

Possibility and Difficulty of Translation: Issues Related to Citizenship and Border Crossing

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1. My discussant theme

My Discussant theme is in the possibility and difficulty of translation, that is the issues related to citizenship and border crossing.

2. On the presentation of Liz Jackson

In the presentation of Liz Jackson, she said, in a globalized context where English is primary, misunderstanding puts an unfortunate burden on non-native English speakers, who often work and study in other languages, to translate themselves, and educate people who do not know what they do not know. This translation work takes patience. So she focused on the difficulty of translation, a reward of being bilingual and cross-cultural.

3. On the presentation of Naoko Saito

In the presentation of Naoko Saito, she said, translation involves an attunement to what happens in the encounter between different languages, and this ordinarily involves the experience of a gap—of the incommensurable, of the “untranslatable”. It is this imperfect answerability in translation that is the condition, in humility, of opening ourselves to the other.

So she focused on the possibility of translation as the condition of opening ourselves to the other.

4. Common perception

Liz focuses on the burden and difficulty of translation, on the other hand, Naoko focuses on the translation as the condition of opening ourselves to the other. Although Liz and Naoko seem to be contrasting at first glance, they share a common perception that homogeneous attitude to other cultures is a trap for multicultural society and in this context translation is a stake that determines the consequences of bridging different cultures.

But the question of multilingualism or emphasis on translation is a major issue between the two.

So the following question could be asked of Liz and Naoko: That is, how do you think about this issues? This is my first question.

And before asking the other question, I would like to give an example.

5. Young people on the streets of Hong Kong

On June 16 2019 there is a demonstration of 2 million people held in Hong Kong. Agnes Chow Ting is one of the most influential leaders in Hong Kong democratization movement. Agnes grew up strongly influenced by the Japanese “otaku” culture. “Otaku” culture is a culture of Japanese youth who love anime and idol groups. Through “Otaku” culture she learned Japanese and bridges the youth culture of Japan and Hongkong, and constructs a democratic spirit to change the political regime of Hongkong. I think she is a multilingual person using Chinese, English, and Japanese, and at the same time she is an excellent translator between Japanese and Chinese through political action as a global citizen. I think it is this kind of citizenship that enable her to have both multilingualism and translation.

6. Citizenship and border crossing

So in this symposium I would like to say that to have both multilingualism and translation is an important condition for the internationalization of the philosophy of education, and at the same time political and global citizenship is the key to mediating multilingualism and translation.

So my second question is, what kind of citizenship enable us to have both multilingualism and translation? In other words, what do you think on the relationship between citizenship and border crossing?

As Lothar Wigger said, according to Humboldt every language implies its own world view and is an expression of its own way of life. Especially in Japan in the modernization process people in Japan has incorporated western cultures through translating them into Japanese, and Japanese language formed by such translations has created a common way of thinking for Japanese citizens. So I think thinking in Japanese is indispensable manner in our academic community.

That is why we should not give up teaching and learning philosophy in Japanese. What is necessary for us is border crossing citizenship and being responsible for and keeping listening to other foreign languages and translating them into Japanese, like Agnes in Hongkong.