

# Problems in Descriptive Differences in Phrases Following Dialogues Between the Original and Its Translated Version on *The Mystery of the Blue Train*

Koshiro Kusamoto<sup>\*</sup>

1. A translated work gives a helping hand to those who want to read a foreign novel but are not proficient with the language in which it is written. By reading a translated version, they enjoy understanding the content of an original version, which often encourages them to grow an interest in its writer and be willing to know more about the writer. In other words, through the medium of a translated version, they can have a chance to know not only about a foreign novel but about its writer as well. In this respect, it can be said that a translated work, regardless of its genre or field, plays a practical and important literary role.

In the process of translating from one language into another language that is syntactically alien from the language originally written, various kinds of efforts are made by a translator to cope with problems arising from the difference between the two languages, before a final version of translation is completed. Concerning translation, it is said that a translated version is doomed to be transfigured to some degree.<sup>1</sup> That is reasonable and is undeniable, considering the fact that not only the translated version is linguistically different from the original but also the readers of the translated version usually live in the society which is culturally different from that in which the original is written.

The aim of this paper is to study some descriptive differences between phrases directly following dialogues (PHRASEs below) in an English version and those in its Japanese translation.<sup>2</sup> The original text used is A.Christie's

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<sup>\*</sup> 大阪電気通信大学人間科学研究センター助教授

*The Mystery of the Blue Train* (MBT below). As its translated versions, H.Naganuma's *Aoresha no Nazo* (AN below) , R.Tamura's *Aoresha no Himitsu* (AH below) or T.Nakamura's *Burutorein Sastujinjiken* (BS below) is used. Since attention is paid to PHRASEs for observation, this study has come to deal mainly with the use of verbs or adverbials in PHRASEs.

2. The descriptive differences concerning PHRASEs can be divided largely into two categories: what can be referred to as descriptive differences in form (DDF below) and those in content (DDC below). This chapter deals with problems found in two kinds of DDF.

2.1. DDF of the first kind is related to deletion of PHRASEs in translated versions.

It often happens that what is described in the original is not described in a translated version. In the case of literary works, it is said that if a translator thinks that deletion of a part of the original work does not affect its literary value, the deletion sometimes is needed in the process of translation.<sup>3</sup> As far as PHRASEs are concerned, the deletion can be observed quite frequently, because PHRASEs generally seem to be considered not to play important roles in a work.

About 550 PHRASEs in *MBT* were studied and it is found out that more than one-third of them were not translated in each of the three Japanese versions. Among those deleted, more than half of them are PHRASEs with verbs 'say,' 'murmur' and 'cry.'

Now, let us look at what the deletion of PHRASEs brings about.

(1) From his pocket he drew out a parcel carelessly wrapped in brown paper...He snapped the case open, and the secretary drew in his breath sharply. Against the slightly dingy white of the interior, the stones glowed like blood.

'My God! Sir,' said *Knighton*. 'Are they are they real?'

Van Aldin laughed a quiet little cackle of amusement.

'I don't wonder at your asking that. Among these rubies are the three largest in the world. Catherine of Russia wore them, *Knighton*. That

center one there is known as Heart of Fire. It's perfect - not a flaw in it.'  
- *MBT*, p.19

This scene is in the very early part of a story. Aldin met Knighton about two months ago in Switzerland. Aldin thought then that Knighton was a man of character. When he knew that Knighton was trying to find a job, Aldin immediately employed him as his secretary. It was known that Aldin had been negotiating for the purchase of a certain world-famous ruby. At last he got it. No sooner had he come home with the ruby than Aldin took it out of his pocket and showed it with pleasure to a faithful and reliable secretary. Knighton was apparently very surprised when the ruby was shown to him, which can be seen in his words 'My God! Sir. Are they are they real?' Also in the three Japanese versions, these words are translated in the way readers can understand Knighton's showing his surprise and admiration for the ruby. In *AN* (p.27) and *BS* (p.23), this PHRASE has been deleted. In *AH* (p.32), the PHRASE has been translated into Japanese with the verb 'aeida,'<sup>4</sup> which expresses stronger and more complex feeling than the verb 'said.' Christie makes good use of a variety of verbs in PHRASEs in *MBT*. It is natural, therefore, to think that when she lets someone give such a phrase as 'MY God! Sir,' Christie would not use a simple verb like 'say' in a PHRASE like this but a more expressive verb like 'cry.' There must be some reason why Christie has used 'say' in this PHRASE.

As a matter of fact, it is Knighton who murdered Aldin's daughter on the blue train. He is an expert in deceiving. Knighton is a real swindler. He has been the primary suspect of jewel robberies which frequently occurred around the world. This criminal has not been identified. This Knighton heard that Aldin had been trying to get the ruby well-known worldwide. He hatched a plot to get the ruby. Knighton, before he first met Aldin, had prepared everything so well that he charmed Aldin and was asked by him to work as a secretary, and he accepted Aldin's offer. And now, the ruby is before him, with Aldin innocent of the truth. Looking at the ruby, Knighton gives the phrase 'MY God! Sir' by simply saying it, not by crying it. It can be that Christie expected careful readers to find out, by reading the PHRASE, that Knighton was cool inside. In other words, the PHRASE possibly serves as one significant clue to the search for the criminal. With the PHRASE

deleted as in *AN* and *BS*, their readers are not given one significant clue hidden in the story.

(2) ‘...I had been already in Nice, and the police had sent to me and asked me to assist them, I should have refused. But this affair, the good God thrust it upon me.’

‘You were on the spot,’ said *Van Aldin* thoughtfully. ‘You examined the compartment, did you not?’

Poirot nodded.

‘Doubtless you found things that were, shall we say, suggestive to you?’

- *MBT*, p.106

The conversation was done a few days after Aldin’s daughter was killed on the train which Poirot was on by accident. Aldin was already informed of Poirot’s fame and prestige as a detective. He realized that this Poirot, a very capable detective, was accidentally on the spot. So, while saying ‘You were on the spot,’ Aldin was thinking about something. Then, comes the next line ‘You examined...’ Readers of *MBT* can see Aldin’s mind being occupied by something and imagine Aldin thinking, as that is expressed in a PHRASE. Actually Poirot was later employed by Aldin to work as his private detective. The PHRASE serves to show how a player expresses, on a stage, what he/she says. In the three Japanese, the PHRASE is not translated and is deleted.<sup>5</sup> Readers unfortunately miss a chance to enjoy imagining Aldin expressing himself, saying the two lines.

2.2. In DDF of the second kind, the position of PHRASEs in translated versions is compared with that in the original. It often happens that PHRASEs in Japanese translation are inserted in positions different from in the original. In many cases, it causes no problems but sometimes causes problems. Let us look at the followings.

(3) ‘You can, perhaps, give me some kind of idea of that conversation?’

‘I could,’ said Katherine, ‘but at the moment I see no reason to do so.’

In a somewhat British fashion she felt annoyed. This foreign official seemed to her impertinent.

‘No reason?’ *cried the Commissary*. ‘Oh yes, Madame, I can assure you that there *is* a reason.’ - *MBT*, p.73

In *AH*, the last two lines with an English PHRASE have been translated as follows:

“Naruhodo. Tokorode madamu, koreniwa doushitemo otazuneshinakereba naranai wakega arunodesu,” *to syochouwa sakenda*.  
- *AH*, p.128

The translation in *AH* has resulted in the Commissary crying all the words. However, it is unusual to cry such a long phrase in the scene like this. The PHRASE with the verb ‘cry,’ in this case, should be translated in the same position as in the original. Otherwise, readers of *AH* considers the Commissary to be a man of strange character. In *AN*, the PHRASE has been translated in a proper position:

“Naruhodo?” *syochouwa koewo hariageta*, “Doushitemo ohanashi negawa nakerebanaran wakega chanto arundesuyo.” - *AN*, p.109

Indeed, the PHRASE here is positioned at the same place as in the original, but it is quite unnatural that the Japanese word ‘naruhodo’ should be cried. However, it is not the matter of position of the PHRASE translated but the matter of Japanese translation of ‘no reason?’ which came out of the Commissary. In *MBT*, Katherine first used the words ‘no reason’ as in ‘...I have no reason to do so.’ Then the Commissary, surprised or a sort of shocked to hear her say ‘no reason,’ repeated the words in the form of question. This is what the author calls a ping-pong conversation between Katherine and the Commissary. It is possible to express it in Japanese so that its translation might sound natural. The PHRASE is deleted in *BS* (p.114).

(4) ‘...After my warnings to her, however, she must have written to the Count suggesting a change of rendezvous.’

‘The Isles of d’Or,’ said the Commissary thoughtfully, ‘are situated just opposite Hýeres, a remote and idyllic spot.’

Van Aldin nodded.

‘My God! How could Ruth be such a fool?’ *he exclaimed bitterly*. ‘All this talk about writing a book on jewels! Why, he must have been after

the rubies from the first.’ - *MBT*, p.99

The last three lines with an English PHRASE have been translated into Japanese as follows:

“Mattaku, Rusu tomo aroumonoga, doushite anna bakanakotowo shidekashitanoka? Housekinikansuru syomotuwo kaiteiru nadotoiu kotobani, taburakasarete!

Yatsuwa hajimekara rubiwo neratteitanoda!” *to imaimashigeni itta.* - *AN*, p.149

“Nantarukotoda! Musumeno orokasani akirerubakarida! Housekino ronbunwo kaiteiru nadoto, bakamo, yasumiyasuminishiro! Ano otokowa, hajimekara, ano rubiwo neratteitanodesu,” *Van · Aldinwa, hakidasuyouni itta.* - *AH*, p.176

In *AN* and *AH*, a PHRASE is inserted after Aldin’s words, which clearly shows a positional difference of the PHRASE between the original and both *AN* and *AH*. Considering the scene at this moment, there seems to be no problem about the PHRASE in translation. Readers think that the words came out of Aldin in a natural tone. However, when verbs used in the English PHRASE and the Japanese PHRASE are observed, it is recognized that they are different. In translated versions, the verb used is ‘itta’ meaning ‘said.’ By using ‘itta’ as the translation of ‘exclaimed,’ Aldin’s phrase has come to sound natural even if the PHRASE in translation is inserted in a position different from the original one. But it seems important to guess why Christie used the word ‘exclaimed’ as a verb of this PHRASE. In *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (LDCE below), ‘exclaim’ is defined as ‘to speak or say loudly and suddenly, because of surprise or other strong feeling.’ Possibly Christie chose the verb purposely in order to express Aldin’s confused feeling of surprise, grief and irritation toward behavior of his daughter. Therefore, she had Aldin exclaim first, ‘My god! How could Ruth be such a fool?’ and then say the next long phrase. Readers of *AN* or *AH* could not know this Aldin’s complex tension as being a father who deeply loves his daughter.

3. This section deals with some of DDC.

3.1. DDC treated here is the case in which a translated word has not properly

expressed the meaning of a word used in a PHRASE in the original.

Christie uses a variety of verbs and adverbials in PHRASEs in her works. She tries to reflect fine shades of speaker's feelings by using them, which can be said to be one of her stylistic characters. This is true of *MBT* as well. Considering PHRASEs to play a significant role, a careful attention should be paid to PHRASEs when translating her works.

- (5) '...But he's got one foot in the grave already, everyone knows that, and anything he may say will cut darned little ice with Derek.'

'Can't *you* do anything, Dad?' *urged Ruth*, after a minute or two.

'I might,' said the millionaire. He waited a second reflectively, and then went on. 'There are several things I might do...' - *MBT*, p.21

In *BS*, for example, the line with a PHRASE in question is translated as follows:

"Papano tachibakara, nanika shitekudasaru kotowa dekinakute?"  
sukoshi mawo oite, *Ruusuwa itta*. - *BS*, p.28

Derek is Ruth's husband. He enjoys a love affair with some other woman. Ruth is talking about this matter with her father. She kept silent for a while after having listened to her father, which means she was thinking of something in her mind. At last she made up her mind and let her words 'Can't *you* do anything, Dad?' come out. Christie used 'urged' for Ruth's way of speaking to her father. In *LDCE*, 'urge' is defined as 'to try very hard to persuade or to suggest very strongly.' It must be that by using 'urge' as a verb in the PHRASE, Christie wanted readers to read Ruth's mind that she should strongly wish her father to be willing to take action for the settlement of this problem. But unfortunately readers of *BS* are unaware of this aspect of Ruth's mind, because the verb used in the PHRASE doesn't express anything more than saying. In *AN* (p.31), the PHRASE is translated as 'Rusuwa, shibarakusitekara tsuyoku itta.' In *AH* (p. 36), the PHRASE is deleted.

- (6) 'A thousand thanks for your hospitality, Mesdemoiselles,' *he cried*; 'it has been a most charming luncheon. *Ma foi*, I needed it!' He swelled out his chest and thumped it. 'I am now a lion - a giant...' - *MBT*, p.194

Christie describes Poirot as a well-composed man of intellect in her works.

He rarely raises his voice. Sometimes, however, Christie makes him cry. In this scene, Poirot was invited to luncheon by two ladies, Katherine Grey, who happened to be on the blue train and enjoyed talking with Ruth, and Lenox Tamplin, a daughter of Lady Tamplin. Katherine is a cousin of Lady Tamplin and had already met Poirot. Lenox had heard about Poirot and wanted to speak with him. The luncheon was not entirely a pleasant one. Katherine was dreamy and distracted, and Lenox made bursts of conversation, interspersed by silences. Trying to express his gratitude for their kindness to invite him to the meal, Poirot raised his voice. In fact, Christie made Poirot cry whenever he showed his appreciation or admiration for what has been done for him, and with words dramatically exaggerated. Christie gifted Poirot with this personality.

Now, Poirot's words used with the PHRASE is translated in *BS* as follows:

“Omotenashi, doumo arigatougozaimashita, madomowazaru Kyasarin, soshite madomowazeru Renokkusu!” to *Powarowa itta*. “tanoshii chuushoku deshitayo...” - *BS*, p.311

The verb in the PHRASE ‘cried’ is translated simply as ‘itta.’ With the verb translated like this, what is gifted to Poirot as a specific character is veiled. It is necessary to translate it in the way that Japanese readers also can realize that Poirot, in most cases, is well-composed and speaks gently, but in some cases, he raises his voice. Then the readers can enjoy Poirot showing an interesting personality. In *AN* (p.296) and *AH* (p.347), the PHRASE is deleted.

3.2. DDC treated here is that a certain word in a PHRASE but not an entire PHRASE as shown in 2.1 is deleted in its translation.

(7) Poirot scribbled something on a scrap of paper and handed it across to M. Carrège. The latter read it and his brow cleared.

‘Well, gentlemen,’ demanded the Count haughtily, ‘am I to be detained further?’

‘Assuredly not, assuredly not,’ M. Carrège *hastened to say*, with a great deal of amiability. ‘Everything is now cleared up as regards your own position in this affair...’ - *MBT*, p.114



This is the scene in which the man called the Count is present at the Examining Magistrate's room and is interrogated about the affair of Ruth's death. Ruth had had an affair with him for quite a long time. She was murdered while she was on the way, taking the blue train, to see him secretly. Besides the man, M. Caux, the Commissary of Police, M. Carrège, the Examining Magistrate, and Poirot are in the room. After having spent some time answering questions in the room, the man impatiently demanded haughtily and in an aristocratically snobbish way, 'Well, gentlemen, am I to be detained further?' As there is no more reason to detain him further, M. Carrège replied hurriedly, trying to show his respect to the Count, though he knows it smells fishy that the title Count was truly conferred on the man. Readers of *MBT* can clearly read mental movement of M. Carrège because the verb 'hastened' is used in the PHRASE in italics. However, because the verb 'hastened' is not translated in *BS* and *AH*, their readers have missed a chance here again to read this M. Carrège's mind. They never realize why Christie made M. Carrège repeat 'assuredly not' twice. Moreover in *AH*, the PHRASE is placed after M. Carrège finished his whole words, which has made it almost impossible for readers to know a rather tensed feeling occurring in his mind. Translated versions with the PHRASE in question in *AH* and *BS* are as follows:

"Iya iya" to Kareijyushiwa aisoyoku itta. "Konojikenni kanrenshitenno anatano otachibawa jyuubun hakkirishimashita..." - *BS*, p.182

"Korewa doumo shiturei itashimashita. Mino akashiwo tatete itadaitanodesukara, ohikitori negate kekkoudesu..." - *AH*, p.202

(8) 'You want something from me?'

'I want your help, Mademoiselle.

What makes you think that I can help you?'

'I do not think so. I only hope so.'

'And if I do not help you, then you will tell my father?'

'But no, but no! Debarrass yourself of that idea, Mademoiselle. I am not a blackmailer. I do not hold your secret over your head and threaten you with it.'

'If I refuse to help you - ?' *began the girl slowly.*

‘Then you refuse, and that is that.’ *MBT*, p.188

Words with PHRASE in italics accompanied are translated in *AH* as follows:

“demo, atashiga okotowari shitara” Zia ga mata kurikaeshita. - *AH*, p.336

Poirot has talked with the girl before and they know each other. He is intimate with her father. He is asking for her help. But she hesitates to answer for some reason though she knows Poirot is a reliable man. He tries his best to encourage and persuade her to help him. Not being able to sweep off some kind of anxiety, and feeling confused, she says, ‘If I refuse to help you - ?’ She says it slowly, trying to confirm what answer Poirot will give. The adverb ‘slowly’ used in a PHRASE makes it possible for readers to clearly read this confused mind of the girl and have in mind a picture of her expression worried. If the adverb which serves as an indicator of informing readers of how the girl said the words were not translated in the PHRASE as shown in *AH*, the readers would miss a chance to read this complicated mind of the girl and think that she just said the words in the same way as she said just a second ago ‘And if I do not help you, then - you will tell my father?’. Also in *AN* (p.286), the adverb ‘slowly’ is not translated and deleted.

3.3. Mistranslation of a word used in a PHRASE also can be classified as one kind of DDC.

- (9) It was M. Carrege, mindful of his status and his duties, who tackled the unpleasant subject.

‘Perhaps, Monsieur,’ he murmured, ‘you are aware by whom - er - this letter was written?’

‘Yes, I know,’ *said Van Aldin heavily.*

‘Ah?’ said the magistrate inquiringly. - *MBT*, p.97

Aldin’s daughter was murdered. She was married but had a love affair with another man. The letter was sent to her from him. Aldin knows everything. And comes this scene.

The PHRASE italicized is translated into Japanese as ‘Odinwa omomino

aru koede itta' in *AN* (p.146), 'Van Aldinga, omo-omoshiku itta,' in *AH* (p.172) and 'Van Oldinga omo-omoshii kuchoude itta' in *BS* (p.154). In translation, 'omomino aru', 'omo-omoshiku,' or 'omoomoshii kuchoude' is used for the adverb 'heavily' in the PHRASE. Those three are the same in meaning and interchangeable, and are regarded as one adverb below for convenience' sake. 'Heavily' and the adverb translated both explain Aldin's way of saying the words 'Yes, I know.' However they describe it completely differently. In Koujien, a Japanese-Japanese dictionary, the adverb 'omo-omoshii' is defined as 'ochitsuiteiru' or 'doudouto shiteiru,' which means 'gravely' or 'majestically,' and 'omo-omoshii kuchou,' which is used exactly in *BS*, is given as an example. Regarding 'heavily,' *Longman Advanced American English* explains that if you do or say something heavily, you do it slowly and with a lot of effort, especially because you are sad or bored. It is clear that each of the Japanese PHRASEs has resulted in translation that cannot tell readers what PHRASE in the original tells about Aldin's heart when he was asked and replied.

4. PHRASEs have a simple syntactic structure which consists of a subject, a verb, and sometimes an adverbial. In many cases, they are allowed to be considered to play an insignificant role. But sometimes they should not be. As shown on PHRASEs in *MBT*, Christie enjoys making various use of verbs and adverbials in PHRASEs, aiming to let readers know how a speaker feels in his/her heart when and while speaking. Thanks to her efforts, readers of the original can enjoy imagining the speaker's look, attitude or behavior as if they saw a performer acting in a drama. When translating Christie's works, therefore, close and careful attention need be paid even to seemingly insignificant PHRASEs. It must be well deliberated if PHRASE should be deleted in translation or if words translated are properly chosen so that readers of a Japanese version could enjoy what is expressed in the original to much the same degree as readers of a novel in its native language.

\* Italics in above examples are not in the original, except for '*is*' in (3), '*you*' in (5) and '*Ma foi*' in (6).

## Notes

1. T. Matsumura, *Honyaku no Riron: Eigo kara Nihongo e* (Tokyo: Tamagawa Daigaku Syuppanbu), pp.50-51.
2. 'PHRASEs' is used when in plural and 'a PHRASE' when in singular. PHRASEs are those in italics in the following sentences:  
'He will get back safely,' *she said*.  
'Well?' *asked the other curiously*.  
PHRASEs consisting of simply such a verb as 'say,' 'ask' or 'reply' and its subject, as seen here in the first example, are not treated in this paper.
3. E. G. Seidensticker and K. Nasu, *Nihongo rashii Hyougen kara Eigo rashii Hyougen e* (Tokyo: Baifuukan), P.213.
4. Roman letters not in the original. The same is true of all the phrases below extracted from Japanese versions.
5. See p.159, p.188 and p.168 in *AN*, *AH* and *BS* respectively.

## Books

- Christie, A (1928) *The Mystery of the Blue Train*. London: Harper Collins, 1994.
- Naganuma, K. *Aoresha no Nazo*, trans. Tokyo: Sougen Suiri Bunko, 1979.
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