

# A new modality of audiovisual translation? Covert translation of presenter scripts in Japan's globally aired English-language TV music show

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## Abstract

This article sheds light on an unresearched translation modality that forms a pillar of program production for Japan's publicly funded, globally aired, round-the-clock English-language television channel, NHK World-Japan TV. The modality in question is the translation of presenter scripts written in one language (Japanese) and delivered to camera exclusively in another (English). Through a critical self-reflexion on the lead author's construction and application of translation guidelines aimed largely at optimizing comprehensibility for viewers of the NHK World-Japan TV music show *J-MELO*, new lines of Translation Studies research into this underrepresented modality and its significance in the wider context of international TV broadcasting are suggested.

## Key words:

Translation for broadcast, Audiovisual translation,  
Presenter-script translation, NHK television, Presenter, J-Pop

## Introduction

This article addresses a lack of Translation Studies research into a translation-for-broadcast modality that forms a pillar of program production for Japan's publicly funded, globally aired, round-the-clock English-language television channel, NHK World-Japan TV. Specifically, this modality pertains to the translation of presenter scripts written in one language (Japanese) and delivered to camera exclusively in another (English). It should be noted that NHK World-Japan TV is not the only broadcaster

to air on-camera-presented programs from a national base in which the official or de facto official language is *not* the language of broadcast, and that other such broadcasters include the China Global Television Network and France 24. In Japan, this broadcast model is reflected in a diversity of recurring NHK World-Japan TV programs, past and current, including: *Science View* (2012–present, NHK World-Japan TV), as asserted by Yamamoto (2018); *Tokyo Eye 2020* (originally named *Tokyo Eye*) (2006–present, NHK World-Japan TV), as observed by Fulford (2018a); *Tokyo Fashion Express* (2008–2019, NHK World-Japan TV), as observed by Shibuya (2019); hourly news shows such as *NHK Newslines* (2000–present, NHK World-Japan TV) (NHK, 2015, p.60), and the music show *J-MELO* (2005–present, NHK-World Japan TV), which was launched about 15 years ago and is still running. *J-MELO* showcases Japanese music and musicians. Segments include artist interviews, studio performances, and viewer requests. Some editions have had seasonal themes, while others have focused on music in particular regions of Japan. *J-MELO* has the distinction of being the first Japanese TV music show to be recorded in English. As of summer 2020, over 600 editions have been made. The NHK World-Japan TV channel is operated by the international arm of Japan's public media organization, NHK. It informs a worldwide audience about Japan through programs on, inter alia, news, business, geography, cuisine, sport, and pop culture (NHK, 2019, pp. 5–6). It is available to 300 million households in 160 countries and territories via satellite, cable TV, IPTV, and terrestrial digital broadcasting (NHK, 2019, p.4). It is also streamed live and on demand (NHK, 2019, p.3) and has a presence on FaceBook, YouTube, and Instagram. The channel is central to a service that constitutes one of “the most recognized international broadcasting brands” (Snow, 2014, p.7) and “one of the most important international platforms to[...] introduce[...] Japanese culture” (Iwabuchi, 2015, p.427). Its programs are also recognized as having an important bearing on Japan's global image (Snow, 2014, p.1).

This article is framed as a critical self-reflexion on the lead author's construction and application of translation guidelines aimed at optimizing comprehensibility for *J-MELO* viewers, and it is intended to sketch out

new investigatory pathways into this underrepresented modality and its significance in the wider context of international TV broadcasting.

### **NHK World-Japan, and presenter-script translation as a form of AVT**

Language on NHK World-Japan includes presenter talk (on camera), narration, voiceover, subtitles, and supers (on-screen text items that, for instance, show the names of people and places). In the lead author's experience (over 20 years as a translator, language consultant, and narrator for NHK), most of the English that is presented to NHK World-Japan viewers as speech or text is translated from Japanese and most of the channel's in-house staff are first-language speakers of Japanese. Given the number of channel workers who must understand and interact with presenter scripts in order to fulfil their roles (e.g., floor managers, producers, and camera operators), scripts tend to be written first in Japanese then translated into English for delivery to camera. Indeed, veteran NHK audiovisual translator Adam Fulford (2018b) notes that "Japanese would seem to be the logical language to use [...] to keep everyone involved [...] on the same page". It is for this reason that the Japanese source text (ST) of a presenter script thus represents an essential shared reference for tasks other than the presenter's delivery to camera in English. As Fulford observed (*ibid.*), staff tend to continue to refer to the Japanese ST even while the presenter is delivering the English translation, i.e., the target text (TT), to camera.

It is notable that despite playing an integral role in enabling Japan's English-language TV channel to access a worldwide audience, the presenter-script translation (PST) modality does not yet appear to have attracted critical attention from Translation Studies scholars. One possible reason is that this form of translation for broadcast is primarily "covert" in nature (House, 2006, p.29); given that the program presenter's language for delivery to camera is English and that it is not accompanied on air by the Japanese source text, it is not obvious to the viewer that a process of interlingual transfer has taken place. Further, whereas most audiovisual translation (AVT) research tends to focus on already-shot video for which the

translation process (e.g., subtitling) takes place *after the fact* of filming, PST at NHK World-Japan TV becomes *part* of the video production and editing process from the moment shooting begins, because the lines that the presenter speaks to camera are the English-language TTs translated from Japanese. With *J-MELO*, visual aspects of the show, e.g., whether the presenter will stand or sit for each shot, have typically been planned by a director before the translation stage and have been outlined in writing as shot descriptions on the STs. Each shot description is written beside the lines to be delivered by the presenter to camera. Consequently, production team members can envisage each shot prior to filming. Once the translation is complete, they can also imagine how the spoken language in each shot will sound and estimate its duration. PST at NHK World-Japan TV does not appear to fit neatly within the scope of AVT as traditionally conceived. Notably, it does not appear to fit neatly within suggested typologies of AVT language transfer methods, e.g., Karamitroglou's "subtitling and revoicing" (2000, p.4). A key issue, perhaps, is "recordedness" (Karamitroglou, 2000, p.2). As Karamitroglou (2000, p.3) points out, some scholars consider "only the translation of recorded audiovisual material" as AVT proper. By contrast, PST, as illustrated by *J-MELO*, is part of the creation of recorded audiovisual material. Any "recordedness" (Karamitroglou, 2000, p.2) prior to the moment of shooting is arguably virtual (provided by the shot descriptions on the STs). Since presenter-script TTs become part of the video from the moment of shooting, moreover, the translator is not required to pursue synchrony (another common aspect of AVT), such as "kinetic synchrony" (synchronization of a TT's delivery with the body movements of the person speaking on screen) (Orero, 2006, p. 258, cited in Franco, Matamala and Orero, 2010, pp. 81-82). The PST modality is also distinct in the sense that TTs are not projected on screen in the form of written text (e.g., subtitles) but are instead spoken to camera in the target language. In this way, presenter-script TTs seek to construct a sense of "prefabricated orality" (Baños-Piñero and Chaume, 2009, para.2), by creating a sense that the spoken language is spontaneous and natural through a presenter's adoption of a "direct relationship with their audience" (Montgomery, 2007, p.74).

A key, interrelated, consideration in the specific context of NHK World-Japan TV is that viewers are likely to be users of English as a second or foreign language. This inference is reasonable given the channel's international reach, together with the fact that, globally, there are more second- or foreign-language speakers of English than first-language speakers, the ratio having risen from 3:1 in 2007 (Skapinker, 2007) to 5:1 in 2014 (TEFL Equity Advocates & Academy, 2014, para. 15). Presenter-script TTs for NHK World-Japan TV programs should arguably, therefore, minimize potential cognitive challenges for second- and foreign-language speakers as well as for first-language speakers. The importance of this consideration is compounded by the fact that viewers *hear* the translations but cannot see them.

### Conceptualizing presenter-script translation

Since *J-MELO*'s inception, most episodes have been shot in a studio, with the presenter reading from a through-the-lens teleprompter. As has been discussed, the presenter's language for delivery to camera is scripted in English but written initially in Japanese. At the time of publication, the show's on-camera presenter is a professional singer who has an ongoing career (mainly in Japan). She speaks Japanese as her first language and speaks English with an American accent. At the time of developing the translation guidelines for the production of *J-MELO* presenter scripts in English, the show had a different presenter who broadly fitted the same linguistic profile. Most *J-MELO* editions have included multiple post-opening segments, i.e., segments that appear after the presenter has opened the show to camera. These include interviews, live music performances, record-company-produced music videos, and pseudo-live linkups to musicians in remote locations. Pseudo-live linkups are constructed from shots of the presenter and previously or subsequently recorded shots of the musicians in remote locations. Segments in which a guest might wish to speak to the presenter in Japanese, rather than in English, are shot in Japanese then subtitled in English. Most editions have followed a similar structure, with a title sequence supported by graphics and a theme song marking the start of

the show. The presenter opens the proceedings to camera with a greeting (mainly in English), a brief overview (in English) of the upcoming content, and a link (in English) signposting viewers to the initial segment. After the initial segment, the presenter gives a link (in English) to the next segment. The link-segment-link pattern is repeated until the final segment, after which the presenter delivers closing comments (in English) and takes her leave with a wave goodbye. A credit sequence supported by graphics and a theme song has typically marked the end of the show.

In *J-MELO*'s early days, a lack of published, directly applicable PST guidance created a need for a simple and effective means through which to streamline the translation process and determine the most appropriate course of translatorial action for each episode of the show.<sup>i</sup> One of the challenges facing the lead author in this regard was a lack of access to ST-TT pairs for pre-existing shows (e.g., news shows) that used the same translation modality. Such pairs might have served as useful models of translational phenomena at the lexical, syntactic, and textual levels. For instance, they might have offered guidance on relationships between ST register and TT register and on any audience-appropriate adjustments from ST to TT in terms of handling of ST phatic language. In the absence of published, directly applicable guidelines based on the same translation modality, monolingual models of good practice were sought within the realm of English-language TV presenter scriptwriting, with published principles for TV news writing, in particular, representing an important starting point. Montgomery's description of the "overall discourse structure" (p.39) in *The Discourse of Broadcast News* (2007), for example, proved to be remarkably similar to that of a typical *J-MELO* edition. As Montgomery (2007, p.39) explains, a news program can be described in basic terms as having "signature opening visuals, followed by headlines, which in turn are followed by a succession of discrete news items, and concludes with a signing off from the presenter followed by closing visuals and credits". The broad structure in place in a typical *J-MELO* episode showed clear parallels. Similarities between TV news and *J-MELO* were also evident in the teleprompter-dependent "mode of address" (Corner, 1995; Tolson, 1996; and Allan 1999/2004, cited in

Montgomery, 2007, p.74). As Montgomery(2007, p.74)says of TV newsreading, “[t]he autocue or teleprompter[...]enables the presenter to read[...] while gazing directly at the camera. In this way, visually, on the basis of direction of gaze, they adopt a direct relationship with their audience”. Strictly speaking, of course, the relationship between viewer and presenter is “para-social”(Horton and Wohl, 1956, p.215)in the sense that it constructs only “a simulacrum of conversational give and take”(ibid.)and from which the viewer “is free to withdraw at any moment”(ibid.).

One of the most concise summaries of rules for TV news writing was published by Kant in 2006(pp. 1-2), and it is worth considering in detail, at this point, how these connect with the needs of PST for the *J-MELO* show. Kant’s rules are laid out in Table 1 (with numbers added by the authors for ease of reference). As shown, Kant’s first and second rules correlate closely with the discursive imperative driving the presenter script, i.e., that TV news scripts should be written to be *heard* rather than to be seen.

1. “ <i>Keep it simple.</i> It is most effective to write in simple, noncompound sentences. When you read a newspaper you have the luxury of reading at your own pace. You can even go back to reread something. The television viewer doesn’t have these options.[...]” (Kant, 2006, p.1)
2. “ <i>Make it conversational.</i> Write the way you speak. This is the easiest way to be understood. You are not trying to impress the viewer with your vocabulary. You are trying to make the script as understandable as possible.[...]” (Kant, 2006, pp.1-2)
3. “ <i>Make it complete.</i> A script must include all the critical facts. A partial script is a misrepresentation. It can lead the viewer to make incorrect assumptions.[...]” (Kant, 2006, p.2)
4. “ <i>Make it accurate.</i> You must fact-check when you are finished writing. It’s always possible to make simple mistakes on complicated stories or to lose track of key details while you are writing.[...]” (Kant, 2006, p.2)

Table 1. From Kant’s “cardinal rules” for TV news writing(2006, pp.1-2).

For the would-be translator, Kant’s third and fourth rules are a reminder of the degree of gatekeeping power the translator wields as the person who

potentially controls the flow of information from the ST to recipients of the TT. Kant's rules are also reminiscent of Grice's "conversational maxims" in the categories of "quantity", "quality", "relation" and, "manner" (Grice, 1975, pp.41-58). Notably, Kant's directive to "[k]eep it simple" (Kant 2006, p.1) connects with Grice's category of manner, with its call to avoid "obscurity" of expression and to be brief and "orderly" (Grice, 1975, p. 46).<sup>ii</sup> The twin objectives of simplicity and conversationality explicit in Kant's first and second rules are congruous with other guides for TV news writers (e.g., Block, 1997; Wulfemeyer, 2003; Boyd, Stewart and Alexander, 2008; and Thompson, 2010) and, in particular, with a number of Block's "Top Tips of the Trade" (Block, 1997, pp.32-50). Block presents his tips (33 in all) as TV news writing guidance that will "help[...]listeners" (Block, 1997, p.32). Those with which the objectives of simplicity and conversationality explicit in Kant's first and second rules are particularly congruous are shown in Table 2.

<p><b>“5. Write the way you talk.</b>[...]you’re writing for people who can’t read your script. They only hear it [...]once.[Use]workaday words and phrasing. [Write]in a straightforward, linear fashion[...]. Write as if you’re telling one listener.[...]” (Block, 1997, pp.33-34)</p>
<p><b>“7. Develop the courage</b>[...]to write simply.[...]We are writing for a general audience, comprising listeners at all levels of interest, knowledge, and brainpower.[...]” (Block, 1997, p.35)</p>
<p><b>“10. Go with S-V-O: subject-verb-object.</b>[...]That’s the standard pattern for people who speak English. The closer the verb follows the subject, the easier for the listener to follow.[...]Avoid subordinate clauses.[...]” (Block, 1997, p.38)</p>
<p><b>“11. Limit a sentence to one idea.</b> This makes it easier for listeners to understand a story they can’t read [...].” (Block, 1997, p.38)</p>
<p><b>“12.[...]Use short words and short sentences.</b> The words that people use most frequently tend to be short. People are accustomed to hearing[...]short words in short sentences.[...]” (Block, 1997, p.38)</p>



<p>“13. Use familiar words in familiar combinations. Using familiar words is not enough.[...] [Use] them in ways that listeners are accustomed to hearing.” (Block, 1997, p.39)</p>
<p>“15.[...] Use action verbs and active voice. [...] Use of the passive conceals the actor.[...] Besides [...], the passive voice is wordy. And dull.[...]” (Block, 1997, pp.39-40)</p>
<p>“21. Use <i>and, also, but, so, because</i>—to link sentences. Connectives join sentences and allow listeners to see how they’re tied together in one fabric. [Feel] free to start a sentence with a connective.[...]” (Block, 1997, pp.42-43)</p>
<p>“22. Try to put the word or words you wish to emphasize at the end of your sentence.[...] F.L. Lucas writes in <i>Style</i>, “The most emphatic place in clause or sentence is the end.[...] [During] the momentary pause that follows, that last word continues[...] to reverberate[...]” [...] Bell Labs has found that people remember best what they heard last.[...]” (Block, 1997, pp.43-45)</p>
<p>“23. Use contractions—but cautiously. Although contractions are conversational and time-savers, some[...] cause confusion. The most common hazard is <i>can’t</i>. Even careful listeners[...] can miss the final <i>t</i>; so they think they heard <i>can</i> [...]” (Block, 1997, p.45)</p>
<p>“26. Omit needless words.[...] Rid your copy of <i>thats, whiches, who ises, ofs,</i> and other space-eaters.[...] In most cases, they can be deleted with no loss of meaning—and with a gain in clarity.[...]” (Block, 1997, p.48)</p>

Table 2. From Block’s “Top Tips of the Trade” (1997, pp.32-50).

In tip 10, for example, Block (1997) appears to assume that both his intended readers (TV news writers) and the viewers they aim to address are first-language speakers of English. Given that NHK World-Japan has a worldwide reach and that second- and foreign-language speakers of English outnumber first-language speakers internationally, it is reasonable to infer that many (perhaps most) *J-MELO* viewers are also non-first-language users of English. It also seems reasonable to infer that the same lexicosyntactic choices intended to make monolingual English-language presenter scripts easier to process for viewers who are first-language English speakers would *also* benefit viewers who are *not* first-language speakers. This inference

appears to be supported by research (e.g., Cadwell, 2008, cited in O'Brien, 2010, p.4; Arnold *et al.*, 1994, p.156; and Brockmann, 1990, p.112) showing that the use of a controlled language in texts, defined by Nyberg, Mitamura and Huijsen (2003, p.245) as an “explicitly defined restriction of a natural language that specifies constraints on lexicon, grammar, and style”, can increase comprehensibility for both first-language, and non-first-language users of English.

### Developing guidelines for translating *J-MELO*: A PST case study

Drawing on Kant's summary of rules TV news writing (2006, pp.1-2) and Block's “Top Tips of the Trade” (1997, pp.32-50), the lead author devised a provisional set of nine translation guidelines for the production of *J-MELO* presenter scripts in English as follows:

1. Write in a linear fashion.
2. Try to write every sentence as subject-verb-object.
3. Limit each sentence to one idea.
4. Try to avoid subordinate clauses.
5. Use short, workaday words and short sentences.
6. Link sentences using sentence-initial connectives.
7. Put the key point/fact of each sentence at the end.
8. Use contractions, except where doing so could mislead the viewer.
9. Omit needless words.

Table 3. Provisional translation guidelines for production of *J-MELO* presenter scripts in English.

Driving each of the guidelines was an overarching goal of minimizing the degree of cognitive challenge for viewers. The twin discursive objective of the guidelines, therefore, was to yield simultaneously not only a special form of text (that is, a text-to-be-spoken) but also a special form of text that is intended to be *understood* by viewers regardless of their English-language ability. It is notable that much of the literature on syntactic simplicity/complexity and its effects on ease/difficulty of comprehension pertains to

texts written for *readers* as opposed to texts written for *listeners*. Lowrey (1998, p.188, cited in Jae, 2011, p.153), for example, notes that analysis of syntax is

[...]concerned with grammatical relations between words; parsing skills enable readers to determine the actors and actions[...]in a sentence. Parsing relies on several cues including word order, word class (e.g., nouns, verbs, etc.), word function (e.g., determiners, quantifiers), and word meaning.

King and Just (1991, p.580, cited in Jae, 2011, p.153) highlight the role of working memory, claiming that “syntactic process transforms a linear sequence of words into a nonlinear (hierarchical) syntactic structure, and this transformation requires temporary storage of word representations during the left-to-right processing of a sentence”. Just and Carpenter (1992, cited in Jae, 2011, p.153) offer a capacity theory of comprehension whereby working memory capacity is reduced when the syntactic complexity of sentence structure increases, and Britton *et al.* (1982, cited in Jae, 2011, p.153) tell us that an increase in syntactic complexity is accompanied by an increase in cognitive load, leaving less working memory capacity for readers to comprehend the text. Underpinning each of these observations is the assumption that human working memory is limited. One takeaway for the would-be PST guideline-maker is that simple syntax presents a smaller cognitive challenge than complex syntax. These considerations are addressed by guideline 5: Use short, workaday words and short sentences.

In the specific case of language intended to be delivered to *listeners*, rather than readers, Fallon, Peelle and Wingfield (2006, p.1) state that “complex syntactic constructions place high demands on working memory resources associated with speech processing”. DeCaro *et al.* (2016, pp. 2-3) highlight the value of using unadorned subject-verb-object syntax, pointing out that

challenges[...]arise when the syntactic structure of a sentence departs from a simple canonical form in which the first noun in the sentence identifies an agent that performs an action, the first verb encountered is the action being performed, and the next noun encountered is the recipient of the action (e.g., “The king[*agent*] assisted[*action*]the queen[*recipient of the action*]”) (2016, p.2).

DeCaro *et al.* (2016, p.2) further note that “it is well known that[...]sentences with a variety of complex syntactic constructions are more difficult to comprehend and to recall than those with less complex structures”. Indeed, studies of everyday speech have shown that sentences with relatively simple syntactic forms occur far more frequently than sentences that have relatively complex syntax. Simple, active, affirmative, declarative (SAAD) sentences, for example, have been found to account for 80–90% of spontaneous utterances (Goldman-Eisler and Cohen, 1970, p.161), suggesting that most first-language speakers of English speakers appear to use simple syntax instinctively.<sup>iii</sup> It seems, then, that the emphasis on simple syntax and the subject-verb-object form advocated by Block with regard to TV news writing is well supported by the extant literature on comprehensibility and cognitive load of texts written to be read and texts written to be heard. Block’s approach can be inferred to result in spoken sentences that are basically SAAD in nature, so it arguably realizes a realistic simulation of real-world Anglophone orality, i.e., “prefabricated orality” (Baños-Piñero and Chaume, 2009, para.2).

The degree to which Kant and Block’s approaches can be seen to dovetail with real-world practice in Anglophone TV news broadcasting further lends weight to their validity as instruments in the construction of *J-MELO* translation guidelines. According to Dale (2018), a supervising producer for CNBC Asia and former senior consulting producer at NHK World-Japan TV,

[...]producers and reporters aim to write for the ear. They strive to keep sentences short and spare[...]. Some broadcasters stick to the one-thought-per sentence rule. Others aim to keep their copy

to no more than 20 words per sentence.[...]It's about keeping your viewers[...]engaged and informed, while not overloading them[...].

The translation guidelines for *J-MELO* presenter scripts enjoy a broad similarity with TV news writing in the sense that they both share the objective of being written, to borrow Dale's description, "for the ear". Yet there are also unique challenges to which a *J-MELO* translator must also respond—including those of the Japanese-English language pair in general and the translator's role in mediating the reception of a Japanese music show for a worldwide audience in particular.

The STs for *J-MELO* presenter scripts reflect characteristics of what Wakabayashi (1992, p.60) has called Japanese "house style". Certain characteristics of Japanese house style run counter to Anglophone broadcasting practice. One such characteristic concerns phatic language. Wakabayashi (1992, p.60) notes that "[p]hatic language seems to play an especially important role in Japan, where much stress is laid on interpersonal relationships". Indeed, Japanese is arguably a "hyper-phatic language" (Reynolds, 2000, p.1) as it has "a variety of linguistic forms that are primarily—if not exclusively—used to acknowledge the communicative linkage between speaker and hearer" (Reynolds, 2000, p.2). This view resonates with Hasegawa's observation (2012, p.59) that the use of phatic language "is significantly more common among Japanese writers than writers of English" and with Wakabayashi's view (1992, p.61) that phatic Japanese expressions that "may have the positive effect of creating an empathetic response on the part of Japanese readers [...] [but] may jar on the English reader[...]". Wakabayashi (1992, p.61) gives examples of frequently used Japanese phatic phrases that could, if translated literally into English without any consideration of underlying attitudinal and cultural factors, give the erroneous impression that the writer was unduly obsequious or insultingly presumptuous. Carrying across all ST phatic language from Japanese into English in *J-MELO* presenter scripts could thus be risky. To the provisional list of nine *J-MELO* translation guidelines, a sensitivity to the challenges of the phatic function in Japanese was therefore reflected in the following addition:

10. Omit source-text phaticity when it appears to exceed Anglophone phaticity.

This guideline remains vague by design, in recognition that any decision as to the excessiveness of phaticity in the target language is, by necessity, subjective. The threshold beyond which the translator might judge TT phaticity as unnatural to viewers would be influenced by the translator's assessment of the knowledges and expectations of viewers (not only those who speak English as a first language but also of those who speak it as a second or foreign language). This guideline serves as both a reminder and a recognition that differences exist between Japanese conversational language and English conversational language in terms of socio-pragmatic functions.

An area of translational challenge that corresponds to the translator's unique role in mediating global receptions of a Japanese music show is the phenomenon of referential voids, which Rabin (1958, p.127) described as "blank spaces in the field of reference, corresponding to referents outside the ken of the language community". Specifically, the STs for *J-MELO* presenter scripts appear to reflect an orientation toward a domestic (Japanese) audience even though viewers in other countries are not necessarily familiar with, for example, Japan's geography and history. Whenever a potential referential void arises, addition of contextual information intended to ensure TT comprehensibility to viewers outside the ST writer's own language community (through, for example, explicitation) is a strategy that respects both viewer and ST writer.<sup>iv</sup> (This strategy respects the viewer and the ST writer by promoting comprehensibility for the viewer and, by the same token, by ensuring that the ST writer's intended message for the viewer is not lost or obscured.) Hasegawa notes that a commonly observed strategy is to add "a word or phrase identifying the category or nature of the referent" (2012, p.34). Indeed, in the lead author's professional experience, this is certainly the most succinct means of tackling such a challenge. The translation guidelines for *J-MELO* presenter scripts were thus expanded to include an 11th item:

11. Fill referential voids by adding the minimal necessary contextual information.

Like the 10th guideline, this example is also necessarily vague; the minimal necessary degree of explicitation depends on the translator's judgement of the audience's knowledge of Japan. As Maitland (2019, pp.204-217) has shown, the role of the translator as an active interpreter of the needs and expectations of TT receivers means that the translation the translator produces is thus a contingent judgement based on the translator's *own* imaginative response, not just to the source *text*, but to the *people* the translator imagines receiving it in translation. As an above all interpretive exercise, therefore, different texts will be imagined differently by different translators in different times and in places. It requires, at base, a subjective process of decision-making.

Some areas of translational challenge relate uniquely to the program's presenter. As discussed, *J-MELO*'s presenter is a first-language speaker of Japanese who speaks English with an American accent. In order to ensure congruity (at least to the ears of those viewers familiar with English-language regional variation) between the presenter's American accent and the TT lexis she employs, the guidelines were further expanded to include the following 12th item:

12. Use American English lexis, rather than non-American English lexis, where there is a choice between the two.

The expanded set of translation guidelines for the production of *J-MELO* presenter scripts in English was thus finalized as follows:

1. Write in a linear fashion.
2. Try to write every sentence as subject-verb-object.
3. Limit each sentence to one idea.
4. Try to avoid subordinate clauses.
5. Use short, workaday words and short sentences.
6. Link sentences using sentence-initial connectives.
7. Put the key point/fact of each sentence at the end.
8. Use contractions except where doing so could mislead the viewer.
9. Omit needless words.
10. Omit source-text phaticity that appears to exceed Anglophone phaticity.
11. Fill referential voids by adding the minimal necessary contextual information.
12. Use American English lexis (rather than non-American English lexis) when there is an American choice and a non-American choice.

**Table 4. Translation guidelines for the production of *J-MELO* presenter scripts in English.**

These guidelines are comparable in terms of size and focus to those of certain controlled languages (“languages with a simplified set of rules and controlled vocabulary that shape and constrain the information in technical documents to help make it understandable and, in many cases, aid machine translation” (Crabbe, 2017, pp.1-2)). For instance, they are comparable in terms of size and focus to the guides, created by manufacturing companies, for *Caterpillar Fundamental English* (Crabbe, 2017, pp.28-31) and *Perkins Approved Clear English* (Crabbe, 2017, pp.31-34). Consequently, the TTs for *J-MELO* presenter scripts can arguably be seen as representing a kind of controlled language in the realm of AVT. Parallels are also evident in guidelines advanced by proponents of so-called ‘plain English’. For instance, Cutts (2013, p. xxxi) offers 14 guidelines on style and grammar, including: “1. Over the whole document, make the average sentence length 15–20 words. 2. Use words your readers are likely to understand. 3. Use only as many words as you need.” While Cutts appears to focus on comprehensibility benefits for people who read texts silently, there are also noted benefits for recipients (listeners) of texts delivered as speech. For instance, Cutts observes (2013, pp. xxv-xxvi) that “[i]n an American study of instructions



given by word of mouth to jurors,[...]plain versions improved comprehension [...]from 45 per cent to 59 per cent.” The evident parallels in terms of size and focus between the *J-MELO* PST guidelines and controlled language guides and the evident parallels between the *J-MELO* PST guidelines and plain-English guidelines suggested that the *J-MELO* PST guidelines would not be unwieldy to apply and appeared to underscore their potential effectiveness.

### Application of translation guidelines to an episode of *J-MELO*

Let us now examine the application of the *J-MELO* translation guidelines to a past episode typical of the show (‘J-Music Now’, 2016, *J-MELO*, NHK World-Japan TV, 27 March). The structure of this episode is set out in the table that follows; for ease of discussion, elements delivered to camera by the presenter (reading in English from a teleprompter) have been numbered and italicized.

Presenter	<i>1. Opening comments</i>
Segment	Pseudo-live linkup to artist/group (Morning Musume’16) at event in Texas
Presenter	<i>2. Link to roundup of newly released music videos</i>
Segment	Roundup of newly released music videos
Presenter	<i>3. Link to pseudo-live linkup to artist/group (Babymetal)</i>
Segment	Pseudo-live linkup to artist/group (Babymetal) (ending with music video)
Presenter	<i>4. Link to studio interview with artist/group (Tetsuro Oda)</i>
Segment	Interview with artist/group (Tetsuro Oda) (ending with music video)
Presenter	<i>5. Link to segment showing artist/group (Morning Musume’16) performing at event in Texas</i>
Segment	Performance by artist/group (Morning Musume’16) at event in Texas
Presenter	<i>6. Wrapup comments for segment showing artist/group (Morning Musume’16) at event in Texas</i>
Presenter	<i>7. Link to studio interview with artist/group (Scandal)</i>
Segment	Studio interview with artist/group (Scandal) (ending with music video)
Presenter	<i>8. Ending (closing comments)</i>

Table 5. Structure, ‘J-Music Now’, 2016, *J-MELO*, NHK-World Japan, 27 March.

Each of the eight main elements of presenter speech in the episode will now be examined in turn. Bridging the Japanese ST Japanese presenter script and the TT that was broadcast, and aimed at facilitating the reader's comprehension of the ST is a fairly literal translation(LT)from the Japanese, i.e., a translation that does not reflect the translation guidelines. The first element of presenter speech, "Opening comments", for example, will be referred to as 'ST1/TT1'; the second, "Link to roundup of newly released music videos", will be referred to as 'ST2/TT2', and so on. For ease of comparison, analysis, and discussion hereafter, each of the presenter's lines within each element has been further numbered (ST1:11, ST1:12, TT1:11, TT1:12, etc.)

ST1:

11. 日本の音楽を世界に発信するJ-MELO。
12. みなさんお元気ですか？ May J.です。（ここだけ日本語）
13. 今日は、日本音楽の最新潮流を届ける「J-Musicなう」です。
14. 最近では、世界で活躍する日本のアーティストが多くなる一方。
15. Team J-MELOのモーニング娘。'16は、いま、アメリカでのライブ直前です。  
Hey girls!

LT1:

11. J-MELO, which transmits/dispatches Japanese music to the world.
  12. Everyone, how have you been? [I] am May J. (only this in Japanese) \*
  13. Today, [it] is 'J-Music Now', which delivers Japanese music's latest trend/s.
  14. Recently, Japanese artist[s] who is/are active in/around the world continue to increase.
  15. Team J-MELO's Morning Musume '16 is now just before [a] live [performance] in America.
- \*In the opening comments, this line (and only this line) is to be delivered in Japanese, not in English.

TT1:

11. Hello, and welcome to J-MELO...the only show that brings Japanese music to the world!
12. Minasan ogenki desu ka? May J. desu. (only this in Japanese)
13. Today we're taking our monthly trip to the cutting edge.
14. We're going to find out what's happening in Japanese music right now.
15. And we start by going international.
16. More and more Japanese acts are performing around the world.
17. One is an idol group that's a big part of Team J-MELO.
18. They're called Morning Musume One Six.

19. And they're about to go on stage in the United States.[And call to them.]\*  
 \* “And call to them.” is an instruction for the presenter to call a greeting to the other party in a pseudo-live linkup.

Table 6. “1. Opening comments”, source text, literal translation, and broadcast translation.

What is immediately evident in this example is that TT1 has more lines than the ST1. This is for three reasons. First, guideline 4., “Try to avoid subordinate clauses”, requires apportioning ST1:l3’s description of this edition’s content (Japanese music’s latest trends) to a discrete clause. Second, ST1 contains a potential referential void. Specifically, the ST indicates that “Morning Musume ’16” belongs in some significant way to “Team *J-MELO*” without specifying what Morning Musume ’16 is. Team *J-MELO* was, at the time of the recording, a loosely defined group consisting of the presenter and other on-camera contributors, e.g., musicians who record reports on location. Viewers might adequately infer the nature of Team *J-MELO* from its name. However, they might have more difficulty inferring the nature of Morning Musume ’16. The idol group Morning Musume (named for its 2016 configuration at the time of the recording) is an enduring cultural phenomenon in Japan, but it has a lower profile elsewhere. For the benefit of viewers outside Japan, it was therefore necessary to add the fact that Morning Musume ’16 is an idol group. The added imperatives of, inter alia, guidelines 3., “Limit each sentence to one idea”, and 7., “Try to put the key point/fact of each sentence at the end”, led to the division of the description of Morning Musume ’16 between TT1:l7 and TT1:l8. The third reason TT1 contains more lines than ST1 is rooted in the relationship between ST1:l4 and ST1:5. While the ST writer appears to have felt that viewers would be able to *infer* that Morning Musume ’16 is among the Japanese acts that are active internationally, this relationship was made explicit in the TT. The name of the idol group is written in the TT as “Morning Musume One Six” to reflect the pronunciation specified by the group. The use of longform writing here further helps minimize the cognitive load for the presenter.

TT1:12“borrows” (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1995/2004, p.85) the Japanese phrase and retains it within the English. The Japanese phrase in question, loosely translatable as “Everyone, how have you been?”, is a signature element of nearly every *J-MELO* opening. Addressing viewers *en masse* is a common feature of Japanese-language broadcasting. In Anglophone broadcasting, by contrast, the “secret of communicating with an audience, however large, is to write and speak as though you were talking to only one person” (Boyd, Stewart, and Alexander, 2008, p.71). The phatic language present in the corresponding ST line furthermore arguably flouts translation guideline 10, “Omit source-text phaticity that appears to exceed Anglophone phaticity”. Together, these distinctions would appear to call most obviously for the line to be adapted to fit the expectations of an Anglophone audience. However, there is also a benefit in terms of promoting intercultural understanding to be derived from taking advantage of the frequent repetition of the Japanese phrase (uttered at the top of every show)—a phrase that is also very likely to be understood by non-first-language-Japanese-speaking viewers sufficiently interested in Japan to watch the NHK World-Japan TV channel.

<p><b>ST2:</b></p> <p>11. モーニング娘。'16のライブは、後ほどたっぷりとお届けします！</p> <p>12. そして日本では今、彼女たちのような女性グループの新曲リリースラッシュなんです！</p>
<p><b>LT2:</b></p> <p>11. [I] will later amply/abundantly deliver/bring Morning Musume '16's live [performance].</p> <p>12. And, now in Japan, release[s] of new song[s] of female group[s] like them is/are [coming in a] flood.</p>
<p><b>TT2:</b></p> <p>11. We'll check out Morning Musume One Six's live show a little later.</p> <p>12. Right now, I want to give you a taste of the latest Japanese releases</p> <p>13. There's been a wave of great new tracks from female groups.</p> <p>14. Here are just a few.</p>

Table 7. “2. Link to roundup of newly released music videos”, source text, literal translation and broadcast translation.

Here, too, TT2 contains more lines than ST2. One reason for this is that the TT here requires an explicit signpost to the upcoming segment content. Reflecting also the obligations of guidelines 3 and 7, a split was introduced between the content given in ST2:l2 and its manifestation in TT2:l2 and TT2:l3. While the writer of the Japanese ST presenter script appears to have felt that viewers would be able to infer that the upcoming songs referenced by the content were merely a selection of new releases rather than an exhaustive compilation, the fact that the songs are just a selection was made explicit in TT2:l4, thereby minimizing guesswork on the part of viewers.

<p>ST3:</p> <p>1. この中に、これからまさにワールドツアーを行うグループがいます。 BABYMETALの皆さん！</p>
<p>LT3:</p> <p>1. In here, there is[a]group that from now on will do/conduct[a]world tour. 2. Everyone in/of Babymetal!</p>
<p>TT3:</p> <p>1. The girls in one of those acts are about to start a world tour. 2. We're going to catch up with them right now. 3. [Call to Babymetal.]</p>

Table 8. “3. Link to pseudo-live linkup to artist/group(Babymetal)”, source text, literal translation and broadcast translation.

The main reason for the addition of an extra line in TT3 is to signpost the upcoming content explicitly, i.e., a conversation with a group. The fact that the group’s members are female has also been made “explicit” (Blum-Kulka, 1986/2004, p.300), in part to encourage greater identification with the band on the part of viewers, and also to support their engagement with the content by avoiding impersonal references to a potentially unknown group of people. Indeed, making the ‘humanity’ of a group more clear is further a common feature of TV news.

<p><b>ST4:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. BABYMETALで「※曲目未定」でした。</li> <li>12. 続いては、作曲家としても大成功を取めたミュージシャンが、新しいロックバンドを結成。</li> <li>13. いまの気持ちを伺います。</li> </ol>
<p><b>LT4:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. [That] was Babymetal with [song title not yet fixed].</li> <li>12. Subsequently/next, [a] musician [s] who has/have/had great success as, inter alia, a songwriter [s] has/is/are formed/forming [a] new rock band.</li> <li>13. [I/We] will ask/be told current feelings/mood/preparedness.</li> </ol>
<p><b>TT4:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That was Babymetal with “[song title not yet fixed]”.</li> <li>2. Next up is one of Japan’s most successful songwriters.</li> <li>3. He’s just formed a new rock band.</li> <li>4. So he’s joining me to talk about where he’s been...and where he’s headed.</li> </ol>

Table 9. “4. Link to studio interview with artist/group (Tetsuro Oda)”, source text, literal translation and broadcast translation.

ST4:l1 and ST4:l3 highlight (a) a tendency in Japanese to omit subjects where the speaker/writer feels that they can be inferred from the context and (b) a corresponding need to make such omitted subjects explicit in the TT. This passage also makes evident a difference between Japanese and English with respect to number (singularity or plurality). In Japanese, number is a lexical category in that, as Baker (2011, p.96) explains, “the form of a noun[...] does not normally indicate whether it is singular or plural”. Japanese writers and speakers tend not to make number explicit even though they have the lexical resources to do so. In ST4:l2, for example, this tendency is evident in the use of 「ミュージシャン」 (literal translation: musician[s]), which does not indicate whether the referent is a single musician or a number of musicians. In English, by contrast, number is a grammatical category (Baker, 2011, p.96), meaning that singularity or plurality must be made explicit. The act was named as Tetsuro Oda (a man) in production-related paratextual information in the ST text file, so the correct numerical choice and gender could be inferred and used to support the translation.

<p><b>ST5:</b></p> <p>11. ROLL-B DINOSAURで「ROLL-B Dinosaur」でした。</p> <p>12. さあ、お待たせしました。</p> <p>31. ヒューストンのモーニング娘。'16、いよいよライブのスタンバイが完了したようです！</p>
<p><b>LT5:</b></p> <p>11. [That] was ROLL-B DINOSAUR with “ROLL-B DINOSAUR”.</p> <p>12. Well/now/then, [I] kept [you] waiting.</p> <p>13. Morning Musume '16 in/of Houston...at last/finally appear to have completed standby for live [performance] .</p>
<p><b>TT5:</b></p> <p>11. That was ROLL-B DINOSAUR with “ROLL-B Dinosaur”.</p> <p>12. Now we're heading back to Houston...because Morning Musume One Six are about to hit the stage.</p>

Table 10. “5. Link to segment showing artist/group(Morning Musume'16) performing at event in Texas”, source text, literal translation, and broadcast translation.

Here, TT5 has fewer sentences than ST5 due to the omission of ST5:12. In the ST, this line appears to encode an apology for having made the viewer wait for something. Translated on this basis, the corresponding TT line would be, “Thank you for waiting.” From a pragmatic perspective, however, it appears to be a strategic use of hyperbole aimed at exciting the viewer about the coming content. The dramatic verb phrase “hit the stage” in the final clause of TT5:12 (“Morning Musume One Six are about to hit the stage”) encodes the ST writer’s apparent attempt to excite the viewer. Simultaneously, it respects guideline 7 (“Put the key point/fact of each sentence at the end”).

<p><b>ST6:</b></p> <p>11. モーニング娘。'16のヒューストンでのライブでした。</p> <p>12. 私もまた、アメリカでライブをやりたい！</p>
<p><b>LT6:</b></p> <p>11. [That] was [a] live [performance] of/by Morning Musume '16 in Houston.</p> <p>12. I too want to [perform] live in America again.</p>

<p><b>TT6:</b></p> <p>11. That was Morning Musume One Six in Houston.  12. They've made me miss the United States.  13. I'd love to sing there again.</p>
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**Table 11. "6. Wrapup comments for segment showing artist/group (Morning Musume '16) at event in Texas", source text, literal translation and broadcast translation.**

By omitting the ST6:l1 reference to a live performance (which is rendered superfluous by the fact that the viewer has just seen the preceding video of a live performance), TT6:l1 enacts the requirements of guideline 9., "Omit needless words". TT6:l2 is not a formal rendering of any part of ST6 and instead serves a bridging purpose aimed at avoiding an unduly abrupt (from the viewer's perspective) transition in terms of duration from the giving of information about the group's performance in Houston to the presenter's recollection of singing in America and her wish to do so again. Given that each of the *J-MELO* STs appears to reflect an orientation toward a domestic audience and that the presenter has an established singing career in Japan, the ST writer may have assumed that viewers would already know that the presenter had performed in the United States.

<p><b>ST7:</b></p> <p>11. ワールドツアーといえば、Team J-MELOのあのガールズバンドを忘れることはできません。  12. 新譜を引っ提げて、スタジオにやってきます！</p>
<p><b>LT7:</b></p> <p>11. Speaking of world tour[s],[we]can't forget that all-girl band in/of Team J-MELO.  12. [They]will come to[the]studio carrying[a]new music release[s].</p>
<p><b>TT7:</b></p> <p>11. One all-female band that's toured the world is part of Team J-MELO.  12. The girls have just put out a new track.  13. So they're dropping in for a chat.</p>

**Table 12. "7. Link to studio interview with artist/group (Scandal)", source text, literal translation and broadcast translation.**



In ST7:l1, the use of 「あのガールズバンド」(back translation: “that girl band”) without any name to identify the band appears to be an attempt to stir the viewer’s curiosity by combining hyperbole with vagueness. It was deemed that such hyperbole and vagueness would not be likely to have such an effect in English, so they were omitted from the TT.

<p><b>ST8:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. SCANDALで「LOVE ME DO」でした。</li> <li>12. 今回のJ-MELO如何でしたか？</li> <li>13. 盛りだくさんの内容でお楽しみいただけただけなのは？</li> <li>14. メール、写真、映像はウェブサイトまで。</li> <li>15. それではまた来週、さよなら！</li> </ol>
<p><b>LT8:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. [That] was SCANDAL with “LOVE ME DO”.</li> <li>12. How was this time/edition of J-MELO?</li> <li>13. Did [you] enjoy [it] with [its] large/varied amount of content?</li> <li>14. [Send] [e] mail [s], photo [s] [and] video [s] to [the/our] website.</li> <li>15. Well then, again next week, sayonara!</li> </ol>
<p><b>TT8:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. That was SCANDAL with “LOVE ME DO”.</li> <li>12. And that’s all we have time for today.</li> <li>13. Remember we love hearing from you.</li> <li>14. So keep sending your messages!</li> <li>15. And keep sharing your photos and videos!</li> <li>16. I’ll see you next time.</li> <li>17. Until then...<i>sayonara!</i></li> </ol>

Table 13. “8. Ending(Closing comments)”, source text, literal translation, and broadcast translation.

ST8:l2 is a signal that the show is about to end. It also appears to embody phaticity as it would, if spoken in Japanese to native-Japanese-speaking viewers, likely reestablish phatic communion with them. In light of guideline 10, much of the phaticity was omitted. TT8:l2 arguably performs the same pragmatic functions as ST8:l2 by(a)., signaling that the show is about to end and(b)., reminding viewers(albeit less explicitly than ST8:l2)that this edition has included a large amount of material. ST8:l4 invites viewers, in a single sentence, to send in email messages, photos, and videos. In recognition of a

preference for short sentences enshrined in guideline 5, “messages” was apportioned to TT8:14 and “photos and videos” to TT8:15. The reference to “messages”, moreover, would otherwise have been buried at the end of the sentence, in contravention of guideline 7. The Japanese word *sayonara* (loosely translatable as ‘goodbye’) at the end of ST8:15 is borrowed from the ST and retained at the end of TT8:15. It is a signature element of the closing comments of nearly every edition of *J-MELO* and was judged very likely to be understood by non-Japanese-speaking viewers sufficiently interested in Japan and its language and culture to watch NHK World-Japan TV.

### Concluding remarks

This article has focused on only one of the NHK World-Japan TV programs in which the presenter-script translation mode explicated here is in active use. Nevertheless, it has opened a window to this exciting AVT modality and invites further research and reflexion. Given that NHK World-Japan TV is not the only broadcaster to air on-camera-presented programs from a national base in which the official or de facto official language is *not* the language of broadcast, a fruitful research avenue is therefore the role of presenter-script translation among broadcasters outside Japan. Research questions still to be addressed include, for instance, what similarities or differences exist between presenter-script translators’ strategies for simulating real-world orality and enhancing comprehensibility (two key, interrelated goals for the *J-MELO* PST guidelines described in this article). Reception studies might investigate how effective such approaches are from the perspective of viewers. Forthcoming research from the authors, for example, uses a translation-orientated focus group method to determine strategic opportunities to enhance the effectiveness of translations aimed at young audiences and broadcast and disseminated within a pop music context.<sup>v</sup> Given that presenter-script translation is a form of “covert” (House, 2006, p.29) translation, research into presenter-script translation is limited by access constraints. Researchers wishing to investigate how TV broadcasters

implement translation within their organizations require copies of scripts in the source language, copies of the broadcast translations, and any paratextual material. Research into this modality thus requires active participation from program-makers. Meeting this challenge will therefore promote cooperation between AVT researchers and the TV industry, paving the way for further and deeper investigation.

### Note from the authors

The authors are grateful to *J-MELO*'s Executive Producer Yoshihito Kondo for permission to use program content. The *J-MELO* program format described in this article was revised in 2018. The translation guidelines described in this article are still in operation with the format adopted since 2018.

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<sup>i</sup> Professional translators known personally to the lead author had worked in the presenter-script modality and can be assumed to have developed their own guidelines, but no such material had been published for public consumption at the time.

<sup>ii</sup> Whereas Grice envisaged conversational partners taking part in dialogical exchange, of course, TV news scripts are delivered by the presenter without an interlocutor and are thus monological at base.

<sup>iii</sup> SAAD sentences occur so frequently because SAAD is the clause type most suitable for asserting new information with the least presupposition (Givón, 1979, cited in Taylor and Taylor, 1983, p.285).

<sup>iv</sup> For a detailed discussion of explicitation, see, e.g., Saldanha, 2008.

<sup>v</sup> See: Maitland, S. and Heath, D. (Forthcoming) 'Putting the "Pop" into J-Pop: Using Creative Subtitles to Promote Japanese Popular Music Globally'.