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# (im)Politeness and Honorification, in Japanese Translation

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## **Abstract**

In this thesis the translation of (im)politeness and honorification from Japanese is examined. Due to the different and complex politeness system in Japanese compared to European languages, difficulties rise in translating texts containing it. The goal of this thesis is to analyze the strategies used and the outcome, while comparing the translations of the novel *Norwegian Wood* made to three different languages: English, Swedish and Spanish. The comparison shows that the English and Swedish translations took big freedom in embellishing (at times to an excessive amount) the target text in order to show the politeness used in the source text. The Spanish translation on the other hand took a more passive approach in this regard.

Keywords: translation, translation strategy, politeness, Haruki Murakami, *Norwegian Wood*.

# Acknowledgements

Thanks mom.

# Abbreviations

SL = Source Language

ST = Source Text

TL = Target Language

TT = Target Text

ACC = Object Particle

ADV = Adverbializer

COP = Copula

FTA = Face Threatening Act

GEN = Genitive Particle

HON = Honorific

HUM = Humble

NOM = Nominative Particle

PAST = Past

PSV = Passive

TOP = Topic Particle

QP = Question Particle

L1 = Plain, familiar language

L2 = Polite, desu/masu language

L3 = Superpolite, honorific language

# Table of content

Abstract .....	2
Acknowledgements .....	3
Abbreviations .....	4
Table of content .....	5
1. Introduction.....	6
2. Politeness .....	7
2.1 Social Deixis .....	8
2.2 Politeness in Japanese.....	8
2.21 Uchi and Soto .....	10
2.22 Addressee- and Referent Honorifics .....	10
2.23 Honorific Suffixes and Pronouns .....	13
3. Translation.....	15
3.1 Hasegawa’s Translation Strategies.....	15
4. Analysis.....	18
4.1 The Book.....	18
4.2 Examples.....	18
4.2.1 Example 1 .....	19
4.2.2 Example 2 .....	20
4.2.3 Example 3 .....	21
4.2.4 Example 4 .....	22
4.2.5 Example 5 .....	23
4.2.6 Example 6 .....	24
4.2.7 Example 7 .....	25
4.2.8 Example 8 .....	27
4.2.10 Example 9 .....	28
4.2.11 Example 10 .....	29
5. Conclusion .....	31
6. References.....	33

# 1. Introduction

In this thesis the translation of (im)politeness and honorification from Japanese will be examined by the use of examples from the novel *Norwegian Wood* written by Haruki Murakami .

Any two languages with big linguistic or cultural differences are inevitably going to cause difficulties for a translator, and may force him/her to make difficult choices. One of the reasons I have chosen this topic is because politeness in Japanese is deemed to be such a big linguistic *and* cultural difference, when compared to European languages.

In a situation where the translator has to choose between keeping the original meaning fully, or making the target text sound natural and believable, which does he/she choose? What strategies does he/she use to convey his/her choice? Can linguistic differences between the three target languages be a factor of strategies used and/or the outcome? These are some of the research questions I hope I can expand and answer to some degree in this thesis.

In the next section an insight into how general politeness, as well as politeness specifically in Japanese, function and differ from each other will be provided. This will be followed by a brief review of translation theory and strategies. These two chapters will include the tools used for the analysis.

The analysis includes 10 passages from the popular novel *Norwee no Mori*, written by Haruki Murakami (1987), as well as its translated counterparts. I have chosen to include the English, Swedish and Spanish translations in the analysis.

## 2. Politeness

Politeness exists in all languages and culture; it can vary in degree, importance and ways to express it. Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) model on polite language is perhaps the most widespread reference up to date. It is an attempt to create a universal model for all languages and cultures. The theory is that every person wants, and tries to protect their public self-image, or in the terms of Brown and Levinson, their *face*. The medium for protecting one self's, or another person's face, is politeness.

Face may be divided into *positive face* and *negative face*. Positive face is defined as "the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others" (Brown & Levinson, 1987:62). Negative face is defined as "the want of every 'competent adult member' that his actions be unimpeded by others" (Brown & Levinson, 1987:62).

Whenever you say something that has the risk of damaging your, or another person's face, it's called a *face threatening act* (FTA). Brown and Levinson bring forth four different strategies when using a FTA, *bald on record*, *negative politeness*, *positive politeness*, and *off-record*.

Consider the following four different ways to ask another person to close a window:

- (1) a. Close the window.
- b. Could you close the window mate?
- c. Excuse me, but I wonder if it might be possible for you to close the window?
- d. It's rather cold in here...

The ***bald on record*** (1a) strategy usually does not attempt to minimize the threat to the addressee's face, and is therefore most often used between speakers with close relationships, such as family or friends. There are cases where the bald-on-record strategy can be used to minimize face threatening acts implicitly, such as telling a person standing outside the door to *come in* (Brown & Levinson, 1987:95).

The ***positive politeness*** (1b) strategy seeks to reduce the threat to the addressee's positive face, his desire that his wants should be thought of as desirable. It can be used to make the addressee feel good about himself, his interests or possessions. Like the bald on-record strategy, it is most commonly used in situations where the audience knows each other fairly well (Brown & Levinson, 1987:101).

The ***negative politeness*** (1c) strategy attempts to reduce the threat to the addressee's negative face, his want to have his freedom of action unhindered and his attention unimpeded. This strategy presumes that the addresser will be imposing on the addressee and that there is a higher potential for awkwardness or embarrassment when compared to the bald on record and positive politeness

strategies. Unlike positive politeness, negative politeness is most commonly used towards people the addresser isn't familiar with (Brown & Levinson, 1987:130).

The **off record** (1d) strategy is done by expressing a desire, but not being specific about how one can fulfill it. The addresser can in a sense do a FTA, but avoid the responsibility of doing it. (Brown & Levinson, 1987:211)

## 2.1 Social Deixis

Lyons (1977:636) provides the following definition on deixis:

By deixis is meant the location and identification of persons, objects, events, processes and activities being talked about, or referred to, in relation to the spacio-temporal context created and sustained by the act of utterance and the participation in it, typically, of a single speaker and at least one addressee.

In other words, deictic words are the words we replace with the specific words for convenience, and expect the listener to understand the meaning based on context. In the following sentence, you, here, now, it, I and her, are all deictic words.

**You** come **here now** and eat **it** before **I** tell **her**.

The following is an example of how the same sentence could look without the use of deictic words.

**Tim Kapusta** come to **Paradisgatan 2, Lund, Sweden 9.34 a.m. 26<sup>th</sup> march 2016** and eat **the chocolate cake** before **Emil Jansson** tells **Malin Hörberger**.

Just as the deictic words above are used to express time, place, an individual etc., a word can also be used to reflect politeness and social status. This is called *social deixis*. Levinson (1983:62) defines social deixis as “the encoding of social distinctions that are relevant to participant roles, particularly aspects of the social relationship holding between the speaker and addressee(s) or speaker and some referent”.

While highly relevant in Japanese, simple examples of this can also be seen in several European languages, where there exist two different ways to address someone with “you”. While they are equivalent in meaning, they differ in politeness and formality, for example the German *du* and *sie*, or the French *tu* and *vous*, where the latter ones are more formal. A few other examples include the English *Sir*, and *Mr*, the Spanish *señor* and *señora*.

## 2.2 Politeness in Japanese

While Brown and Levinson's theory might have been the most influential model up to date, it has also received wide criticism (Lusting et.al, 1980; Cody et.al., 1981; Baxter & Leslie, 1984). Ide (1992) and Matsumoto (1989) criticize it particularly in that it is constructed from a European language perspective. They argue that it's insufficient for many other languages, among those Japanese, and



therefore can't be considered universal. Matsumoto (1988:415) uses the following example to prove her point.

- (2) a. Kyoo wa doyoobi da (plain)  
today TOP Saturday COP.PLAIN  
'Today is Saturday'
- b. Kyoo wa doyoobi desu (polite)  
today TOP Saturday COP.POLITE  
'Today is Saturday'
- c. Kyoo wa doyoobi degozaimasu (honorific)  
today TOP Saturday COP.HON  
'Today is Saturday'

Because these sentences seemingly don't involve any FTA, Brown and Levinson's politeness theory has a hard time explaining it. Furthermore, according to Matsumoto, the honorific form is not used in order to protect the hearers face, but rather to show the status difference between the interlocutors.

Apart from the copula, the sentences are exactly alike. The copulas differ in politeness and formality, and are used accordingly. Sentence (2a) would not be inappropriate to use when speaking to someone distant or of higher status, whereas sentence (2b) would be usable as the polite version of the copula *desu* is used, instead of the plain *da*. Sentence (2c) could be used in a very formal situation, or when speaking to a person of higher status (Matsumoto, 1988:415).

Whenever a person wants to say "today is Saturday" he/she must choose between these different politeness levels. There is essentially no neutral way to say "today is Saturday" or any other sentence, in Japanese. Politeness in Japanese can take the form of copula, verbs, adjectives and even certain nouns. Because Japanese lacks a neutral polite style, the speaker is forced to choose the correct word corresponding to the correct level of politeness demanded in the situation (Harada, 1976).

Politeness in European languages is something an individual chooses in order to protect one self's or another person's face as illustrated by Brown and Levinson. A key point of Ide (1992) of how it differs in Japanese is that the individual merely assesses the situation; the types of words the individual then will use are decided by the Japanese society as a whole.

Another way politeness in Japanese somewhat differs is that the level on formality used, is quite often non-mutual. In a conversation between for example an employee and an employer, the latter might use plain forms, whereas it would be inappropriate for the former not to use honorific forms (Shibatani, 1990:372).

### 2.2.1 Uchi and Soto

*Uchi and soto* is a concept existing in the Japanese society, and an important factor in the polite language. *Uchi* means literally *inside* and *soto* *outside*. They refer to the two metaphysical groups an individual may exist in from the perspective of another individual. For example, a person's family members may be part of his *uchi* (inside) *group*, while a stranger on a bus may be part of his *soto* (outside) *group*.

The group an individual exists is however subject to change. Your close friend might be part of your *uchi group* while playing football together. But while at a family dinner, he and his family might suddenly be part of your *soto group*, where you and your own family are your *uchi group*.

To correctly determine who's *uchi* and who's *soto* is important for a Japanese speaker because it plays a big role in the language one should use to appear polite. "The speaker's orientation in terms of who is *uchi* and who is *soto* – who is in the in-group and who is in the out-group – provides the reference point for the use of polite forms" (Wetzel, 1988:8). The following example is borrowed from Wetzel (1988:8).

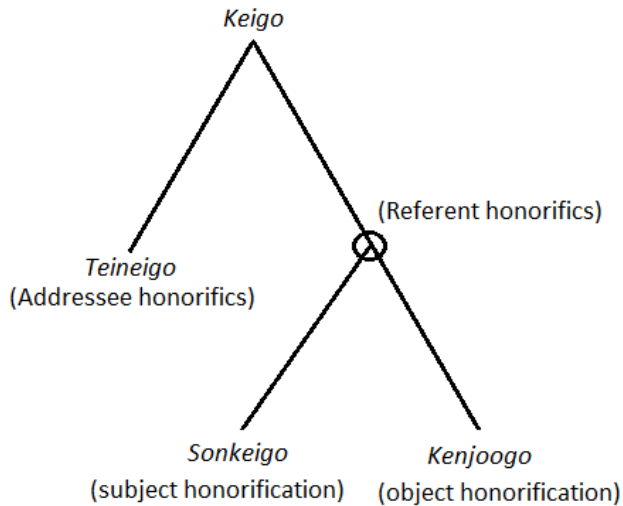
- (3) a. Ashita irasshaimasu (honorific)  
tomorrow come.HON
- b. Ashita mairimasu. (honorific)  
tomorrow come.HUM

Sentence (a) contains the *honorific* predicate *irasshaimasu*, the subject must therefore be someone other than the speaker's *uchi group*, because the speaker wants to 'honor' the *soto*. Sentence (b) on the other hand contains the *humble* predicate *mairimasu*, which is used to lower the status of the subject. Therefore the subject must be part of the speaker's *uchi group* (Wetzel, 1988:8). The next subchapter will include more about honorification and humbling.

### 2.2.2 Addressee- and Referent Honorifics

Polite language is largely divided into two different systems, *addressee honorifics* and *referent honorifics* (Brown & Levinson, 1987:276). Addressee honorifics are used when addressing someone directly while referent honorifics are used when referring to someone.

Honorifics in Japanese are broadly referred to as *keigo*, 'respectful language'. Unlike polite language in general, *keigo* can be divided into three categories rather than two. Addressee honorifics are called *teineigo*, while referent honorifics can be divided into *sonkeigo* (subject honorification) and *kenjoogo* (object honorification) (Shibatani, 1990:375), as illustrated by the image below.



Teineigo (Addressee honorifics) is the language that “indicates an attitude of respect on the part of the speaker for the hearer” (Wetzel, 2004:30). Teineigo can only serve as a politeness marker towards a listener who in some way can be said to be present at the time of the utterance (Larsson, 2008:15). Teineigo can take the form of verb, copula, adjective and a form of modality. Below is an example taken from Shibatani (1990:375), where the verb is affected.

- (4) a. Taroo ga ki-ta. (plain)  
 NOM come-PAST  
 ‘Taro came’
- b. Taroo ga ki-mashi-ta (polite)  
 NOM come-POLITE-PAST  
 ‘Taro came’

*Sonkeigo* (subject honorification) is used to raise the status of the person who is the topic of discussion (Wetzel, 2004:29). It’s used in speaking about the person him/herself under discussion, that person’s location, or that person’s behavior, character, or condition. Below is an example taken from Shibatani (1990:376) of how sonkeigo may be used.

- (5) a. Sensei ga warat-ta. (plain)  
 teacher NOM laugh-PAST  
 ‘The teacher laughed’

b. Sensei ga **o**-warai **ni nat**-ta. (honorific)  
teacher NOM HON-laugh ADV become-PAST  
'The teacher laughed'

c. Sensei ga warawa-**re**-ta (honorific)  
teacher NOM laugh-HON-PAST  
'The teacher laughed'

Apart from in verb form as shown in the examples above, sonkeigo can also be used in other ways: the prefixes *o* and *go* in front of certain nouns (e.g. *go-kazoku*, 'family'), the copula *de irassharu*, titles (e.g. *-sensei* 'teacher'), suffixes ( e.g. *-sama*, ' mr. ') pronouns (eg. *anata* 'you') as well as other deictic words (e.g. *Kochira* 'here') (Wetzel, 2004:31).

Kenjoogo (object honorification) "expresses respect for the other or the listener by lowering the status of (humbling) the self or self's side" (Wetzel, 2004:30). Below is an example taken from Shibatani (1990:376) showing how kenjoogo is used in verb form.

(6) a. Taroo ga sensei o tasuke-ta (plain)  
NOM teacher ACC help-PAST  
'Taro assisted the teacher'

b. Taroo ga sensei o **o**-tasuke **shi**-ta (honorific)  
NOM teacher acc HON-HELP do-PAST  
'Taro assisted the teacher'

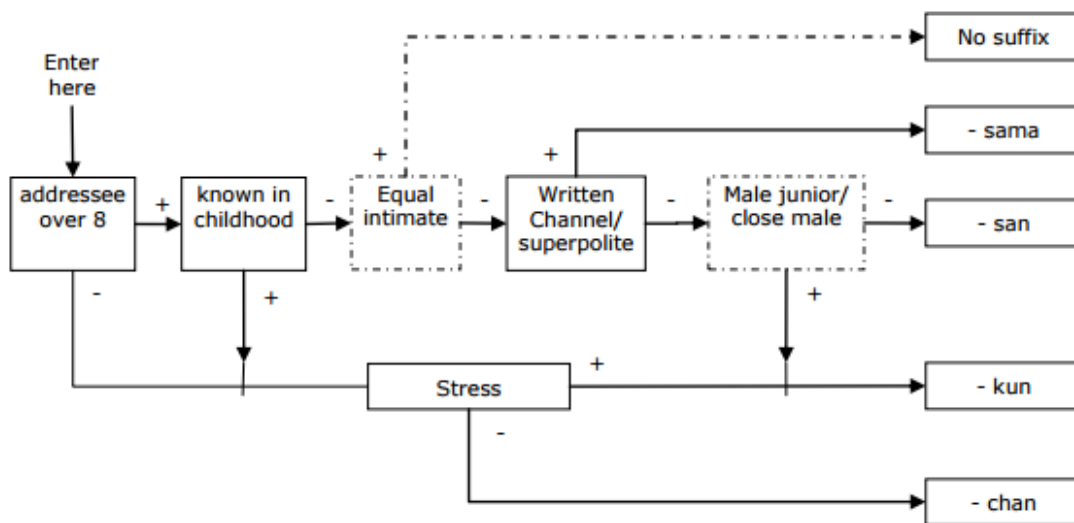
In this example the *o* and *shi* are used to create a humbling verb. The effect this has is that it deprecates the subject's (Taro) status. We can understand that Taro is part of the speaker's *uchi* (due to the use of kenjoogo), and by deprecating the subject's (Taroo, who is part of the speaker's *uchi*) status, the object's (the teacher) status is elevated. Apart from the usage of verb as seen in the example, kenjoogo can also take the form of pronouns (e.g. first person pronoun *watakushi*), self-deprecatory terms to refer to one's *uchi* (e.g. *keisai* 'my wife') and the humbling prefixes *hei-* and *gu-* (Wetzel, 2004:31).

It is important to note that the three axis system theory of teineigo, sonkeigo and kenjoogo, has flaws. Certain forms can't be assigned to just one system, such as the copula *de gozaimasu* which overlaps between teineigo and kenjoogo (Wetzel, 2004:31).

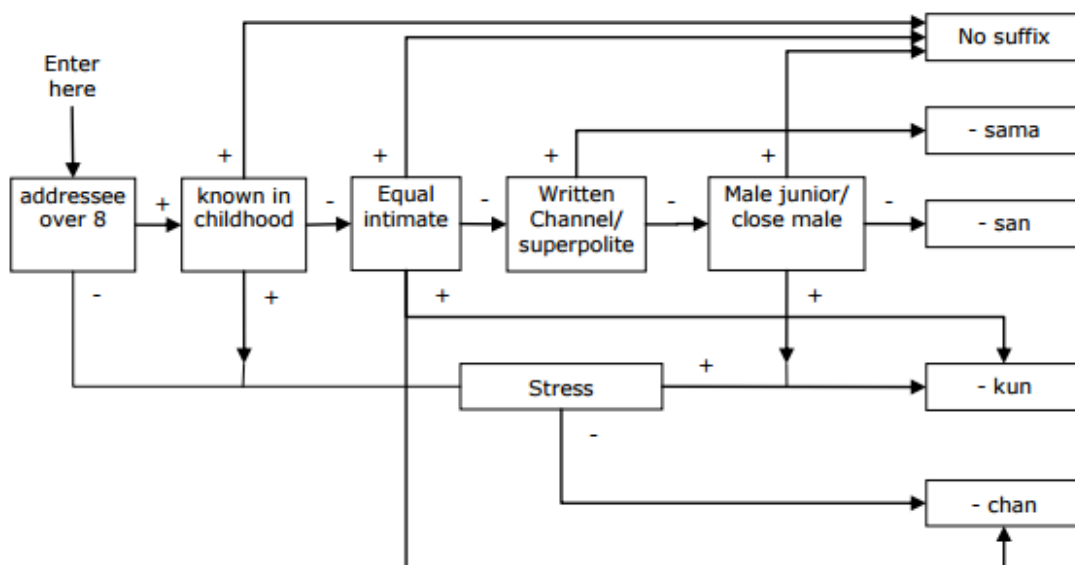
## 2.2.3 Honorific Suffixes and Pronouns

One of the things Japanese may be known for is its diligent use of honorific suffixes. Name (+) suffix may be used both for referring and addressing someone. There are a vast amount of honorific suffixes recorded in the Japanese language; however most are out of date. Today, four are used on a frequent basis in modern Japanese: *sama*, *san*, *kun*, and *chan*. The proper use of these suffixes varies depending on a large amount of factors, including but not limited to: age, social status, familiarity and gender (Bark & Uehara, 2005).

The following chart was made by Lovedays (1986) in an attempt to create a map for the proper use of a suffix. The dotted lines indicate that both the addresser and addressee are male.



By interviewing Japanese native speakers, Bjervås (2012:26) found that Lovedays' chart doesn't correspond fully to how suffixes are used today and that there should be more alternatives in the chart. The following is an updated chart made based on the opinions of four native speakers interviewed by Bjervås.



Addressing a person by name without the use of suffixes is called *yobisute*. *Yobisute* expresses closeness between the users, and is frequently used between close friends. The wrong use of *yobisute* however, can be viewed as extremely impolite (Bjervås, 2012:32).

Japanese has an extremely rich amount of pronouns, each one appropriate/inappropriate depending on the situation, similarly to honorific suffixes. A few first person pronouns that are commonly used in modern Japanese are *watakushi*, *watashi*, *boku*, *atashi*, and *ore*. *Watakushi* is the most formal and polite, whereas *ore* is the most informal (Bark & Uehara, 2005).

*Anata*, *anta*, *kimi*, *omae*, *kisama* and *temee* are the second person singular pronouns existing that are considered to be part of the modern Japanese language, *anata* being the most polite, and *temee* the most impolite (Bark & Uehara, 2005:304). Even with all of these second person singular pronouns, ironically none of them are very appropriate to use when addressing a person of higher status (Shibatani, 1990:372). Instead, titles are typically used to address or refer to someone, often in combination with their last name. For example *Mayuyu sensei*, 'teacher/professor/doctor Mayuyu', or *Abechi shachoo*, 'company president Abechi'.

The same phenomenon applies to the third person pronouns *kare* and *kanojo* (meaning 'he' and 'she' respectively) when referring to someone. Similarly to second person singular pronouns, their use may be avoided when referring to someone of higher status.

### 3. Translation

What is translation? A simple definition by Ian Catford (1965:20) reads: “the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL).” Catford writes that translation is independent of the distinction between synchronic and diachronic comparison. Translation equivalences may be set up, and translations performed, regardless if the languages are related or not, as well as if they share any kind of spatial, temporal or social relationship.

Hasegawa (2012:24) inquires on Catford’s definition by questioning what counts as equivalence. She argues that if a text is translated from one language to another, they must differ in form. Hasegawa (2012:24) continues: “The question of equivalence is a profound one requiring a concrete frame of reference; mere abstract arguments are not fruitful.”

Another short and yet clear definition by Peter Newmark differs from Catford’s by highlighting his idea of the objective of translating (the original author’s intent), and is worth mentioning:

What is translation? Often, though not by any means always, it is rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text (Newmark, 1988:5).

#### 3.1 Hasegawa’s Translation Strategies

In this section I will summarize Hasegawa’s seven general translation strategies: *borrowing*, *calque*, *literal translation*, *transposition*, *modulation*, *equivalence* and *adaptation*.

**Borrowing**, Hasegawa notes, is the simplest translation technique, and is exceptionally prominent in English to Japanese translation in technical fields.

- (7) Konpairu sare-ta      apurikeeshon  
compile do.PSV-PAST application  
'Compiled applications'

She adds that borrowing is also “widely used to create stylistic effects or an air of sophistication” (Hasegawa, 2012:206). In contrast to English to Japanese translation however, most Japanese words are indistinguishable to most English speakers. Therefore Hasegawa brings forth a strategy for dealing with culture-specific words, modern concepts and buzzwords by adding a short explanatory word after the loanword e.g. *soba* → *soba noodles*, *yukata* → *yukata robe*.

**Calque** is another kind of borrowing whereas “elements of an expression in the SL are translated literally into the TL” (Hasegawa, 2012:208). Note that a Calque is a replacement at word level.

- (8) Akimatsuri      (aki=autumn, matsuri=festival)  
'Autumn festival'

**Literal translation** is a calque at a clause level, rather than at word level.

- (9)      Watashi ga    kat-ta      tokoro no    hon  
           I            NOM buy-PAST just    GEN book  
           ‘The book I just bought’

In the sentence above, all elements from the ST has been translated to the TL, each word with the most appropriate counterpart. *Watashi* to *I*, *katta* to *bought*, *tokoro* to *just*, and *hon* to *book*. Literal translation in simple sentences like this seems appropriate, and is also frequently used between languages with common ancestry. However “overly close correspondence to the syntax of the SL can seriously impair the effectiveness of communication in the TL and can even come out sounding ridiculous” (Hasegawa, 2012:209). Therefore Hasegawa adds that literal translation is normally inappropriate. Hasegawa’s opinion on literal translation agrees with that of Newmark’s:

The present excessive emphasis in linguistics on discourse analysis is resulting in the corresponding idea in translation theory that the only unit of translation is the text, and that almost any deviation from literal translation can be justified in any place by appealing to the text as an overriding authority. The prevailing orthodoxy is leading to the rejection of literal translation as a legitimate translation procedure. (Newmark, 1988:68)

“**Transposition** involves rendering of an SL element using TL elements which are semantically, but not formally, equivalent” (Hasegawa, 2012:209). This strategy is, according to Hasegawa, particularly significant in translation between Japanese and English. An example to where this is applicable lies in verbal vs. nominal constructions. The former is prominent in Japanese, whereas English favor the latter.

- (10)      Kore ga    wakar-eba,      mondai    wa    zutto      kaiketsu    shi-yasuku    naru.  
           this    NOM understand-if, problem TOP completely solution    do-easily    become  
           Recognition of this will help us resolve the problem.                    (Nominal construction)

A translation not using *transposition* would result in a verbal construction, and a somewhat less fluent sounding sentence in English as seen in the example below.

- (11)      If we recognize this, the problem will become more manageable. (Verbal construction)

“**Modulation** is a variation of the form of the message that is accomplished by changing its point of view” (Hasegawa, 2012:213). For example: A note on the door with *okosanaide kudasai* written on it is translated into the common phrase *Do not disturb* rather than its literal translation ‘Don’t wake me up’.



**Equivalence** is according to Hasegawa the most frequently used translation technique. It's a strategy that "creates 'equivalent texts' by using different structural or stylistic methods" (Hasegawa, 2012:214). Equivalence has a lot of usage, including but not limited by: greetings, situational expressions, idioms, clichés and proverbs.

(12) O-genki desu ka  
HON-healthy COP.POLITE QP  
How have you been?

**Adaptation** is according to Newmark (1988:46) the most 'freest' form of translation. This strategy is used when encountering a situation that does not exist in the TL culture. The SL culture is converted to the TL culture and the text is rewritten. A good example would be a mitzvah. In this scenario the translator must replace it with a different, but yet similar, situation. Mitzvah could then be translated into, for example, a *seijinshiki* (coming-of-age ceremony) (Hasegawa, 2012:216).

Although not brought up as a strategy, **omission** deserves to be mentioned as well. Omission is a "convenient and thus frequently used technique" (Hasegawa, 2012:52), But Hasegawa cautions that it must not be used at whim. She lists four reasons to use omission:

1. The word introduces too much detail.
2. It creates an overly distracting digression from the main intent of the text.
3. It would require too much space to render coherently into English.
4. It overly eroticizes the TT.

Mona Baker's statement on omission agrees with that of Hasegawa's: "If the meaning conveyed by a particular item or expression is not vital enough to the development of the text to justify distracting the reader with lengthy explanations, translators can and often do simply omit translating the word or expression in question" (Baker, 1992:52).

## 4. Analysis

This chapter will include a review of the book, the method used in the analysis and the analysis itself.

### 4.1 The Book

The popular 1987 novel *Norwegian Wood* written by Haruki Murakami has been chosen as base for the analysis with all the examples taken from there. I have chosen to include the English version *Norwegian Wood* (2000), the Swedish version *Norwegian Wood* (2003), and the Spanish version *Tokio Blues* (2005) as the target texts in the example sentences. The English version was translated by Jay Rubin, the Swedish version by Eiko and Yukiko Duke, and the Spanish version by Lourdes Porta.

Haruki Murakami was born January 12, 1949 in Kyoto, Japan. He has written bestselling books/stories not only in Japan, but internationally as well. *Norwegian Wood* is Haruki Murakami's second novel, published in Japan 1987. The title is taken from a song by The Beatles by the same name, which bears emotional meaning towards the book's main character, Toru Watanabe.

The story is set in late 1960's Japan, where the 20-year old protagonist is studying at university. Quickly into the story Watanabe starts to develop relationships with two different women. The first one is his emotionally troubled childhood friend Naoko, whose soul mate, Kizuki, committed suicide a few years prior. The second one is a fellow university student, Midori, whose lively and open personality could be considered the opposite of that of Naoko's.

*Norwegian Wood* is a sorrowful story of loss that has sold over four million copies in Japan.

### 4.2 Examples

Although social deixis and politeness as a whole can be very complex in Japanese, for the sake of simplicity, some of it has been divided into 3 levels. These levels will mostly correspond to the different forms copula and verbs take. Other methods of expressing (im)politeness and honorification, such as the use of pronouns and suffixes, will not be expressed as levels, and will instead be dealt with individually.

L1 will correspond to the plain/familiar form (e.g. the copula *da*, the verb form *naru* 'to become'). L2 will correspond to addressee honorifics, also known as the polite teineigo form (e.g. the copula *desu*, the verb form *narimasu* 'to become'). L3 will correspond to referent honorifics, also known as the superpolite form, including both sonkeigo and kenjoogo (e.g. the copulas *de irasshaimasu* and *de gozaimasu*, the verb forms *o nari ni naru* and *o nari suru* 'to become').

In order to thoroughly understand the social deixis used in the Japanese text and remove doubt, an interview with a Japanese native speaker has been made.

Before each example, a brief explanation of the situation will be provided for context.

Words whose social deixis is of importance to the analysis are written in **bold**.

### 4.2.1 Example 1

The main character Watanabe has just received manual intercourse from his childhood friend, Naoko.

Japanese (p.259)

*"kore de sukoshi raku ni arukeru yoo ni **natta**?" to naoko ga kiita.*

*"**okagesamade**" to boku wa kotaeta.*

*"jaa **yoroshikattara** moo sukoshi **arukimasen**?"*

*"ii **desu** yo" to boku wa itta.*

English (p.172)

"Will that make it easier for you to walk?" she asked.

"**I owe it all to you.**"

"Well, then, **Sir, if it suits you, shall** we walk a little farther?"

"By all means."

Swedish (p.192)

"Gör det här det enklare för dig att gå en sväng?" frågade hon.

"**Jag är er stort tack skyldig.**"

"I så fall **kanske** vi kan fortsätta en bit?"

"Naturligtvis." sa jag.

Spanish (p.97)

"¿Ahora estarás más cómodo?" preguntó Naoko.

"**Gracias a ti**" respondí.

"Entonces, **si te apetece**, podemos pasear. "

"Como quieras."

The first sentence uses the plain form (L1), recognized by the use of **natta** (to become). Because this is the natural usage between close friends, it doesn't pose any difficulty for the translation. In the next sentence we can see Watanabe saying **okage sama de**, expressing gratitude. Which triggers Naoko to start a "comical role play" by switching to the polite form (L2) using **arukimasen**, which would normally be strange to use between two close friends. Watanabe then continues the use of L2 started by Naoko with the use of the polite **desu** instead of the plain *da*.

**Okage sama de** is an expression and can be translated using Hasegawa's equivalence strategy. **Yoroshikattara** makes the third sentence into a request using positive politeness, and is translated into all languages simply using the same manner. The shift between L1 and L2 however can't, and further strategies are needed. The English and Swedish translators have interpreted the switch in politeness as a comical role play between the characters, and translated accordingly. The Spanish translator has taken a different approach.

The English translator has reacted to the switch and has equivalently translated the newly adopted polite forms using **Sir**, which similarly to the use of L2 in Japanese, would be of strange usage in English between close friends in a normal conversation. By this, the comical role play intended by the author effectively remains through the translation.

The Swedish translator has made a very similar translation of the switch as the English, by using **er**, the plural form of *you*, when Watanabe addresses Naoko. In Swedish, using the plural form or a third person pronoun used to be a way to express politeness or address for example a teacher or superior. Its usage discontinued 1960's however. Its usage here is, just like the English **sir**, is an overly respectful expression to use between two friends, and the comical role play remains through the translation.

While translating **Okage sama de** and **Yoroshikattara** in the same manner as the other TL, the Spanish translator has on the other hand ignored the shift from L1 to L2, and the humoristic role play the author intended becomes lost in translation. As the English and Swedish translations manage to mediate the intended meaning behind the text in a natural way, one could ask why the Spanish translator failed to do so. The social deixis required to translate in the same manner as the other TT certainly exists in Spanish, especially because it has little relevance if the language used is outdated or not. One could imagine that the translator may have simply made a mistake reading the ST, unfortunately only the translator himself could tell us.

## 4.2.2 Example 2

Freshman Watanabe has just met Nagasawa, a senior at the same university.

Japanese (p.57)

*"tada ore wa toki no senrei o uketenai mono o yonde kichoo na jikan wo muda ni tsuiyashitakunain da. Jinsei wa mijikai."*

*"Nagasawa san wa donna sakka ga suki nan desu ka?"*

English (p.37)

"But I don't want to waste valuable time reading any book that has not had the baptism of time. Life is too short."

"What kind of authors do you like?" I asked, **speaking in respectful tones to this man two years my senior.**

Swedish (p.44)

"Men jag vill inte ödsla tid på att läsa något som inte har överlevt. Livet är för kort för det."

“Men vilka författare gillar du då?”

Spanish (p.23)

“Pero no quiero perder un tiempo precioso leyendo libros que no hayan sido bautizados por el paso del tiempo. ¿Sabes?, la vida es corta.”

“¿Y qué escritores te gustan?” le pregunté

In this example, Nagasawa uses L1 when addressing Watanabe, recognized by the copula **da** and the adjective **mijikai**. Watanabe on the other hand uses L2 when addressing Nagasawa, recognized by the copula **desu**. Additionally, the suffix **san** is used when addressing Nagasawa. According to the informant, the difference in the degree of politeness, the suffix and the first person pronoun **ore** may all be seen as normal in the situation. Because Nagasawa is both older and a senior, in contrast to Watanabe being a freshman, the different politeness levels used does not necessarily signal anything other than the difference in social status to the Japanese reader.

The English translator manages to translate the difference in politeness levels by adding **speaking in respectful tones**. Of course, due to the culture difference, this might seem odd to an English reader. Therefore the translator is forced to further explain his added translation by adding **to this man two years my senior**. The Spanish and Swedish translations have ignored the social deixis used, and in that sense omitted it.

The English translator's choice not to omit may be questioned. It poses an “unnecessary” distraction from the main intent of the text. It requires a relative large amount of space to render coherently into English. The text is also arguably introducing too much detail, and eroticizes the TT. According to Hasegawa's reasons to omit, the social deixis used in this example is a prime candidate for omission. The arguably positive effect the added text has is that it has attempted to translate a part of Japanese culture for the reader, something the Swedish and Spanish reader does not receive.

### 4.2.3 Example 3

While Watanabe is in class an unknown person, ‘the short one’, steps inside and tells the teacher that they would like to use the classroom.

Japanese (p. 105)

*Se no hikui kata ga kyooshi no tokoro ni itte, jugyoo no koohan wo tooron ni atetai node ryooshoo shite **itadakitai**.*

English (p. 69)

The short one walked up to the professor and said, with a **degree of politeness**, that they would like to use the second half of his lecture for political debate and **hoped that he would cooperate**.

Swedish (p.80)

Den korte gick fram till professorn. Med **viss artighet** sa han att de skulle vilja använda den andra hälften av föreläsningen till politisk debatt och att de **hoppades att han skulle acceptera**.

Spanish (p.40)

El bajo se dirigió al profesor, le **pidió su consentimiento** para dedicar la segunda mitad de la clase al debate político.

Although no conversation is written, the sentence ends with **itadakitai**, literally meaning *want to receive*. Its form however is in L3, the super polite speech of Japanese. This signals that in 'the non-written conversation', the "short one" uses L3 when speaking to the teacher. Similarly to the English translation in example 3, both the Swedish and English translation has added a line explaining that the addresser uses polite language.

The Spanish translation has added another type of line, **pidió su consentimiento**, 'asked for consent'. By this we can understand that in the Spanish version of the non-written sentence, the speaker asks a request using a negative politeness strategy. Both the English and Swedish translators have taken a similar approach as well, further adding **hoped that he would cooperate** and **hoppades att han skulle acceptera** 'hoped that he would accept'. Due to these factors it's very clear that in every TT, 'the short one' uses a negative politeness strategy, whereas in ST there is no indication that he does. More of this strategy will be seen in example 7 and 9.

#### 4.2.4 Example 4

20 year old Watanabe has gone to the mental institution where his childhood friend Naoko is staying. While waiting, an unknown mature woman by the name of Reiko approaches and sparks up a conversation.

Japanese (p.172)

*"eeto ne, watanabe **kun** datta wa ne, **anata** ga naoko ni au toki ni watashi no hoo kara koko no setsumei o shite oita hoo ga ii to omotta no yo"*

English (p.114)

"It crossed my mind that I should tell you about this place, **Mr. Watanabe**, wasn't it? - before you see Naoko.

Swedish (p.130)

"Det slog mig plötsligt att jag borde berätta för **er** om det här stället, **herr... Watanabe** var det väl, innan **ni** träffar Naoko."

Spanish (p.66)

“Verás..., te llamas Watanabe, ¿no? He pensado que, antes de que veas a Naoko, será mejor que te explique cómo funcionan aquí las cosas.”

In this example the addresser utilizes two different ways to refer to the addressee. Name plus the suffix *kun*, and the second person singular pronoun *anata*. The speaker also uses L1 when addressing the listener. When the informant was asked she concluded that this is a rather neutral way of an adult woman addressing and referring to a younger male. If anything it's casual, rather than polite.

The English translator has translated the cultural word *kun* with a functional term, but is not a cultural equivalent. *Kun* to *Mr.* could be considered a correct calque translation, but in this context, *kun* does not pose any sort of honorification or politeness to the point of what *Mr.* does. The speaker must make a choice on how to address the listener; *yobisute* (no suffix) would be considered rude, while any suffix but two would be considered overly polite or unnatural. The only acceptable choices in this situation would be *kun* or *san*, whereas the latter is somewhat more polite.

Not only does *Mr.* not correspond equivalently to *kun* in this situation, considering the interlocutor's ages and 'normal' social statuses, the use of *Mr.* might seem odd and even unnatural for the English reader. Furthermore, TT does not reflect the politeness and mood set in ST and therefore is not equivalent. The Swedish equivalent of this calque translation will be further discussed in the next example in the Swedish text's analysis.

The Swedish translator has taken a similar approach as the English, with one addition. *Herr*, the equivalent of *Mr.*, is used, but also *er* and *ni*. This will also be further discussed in the following example.

#### 4.2.5 Example 5

After the introduction, the two characters are continuing the conversation.

Japanese (p.173)

*“nee, anata nanika hirugohan tabeta? Onaka suiteinai?”*

*“suitemasu ne” to boku wa itta*

English (p.114)

"Come to think of it, have you had lunch? I'll bet you're hungry."

"You're right, I am."

Swedish (p.130)

*“Är ni hungrig? Har ni ätit lunch? Jag slår vad om att ni är hungrig!”*

”**Ni** har helt rätt, det är jag”, sa jag.

Spanish (p.66)

¿Has comido? ¿Tienes hambre?

—Sí, tengo hambre —afirmé

The Swedish translator continues to use the plural *ni* mutually between the two characters for one page, after that the characters may be considered better acquainted and *ni* is dropped. In the Japanese version however, Reiko consistently use L1 when addressing Watanabe, while Watanabe consistently use L2 when addressing Reiko, the pronouns and suffixes used also do not change – throughout the entire book. Even at the end, where Reiko and Watanabe become significantly closer, it remains the same.

Although using the plural forms *ni* and *er* reflects politeness and formality when addressing someone, it became out of date during the 1960’s (Johnsson, 2006:14). Considering the time *ni* became outdated, this raises an important question. As the story of the book takes place in the 1960’s, this outdated language could be used by the translator for the purpose of using the correct language corresponding to the time the story takes place. This could also have been an excuse for the translator to use this type of language, in order to further be able to translate the politeness from Japanese. Unfortunately, only the translator himself/herself could answer this.

Regardless, the question remain if it would be natural even in the 1960’s Sweden that a middle aged woman use this kind of politeness when greeting a younger male. When interviewing two senior citizens who were in their 30’s during the 1960’s, they concluded that if the user of *ni* would have been the younger one out of the two, this conversation could be seen as natural and appropriate. In the situation of a middle aged old woman addressing a younger male however, granted the younger person is not of royal, or extremely high status, it is not. Therefore we can conclude without a reasonable doubt that the language used in this example is, to a certain degree, unnatural.

The Swedish informants also stated that the use of *ni* would be mandatory if *Herr* is used. We can make the assumption that *Herr* is a calque translation of *kun*, whereas *ni* is almost mandatory to use after *Herr* is used. By this we could argue that not omitting *kun* in example 4 has led to a sentence becoming unnatural, and its usage leads to the use of *ni*, which makes the following conversation unnatural as well. Furthermore, the impression the Swedish reader gets of the situation, is not equivalent to that of the Japanese reader.

#### 4.2.6 Example 6

Middle-aged Reiko, Naoko’s close friend and relatively new acquaintance to Watanabe, is going outside to pick some grapes. Naoko offers to go with her, but instead Reiko suggests to be accompanied by Watanabe.



Japanese (p.2:5)

"*issho ni ikimashoo ka?*" *to naoko ga itta.*

"*nee, watanabe **kun** karite itte ii kashira?*"

"*ii*

*wa*

*yo*"

English (p.179)

"Want me to go with you?" asked Naoko.

"How about letting me borrow **your young Mr.** Watanabe here?"

"Fine," said Naoko.

Swedish (p.199)

"Vill du att jag följer med?" Frågade Naoko.

"Får jag fråga **unge herr** Watanabe här istället?"

"Självklart," sa Naoko.

Spanish (p.100)

"¿Quieres que te acompañe?" preguntó Naoko.

"¿Me prestas un rato a Watanabe?" sugirió Reiko.

"Por supuesto."

Here too Reiko uses the suffix **kun**, this time when referring to Watanabe. When the informant was asked she responded that once again, in this example **kun** may simply be seen as the proper suffix to use by the character Reiko.

The English and Swedish translation has once again insisted on translating the suffix **kun**, again using **Mr.** and **Herr**. Like in example 3 the texts are not equivalent in meaning, but unlike in example 3 the TT's are not unnatural. By adding the possessive **your young** before **Mr.** the translator has effectively added a 'comical element' not seen in ST. The same principle goes for the Swedish translation, with its use of **unge herr**, 'young Mr.'.

One could question the reason for this translation, and the result. The Spanish translation is without a doubt the most equivalent, as no 'comical element' is seen in neither ST nor TT. But on the other hand the strategy undertaken by the Swedish and English translator has at the same time not really changed the text for the worst.

#### 4.2.7 Example 7

Watanabe is trying to reach his close friend Midori. When calling a number he received, a man answers.

Japanese (p.100)

“Moshimoshi, kobayashi shoten **desu**” to otoko no koe ga itta. kobayashi shoten?

“**Mooshiwake arimasen ga**, midori **san** wa **irasshaimasu ka?**” to boku wa kiita.

“**iya**, midori wa ima **imasen nee**” to aite wa itta.

“daigaku ni **ikaretan deshoo ka?**”

“un, eeto, byooin no hoo **janai kanaa. Otaku** no namae wa?”

English (p.66)

A man answered: "Kobayashi Bookshop." Kobayashi Bookshop?

"**Sorry to bother you**," I said, "but I **wonder** if Midori **might** be in?"

"No, she's not," he said.

"Do you think she might be on campus?"

"Hmm, no, she's probably at the hospital. Who's calling, please?"

Swedish (p.76)

En man svarade: "Hallå, Kobayashis bokhandel." Kobayashis bokhandel?

“**Ledsen att besvära**,” sa jag, “men jag **undrar** om Midori är inne?”

”Nej, det är hon inte just nu,” sa han.

”Tror **ni** hon är på universitetet?”

”Nej, hon är nog på sjukhuset. Vem är det som ringer?”

Spanish (p. 38)

“Librería Kobayashi, dígame” dijo una voz masculina. “¿Librería Kobayashi?”, pensé.

“Perdone, ¿está Midori, **por favor?**” pregunté.

“Midori ahora no está” respondió mi interlocutor.

“¿Ha ido a la universidad?”

“No lo sé. Querrás decir al hospital. ¿Quién llama?”

Even though Watanabe and Midori are close friends, Watanabe is referring to Midori using the suffix **san**. This is because in this situation, Midori is part of the addressee's *uchi group*, and Watanabe's *soto group*. Watanabe also uses L3, noticed by **irasshaimasu** and **ikaretan deshoo**, when referring to Midori. The shop owner on the other hand uses L2 when addressing Watanabe. Due to this, the informant could make the assumption that the interlocutor's voices revealed their ages, where the store owner is older than Watanabe. In such a situation this L2 vs. L3 disparity would be understandable.

The expression **mooshiwake arimasen ga** is translated to all languages using equivalence (**Sorry to bother you, Ledsen att besvära, Perdone**). The second line of the second sentence, **midori san wa irasshaimasu ka**, is in reality a very straight forward question, meaning *Is Midori there?* But due to the use of referent honorifics it is still very polite.

The English translator has translated the politeness by adding uncertainty (*wonder, might*) and by doing so creating a sentence using negative politeness. The Swedish translator has done the same thing by adding *undrar* 'wonder'. The Spanish translator has simply added *por favor* 'please', in order to show the politeness. The Swedish translator's usage of *ni* has already been reviewed in previous examples.

#### 4.2.8 Example 8

Reiko is recalling her time as a piano teacher, instructing a troubled 14 year old girl. One day while at Reiko's house the girl felt sick and Reiko tries to comfort her.

Japanese (p.2:14)

sukoshi suru to ne "*sumimassen*, sukoshi senaka o sasutte *itadakemassen* ka" tte sono te ga kurushisoo na koe de itta no. miru to sugoku ase kaiteiru kara, watashi isshookenmei senaka sasutteyatta no. suru to "*gomennasai*, bura hazushite *kuremasen* ka, kurushikutte" tte sono ko iu no yo.

English (p.185)

A few minutes later she asked me to rub her back. She sounded as though she was really suffering, and she was sweating like mad, so I started to give her a good massage. Then she apologized and asked me if I'd **mind** taking off her bra, as it was hurting her.

Swedish (p.205)

"Förlåt, **kan** du stryka mig över ryggen?" Kved hon.

Hon svettades floder, så jag började ge henne en rejäl massage. Då sa hon plötsligt: "Förlåt, men **har du lust** att knäppa upp behånen, den sitter åt så?"

Spanish (p.104)

Unos instantes después me preguntó con voz quejumbrosa si **podía** pasarle la mano por la espalda. Vi que estaba sudando a mares, así que le froté la espalda con todas mis fuerzas. Y ella continuó: "Perdón, ¿**podría** quitarme el sujetador? Me estoy ahogando".

In this example the 14 year old piano student asks the teacher two requests, one of them is asked using L3, and the second L2. According to the informant, the text as a whole is still very polite, the choice to alter from L3 to L2 might simply be for the purpose of not repeating the same words.

All translations has converted parts of the text to negative politeness, similarly to that in example 3 and 7. The Spanish translator has at long last used the polite verb form in Spanish, seen by *podria*. The Swedish translator has on the other hand not used *ni*, a surprise considering the past use of it. The most obvious reason for this would be that the Swedish version has two translators.

### 4.2.10 Example 9

Midori is recalling what answer she got when she asked a question while at a political debate.

Japanese (p.2;58)

*"Sonna koto wakaranai de doo surunda yo, nani kangaete ikiterunda omae?"*

English (p.214)

"One guy **yelled** at me, "**You stupid bitch**, how do you live like that with nothing in your brain?"

Swedish (p.236)

*"Din dumma jävla kossa, hur kan du leva utan något i skallen?" skrek en kille åt mig.*

Spanish (p.120)

**Me gritaban:** "¿Cómo puede ser que no entiendas estas cosas? ¿Qué tienes en la cabeza?"

A (very) literal translation of ST might look something like this:

How do you do not understanding those kinds of things, what are you thinking when you're living?

As we can see, all the other translations seem excessively rude when compared to the literal translation. What the literal translation does not account for is the social deixis behind the second person singular pronoun used, *omae*. The informant was asked to rate how impolite this sentence was on a scale from 1-5 (1 = neutral, 5 = extremely rude). She answered a clear 5, extremely rude.

The translations have all taken measures to account for the impoliteness. The English translator has translated *omae* to *stupid bitch* and the Swedish translator, *dumma jävla kossa* 'stupid fucking cow'. Comparatively, the Spanish translation looks rather similar to the literal translation, with one difference shared with the other translations, *me gritaban*, 'they yelled at me'. ST does not specify if the sentence were spoken, whispered, yelled or anything of the sort. Therefore the 'yelling' is effectively an added translation in order to show the impoliteness, or in the case of the Swedish and English translation, present it further.

Even though all of the texts are undeniably impolite, they are impolite for a different reason. *Omae* is not necessarily impolite to use when addressing someone. For instance the character Nagasawa continuously addresses his close, younger close friend Watanabe with *omae*, without there being any impolite element. The same certainly doesn't apply to *stupid bitch* and *stupid fucking cow*. *Omae* introduces impoliteness because it lowers the social status of the hearer significantly; it is in essence a cultural insult without a proper equivalent in any TL.

### 4.2.11 Example 10

During an emotionally difficult week, Watanabe starts drinking from a bottle of whisky in his dorm which he shares with a stuttering roommate. The roommate isn't too happy about it and asks Watanabe to bring it outside, which doesn't sit well with Watanabe.

Japanese (p.78)

*"**Omae ga dete ike yo**" to boku wa itta.*

*"datte, ryo, ryo no naka de sake nonjanaikenainotte, ki, ki, kisoku daroo" to kare wa itta*

*"**omae ga dete ike**" to boku wa kurikaeshita.*

English (p.51)

"You get the **hell** out," I **growled**.

"But you know drinking in the dorm is a-a-against the rules."

"**I don't give a shit**. You get out."

Swedish (p.60)

"Du kan väl sticka ut." sa jag.

"Men visst är det mot re... reglementet att dricka alkohol på stu... stu... studenthemmet?" sa han.

"Du kan väl sticka ut" upprepade jag.

Spanish (p.30)

"**Vete tú**" le espeté.

"Pe-pero en el dor-dormitorio no se puede tomar alcohol. Son las nor-normas. "

"**Vete tú** —le repetí."

In this example the second person pronoun **omae** is again used, and again the informant was asked to rate the level of impoliteness from 1 to 5. Once again the answer was a clear 5 (extremely rude), due to the use of both **omae**, but also the verb used in its strong imperative form, **dete ike**.

The English translator has reacted to the impoliteness on several points. The word **hell** has been added to the first sentence, and the phrase **I don't give a shit** to the third. Furthermore like in example 9, the translation includes a change in how the speaker utters the words. *Itta* 'said' has been translated to **growled**, in an effort to further show the mood the speaker is in, which is shown clearly by the impoliteness in ST.

The Swedish translator has not gone to any larger extent to translate the impoliteness; the TT is almost a literal translation. While the reader understands Watanabe's frustration from context and language used, the extreme impoliteness becomes lost in translation.

Similar to the Japanese imperative form, Spanish is also in the possession of a strong one. Therefore a literal translation already comes a long way, but further embellishment would be needed to reflect the impoliteness behind *omae*. Like the English translator, the Spanish one has also translated *itta* to something else than *said*. He has used *le espeté*, 'he spat', for the same reason and goal as the English translator.

## 5. Conclusion

The result of the analysis shows a pattern of the different translations. The English and Swedish translators both went to great lengths both to translate the politeness and honorification existing in Japanese culture, but also minor words without equivalence in SL. Whereas the Spanish translator took a more passive route, making little effort translating the politeness in Japanese at the cost of making the text seem unnatural.

The polite singular pronoun *usted* in Spanish, as well as the polite plural pronoun *ustedes* are still frequently used in Latin America. During the time the translation was written it was becoming outdated in Spain (although certainly not as outdated as the Swedish counterpart). Verbs may also take on different forms to express politeness, both in singular and plural forms.

I argued that the translator's job was not limited to be enjoyed by merely the population of Spain, but also the myriad of people speaking Spanish around the rest of the world. My initial theory was therefore that Spanish would have had an advantage to deal with many of the different swings of politeness in the Japanese language, with its possession of a polite form. Whereas the English and Swedish translators would be struggled translating the same. However, even the English translator, whose language's social deixis has been shown to be less capable linguistically of translating politeness than both other TL, has translated the politeness to a larger extent than the Spanish translator.

The results of the analysis did not prove my initial thought completely wrong, as both the English and Swedish translators are striving to mediate the politeness from Japanese. Where the English translator had to improvise or omit, the Swedish translator made a lot of use out of the outdated plural pronoun that was used in Swedish many years ago, and by so succeeding in the goal of mediating the politeness levels in Japanese to some extent. I conclude that the fact that the Spanish translation did not use its language's social deixis to the same extent as the Swedish, suggests that the loyalty the translator chooses is by far more impactful than the differences existing in the social deixis between the three target languages.

By reviewing the results from the analysis we could attempt to categorize a few strategies used in the translation of (im)politeness more specifically than that of Hasegawa's general translation strategies.

1. Add an explanatory line (as seen in example 2 and 3)
2. Convert to positive or negative politeness (as seen in example 3, 7, and 8)
3. Translate using corresponding social deixis (as seen in example 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8)
4. Add and embellish (as seen in example 6, 9, and 10)
5. Ignore (as seen in example 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6)

The most successful translations have been made using strategy 2, 4 and 5, whereas strategy 1 and 3 has more often than not, inflicted damage onto the TT. When reading the example sentences, it becomes difficult not to argue that the Spanish translation is superior in this specific subject. Naturality in TT and equivalence to ST should be seen as top priorities to the translator, and

unfortunately both become compromised on several occasions both in the English and Swedish translations, with their attempts to translate politeness.



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