

# The *Other* in Myself Generated through Foreign Language

---

**NOBUHIKO ITANI**

Graduate School of Education, Kyoto University

Not only language but we ourselves are also changing in translation. The other in myself is to be generated through foreign language. It's like metamorphosis of insects in spring.

When I try to translate my thought from Japanese into foreign language, I always find it difficult to keep the nuance of the thought. It is easier for me to make new sentences in English than to translate Japanese sentences into English. I used to believe that the difficulty of translation was caused by a defect of my English skill. In my first trip abroad for the international conference at IoE and the annual conference of PESGB at University of Oxford, however, I came to discover another reason why my previous translations of my thought had almost always failed. I've found that translation is a field where new ideas and even a new self are being generated.

Indeed, I can convert a Japanese word into an English word, which is, in light of the definition by a dictionary, supposed to have almost same meaning as the Japanese one. I can also transcribe some Japanese sentences into English equivalents. However, since my native language Japanese constitutes both my body and mind, I cannot translate my thought into English without changing my whole self. In other words, my thought cannot be translated into English by myself, because I myself as a Japanese writer am dying in the process of translation while the other as an English writer is to be born in myself. It seems me to be easier to translate objective data or information as well as the thought of someone else by converting one language to another. But as far as my own thought is concerned, my translation inevitably fails, unless the generation of the other in myself is realized.

I myself and my thought are to be reborn in translation, which becomes more apparent in face-to-face dialogue than in solitary writing. There is not enough time to reflect our own notion in dialogue, while we can objectify our thought more clearly in writing enough to translate it as if it were made by someone else. Expressions and tones of my voice are also important factors not only for communication with others but also for the transformation of myself. Thus, although it was a very challenging job for me as a foreigner to argue with efficient graduate students in UK on educational issues, it made me realize that translation of my own thought was an opportunity for a metamorphosis of myself, that is to say, a chance to meet the other in myself.

Indeed the other in myself tells me a lot of things. He or she illuminates some essential aspects of my thought and elucidates its possibility and limits. It is, however, a mere outcome of this encounter with the other in myself. The most surprising event here is the encounter itself. I never intended to transform myself when I was discussing philosophical issues with people in the UK: I just could not stop the transformation of myself. The atmosphere of both conferences in the UK had major influences on this

transformation. I was very impressed with the fact that almost all people took part in discussions intensively and enjoyed it. They were friendly enough to get acquainted with each other even when they met for the first time.

Though the other in myself disappears when I am speaking in Japanese, the impact of his or her existence always remains. It becomes easier for me to learn English after I realized the existence of the other in myself. It's not me but the other in myself who writes and speaks in English. It's not me but the other in myself who should feel ashamed of my insufficient command of English. This other is a new born. I'm now enjoying the development of the other in myself and of his or her thought. I'm most grateful to all professors and members who were engaged in this project at IoE and Kyoto University for offering us such a good opportunity of this valuable experience.



Session