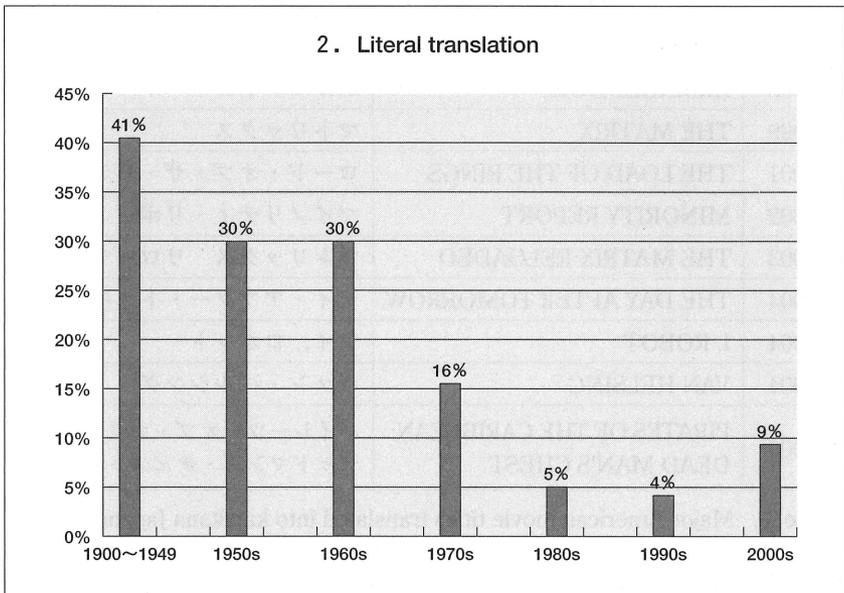


Table 4 . The ratio of literal translation to the other two types of translation in the seven periods.

Next, I shall discuss American science-fiction movie titles literally translated into Japanese. Table 4 shows the literal translation ratio in the seven periods of 1900 – 1949, the 1950s, the 1960s, the 1970s, the 1980s, the 1990s and the 2000s.

We can see from Table 4 above that the number of literal translations has decreased since 1900, with a significant decrease occurring in the 1970s. Until the 1960s, the ratio of literal translation to the other ways of translation had been more than 30%. Literal translation had been a very common way of translating movie titles until the 1960s. After the 1970s, however, literal translation accounted for less than 16%, and it has become a rather exceptional way of translation after the 1970s.

The number of literal translations tends to have decreased until the present day. However, we have a sizable increase in the ratio of literal translations in the 2000s. What accounts for this increase in the 2000s? The answer to this question may be found in the addition of the subtitles to the main titles. Many American movie titles have come to have some subtitles, and these subtitles have been often translated literally into Japanese. Before the 1990s, many American movie titles did not have subtitles, and those titles without subtitles were translated into katakana Japanese. Table 5 shows the American original movie titles with subtitles and their corresponding Japanese translated versions.

| year | The original title                            | The translated version     |
|------|---|----------------------------|
| 2002 | THE LORD OF THE RINGS:<br>THE TWO TOWERS      | ロード・オブ・ザ・リング/<br>二つの塔      |
| 2002 | STAR WARS: EPISODE II<br>Attack of the Clones | スター・ウォーズ エピソード2<br>クローンの攻撃 |

|      |  |                              |
|------|--|------------------------------|
| 2002 | SPY KIDS 2: THE ISLAND OF LOST DREAMS                        | スパイキッズ 2<br>失われた夢の島          |
| 2003 | THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE RETURN OF THE KING                | ロード・オブ・ザ・リング/<br>王の帰還        |
| 2005 | STAR WARS: Episode III REVENGE OF THE SITH                   | スター・ウォーズ エピソード 3<br>シスの復讐    |
| 2005 | THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA: THE LION, THE WITCH & THE WARDROBE | ナルニア国ものがたり<br>第 1 章: ライオンと魔女 |

Table 5. American original movie titles with subtitles and their literally translated Japanese version.

We note in Table 5 above that literal translations are only found in the parts of subtitles. If American movie titles had not had subtitles in the 2000s, they would have been translated into katakana Japanese just as was the custom before the 2000s. Until the 1960s, literally translated titles accounted for more than 30%. Why was literal translation adopted relatively more until the 1960s than after the 1970s?

We notice that literal translation was a very popular way of translation before 1970. The answer to the first question above (why was literal translation adopted relatively more until the 1960s?) may be found in the relatively low degree of popularity of English before 1970. English education was not promoted much in those days. Therefore, ordinary people could not understand English too well, and it is presumed that they wanted American movie titles to be translated into Japanese. Table 6 shows some American movie titles literally translated into Japanese.

| year | The original title                   | The translated version |
|------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1900 | UNCLE JOSH'S NIGHTMARE               | ジョシュおじさんの悪夢            |
| 1914 | GERTIE THE DINOSAUR                  | 恐竜ガーター                 |
| 1914 | A TRIP TO THE MOON                   | 月世界まで                  |
| 1915 | ALICE IN WONDERLAND                  | 不思議の国のアリス              |
| 1915 | THE DINOSAUR AND<br>THE MISSING LINK | 恐竜とミッシングリンク            |
| 1917 | JACK AND THE BEANSTALK               | ジャックと豆の木               |
| 1920 | A TRIP TO MARS                       | 火星旅行                   |
| 1923 | THE TEN COMMANDMENTS                 | 十誡                     |
| 1926 | SPARROWS                             | 雀                      |
| 1933 | THE INVISIBLE MAN                    | 透明人間                   |
| 1933 | LADY FOR A DAY                       | 一日だけの淑女                |
| 1936 | THE DEVIL-DOLL                       | 悪魔の人形                  |
| 1939 | THE WIZARD OF OZ                     | オズの魔法使                 |
| 1941 | THE WOLF MAN                         | 狼男                     |
| 1945 | THE PURPLE MONSTER STRIKES           | パープルモンスター襲来            |
| 1947 | THE BEGINNING OR THE END             | 始めか終りか                 |
| 1953 | WAR OF THE WORLDS                    | 宇宙戦争                   |
| 1953 | CAT WOMEN OF THE MOON                | 月のキャット・ウーマン            |
| 1955 | BRIDE OF THE MONSTER                 | 怪物の花嫁                  |
| 1955 | CONQUEST OF SPACE                    | 宇宙征服                   |
| 1956 | FORBIDDEN PLANET                     | 禁断の惑星                  |
| 1958 | THE SPACE CHILDREN                   | 宇宙の子供                  |
| 1958 | TOM THUMB                            | 親指トム                   |
| 1959 | ON THE BEACH                         | 渚にて                    |
| 1960 | SEX KITTENS GO TO COLLEGE            | お色気小娘カレッジへ行く           |

|      |                                |                |
|------|--------------------------------|----------------|
| 1961 | THE DEVIL'S MESSENGER          | 死神の使者          |
| 1961 | POCKETFUL OF MIRACLES          | ポケット一杯の幸福      |
| 1962 | THE CREATION OF THE HUMANOIDS  | ヒューマノイドの創造物    |
| 1964 | SEVEN DAYS IN MAY              | 五月の七日間         |
| 1966 | FAHRENHEIT 451                 | 華氏451          |
| 1966 | AROUND THE WORLD UNDER THE SEA | 海底世界一周         |
| 1967 | THE DAY THE FISH CAME OUT      | 魚が出てきた日        |
| 1968 | PLANET OF THE APES             | 猿の惑星           |
| 1968 | ROSEMARY'S BABY                | ローズマリーの赤ちゃん    |
| 1968 | THE BAMBOO SAUCER              | 竹の円盤           |
| 1968 | FINIAN'S RAINBOW               | フィニアンの虹        |
| 1969 | THE COMPUTER WORE TENNIS SHOES | テニス靴をはいたコンピュータ |

Table 6 . Some American movie titles translated literally into Japanese from the 1900s – 1960s.

From table 6 above, we see that American movie titles translated literally into Japanese were relatively simple titles. The ordinary audience in Japan, however, could not understand even such simple English in those days, and it was necessary to translate English titles into Japanese.

From Table 4 above, we see that the proportion of literal translation has decreased to less than 16% since the 1970s. It has become rather exceptional to translate English titles literally into Japanese. What accounts for this change in the way of translation after the 1970s? The answer may be attributed to some change in English educational policy on the part of the Japanese government in 1963, when they began to promote English education by

making English a compulsory subject in high school (See the Internet web site Wikipedia: <http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E5%AD%A6%E7%BF%92%E6%8C%87%E5%B0%8E%E8%A6%81%E9%A0%98>). Consequently, more and more people were able to understand some easy English words and phrases without translation. We find that the relative decrease of literal translation is quite a natural phenomenon corresponding to the higher ability of English cultivated in English school education in Japan.

This decrease of literal translation is related to the increase of katakana transcription of English titles. The widespread promotion of English education has caused an inverse proportion of katakana transcription to literal translation of English movie titles.

### III. Culturally Transformed Japanese Version

Finally, I shall discuss the original titles much transformed culturally and translated into Japanese.

In section II, I discussed the literal translation of American movie titles. We know that literal translation is usually less important in generating semantic differences between the original titles and their Japanese versions.

We note, however, that the original titles are often translated not literally but semantically into quite different Japanese expressions. Why is this kind of translation required? I assume that it must be due to the different ways of thinking in different cultures. American original titles are supposed to be designed to attract people living in American culture. Such American English titles, however, cannot necessarily always attract the interest of the people living in Japanese culture. Therefore, it is necessary in such a case to culturally transform and translate the original titles into Japanese titles that may be easily accepted by the Japanese audience. Table 7 shows the number of culturally transformed translations from 1900 – the 2000s.

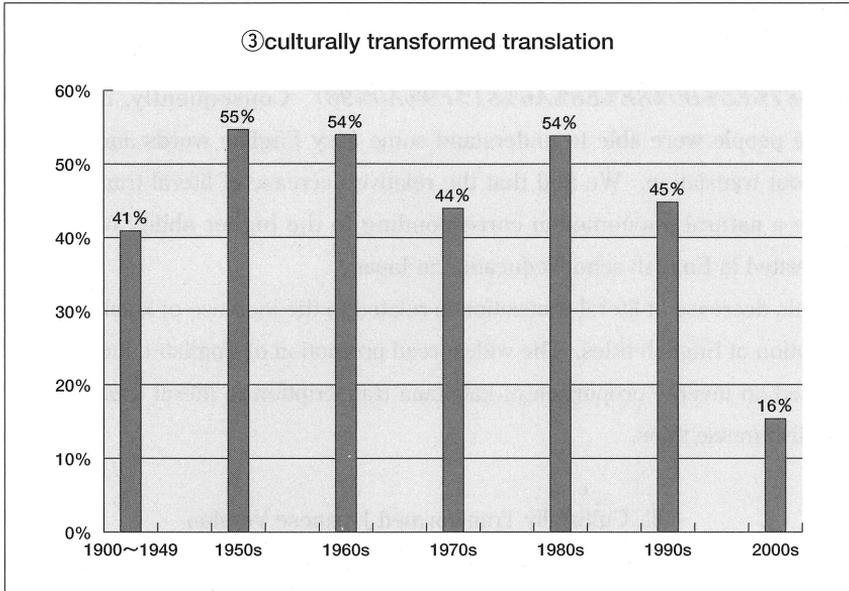


Table 7 . The ratio of culturally transformed translation to the other two types of translation in the seven periods.

We find that the ratio of culturally transformed translation to the other two types of translation accounts for about 50% in the period 1900s~the 1990s. In the 2000s, however, the ratio decreases to only 16% in the inverse proportion to the possibly increased English ability of Japanese speaking people who are supposed to be able to understand English titles in katakana-transcribed Japanese.

A text is an object of interpretation, and what occurs together with the text is demonstrated as context. Thus, we can take movie titles as text, and the people's way of thinking as context. What is the relationship between text and context? We have a short history of study concerning the relationship between text and context. Table 8 shows the main studies of this relationship

between language and context (culture) that we have today.

| Researchers  | year | Japanese  | English  |
|--------------|------|---|--|
| B. Bernstein | 1970 | Restricted codes                                  | Elaborated codes                               |
| Sh. Toyama   | 1973 | Point (= omitted) description                     | Line (= fully logical) description             |
| Y. Ikegami   | 1981 | Become-language                                   | Do-language                                    |
| E. T. Hall   | 1983 | High context<br>(with little textual information) | Low context<br>(with much textual information) |
|              |      | Implicit  | Explicit                                       |

Table 8 . Main studies of the relationship between language and context.

The sociolinguist, Bernstein (1970), observes that the educated children of the upper class usually have a language with “elaborated codes” which are rather free from context, while those of the lower class with less education have a language with “restricted codes” which are much dependant on context.

In 1973, Japanese scholar, Shigehiko Toyama, discovered that we Japanese express only some important points leaving the rest of the text to the inference of the addressees. We know from our everyday experience that when we closely share the context, it is not always necessary to express so much of it because the shared context usually compensates for the lack of text with commonly shared contextual information. For example, family members or close friends do not need to express so much verbally, as they usually share much of the context. Accordingly, Toyama discovered that English with a less shared context tends to express verbally much more of the text than Japanese.

In 1981, Ikegami defined Japanese as a “Become-language”, and English as a “Do-language”. In another paper (1991), he writes:

The ‘DO-language’ is so called, because of its focus on the agent and what he does. The term ‘BECOME-language,’ on the other hand, is not as satisfactory. Although BECOME implies lack or suppression of agentivity, it does not sufficiently imply the focus on the event as a whole, because the verb become can take a human individual as its subject just like the verb do. The Japanese verb *naru* would be more appropriate to represent what I have in mind, because it can leave inexplicit who or what becomes something. But in default of a better term, I shall be content with the English word.

(1991 : 318 – 319)

Hall (1983) defined Japanese as a “high context with little information” language and English as a “low context with much information”. High context means the larger share of context, while low context means a smaller share of context.

In this way, we have several studies of language and context as shown in Table 15. Each study in Table 15 may seem to insist on different ideas but, actually, each one will be found to converge on the one basic idea of [large share of context—context-dependent oriented interpretation—restricted codes—small textual information—state-oriented—Become-language] vs. [small share of context—context-free oriented interpretation—elaborated codes—large textual information—activity-oriented—Do-language]. Arima (1989) writes:

Generally speaking, the higher a society develops technologically and the work increases its systematic complexity, the more minutely work is subdivided. In a society where such subdivision of work has developed, most people are engaged in only one small aspect of a whole piece of work, and they will find it difficult to share the common experience in work....it will be also difficult for people with different cultural and racial backgrounds living together or having some contact with one another to share much common experience....typical examples may be found in the USA...where people can have contact with people of other counties rather easily....interpretation is essentially a

pragmatic matter, while the widely accepted new ways of using signs... gradually transform the system of signs...as is clearly identified in the syntax of a language. (1989 : 358.)

Japanese culture has long been cultivated in a geographically, racially and politically closed society, and this has developed the homogeneous context of a culture which means a great share of context among the people. In principle, the large share of context will necessarily encourage the highly context-dependant interpretation. A long history of agriculture in an unsteady climate with violent typhoons and long rainy season also may have helped to cultivate the context-dependant attitude in religious attitudes to Nature and closely intensive teamwork. (ibid. : 361 – 362)

Japanese speakers traditionally do not find it necessary to verbally express much information as they can let the interpreters guess the meaning from a highly shared context. In contrast, English is a language oriented to verbally express more information in detail as the interpreters are not expected to get much information from a small-shared context. Now, we have come to understand why Japanese is an “implicit” language and English is an “explicit” language.

Thus, we see that we have some differences between American ways of thinking and traditional Japanese ways of thinking. This difference must have some influence on the difference between the original titles and their culturally transformed Japanese versions. As we have already discussed, the culturally transformed translation is necessary to reveal some Japanese preference to their culture.

We see in Table 7 that the ratio of culturally transformed type of translation has not changed in all of the six periods in contrast to the other two types of translations. This means that the culturally transformed translation is a rather constant element in the style of translation. However, the quality of cultural

transformation seems to have changed before the 1960s and after the 1970s.

| year | The original title                     | The translated version |
|------|--|------------------------|
| 1917 | REACHING FOR THE MOON                  | ドーグラスの月の世界             |
| 1923 | THE UNKNOWN PURPLE                     | 殺人光線                   |
| 1927 | THE MISSING LINK                       | 怪獣征服                   |
| 1933 | ISLAND OF LOST SOULS                   | 獣人島                    |
| 1941 | MAN MADE MONSTER                       | 電気人間                   |
| 1942 | I MARRIED A WITCH                      | 奥様は魔女                  |
| 1943 | SON OF DRACULA                         | 夜の悪魔                   |
| 1949 | IT HAPPENS EVERY SPRING                | 春の珍事                   |
| 1950 | ROCKETSHIP X-M                         | 火星探検                   |
| 1951 | THE THING FROM ANOTHER WORLD           | 遊星よりの物体 X              |
| 1952 | UNTAMED WOMEN                          | 美人島の巨獣                 |
| 1953 | THE BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS          | 原始怪獣現わる                |
| 1954 | CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON         | 大アマゾンの半魚人              |
| 1956 | IT CONQUERED THE WORLD                 | 金星人地球を征服               |
| 1957 | THE MONSTER THAT CHALLENGED THE WORLD  | 大怪獣出現                  |
| 1957 | THE INVISIBLE BOY                      | 宇宙への冒険                 |
| 1959 | THE JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH | 地底探検                   |
| 1959 | DARBY O'GILL AND THE LITTLE PEOPLE     | 四つの願い                  |
| 1960 | BEAST FROM HAUNTED CAVE                | 魔の谷                    |
| 1960 | DINOSAURUS !                           | 最後の海底巨獣                |

|      |   |                         |
|------|---|-------------------------|
| 1961 | ATLANTIS,<br>THE LOST CONTINENT                   | 謎の大陸アトランチス              |
| 1961 | VOYAGE TO THE BOTTOM<br>OF THE SEA                | 地球の危機                   |
| 1962 | FIVE WEEKS IN A BALOON                            | 気球船探険                   |
| 1963 | JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS                           | アルゴ探検隊の大冒険              |
| 1964 | ROBINSON CRUSOE ON MARS                           | 火星着陸第1号                 |
| 1966 | AROUND THE WORLD<br>UNDER THE SEA                 | 海底世界一周                  |
| 1969 | SPACE TRAVELERS                                   | 宇宙からの脱出                 |
| 1970 | HAUSER'S MEMORY                                   | 国際謀略作戦                  |
| 1970 | NO BLADE OF GRASS                                 | 最後の脱出                   |
| 1972 | FROGS   | 吸血の群れ                   |
| 1974 | IT'S ALIVE  | 悪魔の赤ちゃん                 |
| 1975 | ESCAPE TO WITCH MOUNTAIN                          | 星の国から来た仲間               |
| 1976 | LOGAN'S RUN                                       | 2300年未来への旅              |
| 1978 | THE RETURN OF CAPTAIN NEMO                        | アトランチスの謎                |
| 1980 | WHEN TIME RAN OUT...                              | 世界崩壊の序曲                 |
| 1980 | BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS                           | 宇宙の七人                   |
| 1981 | MODERN PROBLEMS                                   | スーパー念力マン                |
| 1982 | ZAPPED!   | 超能力学園Z                  |
| 1984 | RUNAWAY   | 未来警察                    |
| 1985 | REVENGE OF THE TEENAGE<br>VIXENS FROM OUTER SPACE | 宇宙からの誘惑/<br>エイリアン・シスターズ |
| 1985 | THE TOXIC AVENGER                                 | 悪魔の毒々モンスター              |
| 1985 | ENEMY MINE  | 第5惑星                    |
| 1986 | PRISON SHIP                                       | 宇宙要塞からの脱出               |

|      |                       |                     |
|------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1986 | HERO IN THE FAMILY    | アストロ・モンキー<br>宇宙の大逆転 |
| 1987 | LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON | ハモンド家の秘密            |
| 1989 | BEYOND THE STARS      | 宇宙への選択              |
| 1992 | DEATH BECOMES HER     | 永遠（とわ）に美しく…         |
| 1993 | HEART AND SOULS       | 愛が微笑む時              |
| 1996 | THE PREACHER'S WIFE   | 天使の贈りもの             |
| 1998 | FALLEN                | 悪魔を憐れむ歌             |
| 2000 | FREQUENCY             | オーロラの彼方へ            |
| 2006 | CLICK                 | もしも昨日が選べたら          |

Table 9. The American original titles culturally translated into Japanese.

Table 9 shows some examples of American titles and their culturally transformed and translated Japanese versions from 1900~the 2000s.

First, in the case of “Reaching for the Moon” (1917), this is translated as 「ドーグラスの月の世界」, where 「ドーグラス」 indicates the name of the hero in the moon. Thus, both English and Japanese titles here indicate the moon from similar viewpoints even though the English expression refers to the act of “Reaching for”, while in Japanese it is the resulting state of the activity. These titles show some features of English and Japanese. In English, activity usually involves a resulting state, while in Japanese activity is rather process-oriented and does not necessarily involve the resulting state. This kind of difference may be illustrated by a well-known example of “\* I burned it but it did not burn.” vs. 「燃やしたけど燃えなかった。」 Of course, both English and Japanese have result-oriented expressions. (e.g. “She passed the exam” vs. 「彼女は試験に〈合格した〉」 and process-oriented expressions (e.g. “I invited her to the party, but she did not come.” vs. 「彼女をパーティーに〈招いた〉が来なかった。」). Ikegami (1991) indicates that when this

kind of orientation differs between English and Japanese, it is always English which is oriented to the result and Japanese which is oriented to the process. I think the case under discussion is one such case. Thus, “reach” involves the result of the activity, while the corresponding Japanese does not. Therefore, the Japanese version is required to express the state of the result as 「ドークラスの月の世界」. This is my inference.

Similar examples may be found in the case of “I married a witch” (1942) and its Japanese version 「奥さまは魔女」. “奥さまは魔女” means “my wife is a witch.” We notice that “I married a witch” focuses on the act of marrying someone, while the Japanese version focuses on the result of this activity; as a result of marriage, a witch has become his wife. This implies that English focuses on the activity, while Japanese focuses on the result of the activity, i.e. state.

In the example of “The unknown purple” 「殺人光線」, “purple” indicates the color of a beam of light which comes to work as a death ray which is expressed in Japanese translation. Here, the Japanese expression “a death ray” describes the result of the effect of the ray while the English title “The unknown purple” does not and only objectively indicates the unknown fact of the color purple. We see that the English title is more objectively expressed than the Japanese title. Here we find the Japanese title emphasizes the “state” of the effect of the ray.

The next example of “Hauser’s Memory” (1970) is translated into 「国際謀略作戦」, where the English title focuses on the memory of a person called Hauser, while the Japanese title describes the content or state of his memory. This may be due to the fact that English expresses the meaning from the external viewpoints, while Japanese does so from an internal viewpoint because English is a more context-free oriented language, while Japanese is a more context-dependent oriented language. It is known that a context-free oriented interpre-

tation is likely to produce an external viewpoint, while a context-dependant oriented interpretation produces an internal viewpoint.

In the case of “Frequency” (2000) and the translated version 「オーロラの彼方へ」, the original title indicates the “Frequency of radio”, which is the only means of communication of the son with his father. On the other hand, the Japanese title focuses on the aurora which is a significant image of this story. In this movie, the most important machine is a radio because only the frequency of that radio can connect the son with his father. So, this most important element of “Frequency” is used as the English title. What the original title means is so explicit that the audience is able to understand the content of this work very easily. In contrast to this original title, the meaning of Japanese translated title will not be so easily understood because it only expresses some pregnant meaning which becomes clear only at the end of the story. Therefore, this Japanese title is very implicit in meaning, while the English title is very explicit because the communication between the son and his father through the “frequency of radio” is expressively focused on.

In case of “CLICK” (2006) and the translated version 「もしも昨日が選べたら」, the English title ‘CLICK’ signifies the operation of a remote computer controller which is the most important element in this work. We can say that “CLICK” is an objective description from an external viewpoint, while the Japanese title expresses the emotion of the main character from an internal viewpoint. We can describe the emotion of the character only from an internal viewpoint. Thus, here Japanese uses an internal viewpoint of the content, and English adopts an external viewpoint.

So far, we have discussed the characteristics of American and Japanese cultures and languages very closely related with each other. Further, we have seen, through the cultural translation of movie titles, how the way we interpret text in a given context tends to determine the type of interpretation which

comes to be expressed in various forms of language and culture.

### Conclusion

In this thesis, I have dealt with the following three types of Japanese translation of American movie titles.

- ① English titles that are phonetically transcribed into katakana Japanese.
- ② The meanings of English titles that are almost literally translated into Japanese
- ③ The meanings of English titles that frequently undergo major semantic transformation when translated into Japanese.

Table 10 shows the rate of three types of translation in seven time periods of 1900 – 1949, the 1950s, the 1960s, the 1970s, the 1980s, the 1990s and the 2000s.

Let me briefly summarize the distribution of each of the three types from 1900 to 2006. You can see from Table 10 below that the number of katakana transcriptions did not change so much between 1900 and the 1960s. After the 1960s, it has increased dramatically until the present day. I have explained this type of translation in I. We have found out that this inverse proportion may be attributed to the same inverse proportion of English popularity due to changes in English education in Japan. We have also found out that the small increase of type ② in the 2000s is attributed to the translation of subtitles which had seldom appeared with the original English movie titles before the 1990s. I have explained this type of translation in II.

Before 1970, katakana transcription was mainly limited to well-known English proper names or very easy English words, because English high school education in those days was not promoted so much in Japan, and the majority of people could understand only such simple English vocabulary. After the 1970s, however, English education has been much promoted, and

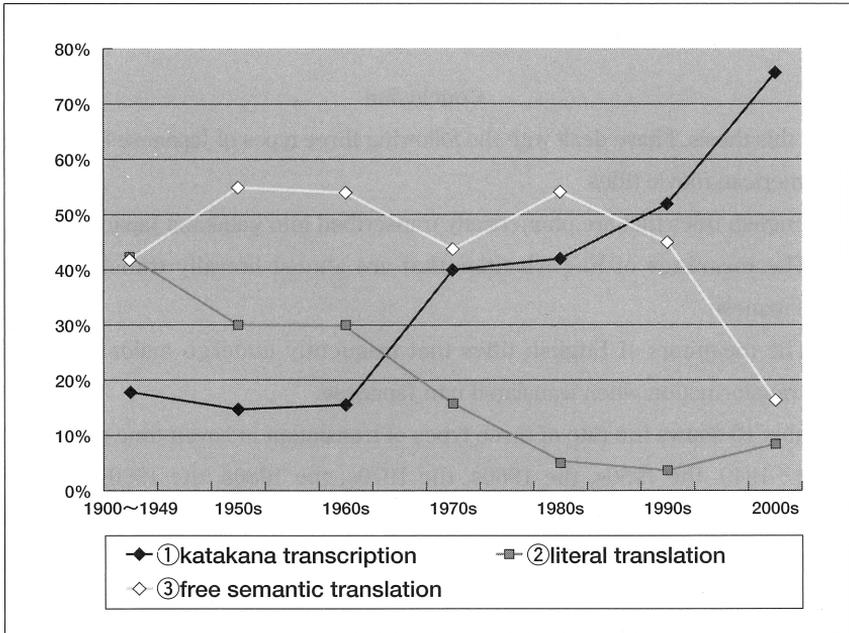


Table10. The rate of the three types of translation in the seven periods of 1900 – 1949, the 1950s, the 1960s, the 1970s, the 1980s, the 1990s and the 2000s

more and more people are able to understand considerably more English. Today, we find this type of translation as the most usual Japanese versions of English titles. Now, let us examine the second type of translation i.e. literal translation in Table 17. We find that it has generally decreased from the 1990s, and it has increased a little after that. You will find the distribution of type ① and ② are in inverse proportion.

Finally, we examined the third type of translation i.e. culturally transformed and translated Japanese version in Table 10. This type shows a constant percentage of about 50% until the 1990s, and it has drastically decreased since then. It is remarkable that this third type has kept at a rather high percentage

of around 50% constantly over most time periods except for the 2000s. We have found that this type is most closely related to the difference of interpretation between different cultures and languages. We have seen that the titles of artistic works are designed to attract people living in a given culture. This has led us to believe that original American movie titles are designed to attract people living in American culture and that their Japanese translated versions are designed to attract the interest of the people living in Japanese culture.

We have briefly surveyed the major theories of interpretation—Bernstein (1970), Toyama (1973), Ikegami (1981), and Hall (1983)—and found that all of them converge on the same relationship of text and context in the interpretation. The type of interpretation in the larger share of context tends to have implicit characteristics as found in traditional Japanese culture and language, and the smaller share of context tends to have explicit characteristics as found in American culture and language. We have identified these typical characteristics of language and culture in the expressed forms of American movie titles and their Japanese versions in this third type. Many of the original American movie titles are found to be rather explicit in their forms from an objective viewpoint, which is required from a small shared context. We have also inquired why we can share the context to a larger or smaller degree and found the answer in different conditions of a given natural and cultural context.

In this way, we have discussed the contrastive characteristics of American and Japanese language and culture found in the Japanese translation of American movie titles. We know that, strictly speaking, each language has its own culture, and each culture has its own language. We have found that different ways of interpretation invite this significant difference, too.

I think we can presume that we will never lose the third type of translation, i.e. culturally transformed translation, however Americanized our future Japanese life may be come, because some part of difficulty of interpretation will

remain as far as we live in different cultures. We can also assume that we are going to have more and more katakana transcription as our life becomes more Americanized in the future.

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