

Leveling Up: How to Raise the Quality of Your Audiovisual Translations

Sarah Alys Lindholm

Warning: The presentation you are
about to view may contain adult language.

Why Quality?

- ▶ Advantages of upping your quality:
 1. Quality is awesome, and also profitable.
 2. Your work gets fewer edits = you get more of what you want.
 3. The editor is in control, but you can help steer the ship.

Common Errors

- ▶ Question/Answer Mismatch
- ▶ Missing Lines
- ▶ Inconsistency (The Greatest Sin of All)
- ▶ Mismatch with Visuals
- ▶ Not Identifying What's Important
 - ▶ Choosing the Wrong Thing to Cut
 - ▶ Bonus Section: “Wordplay Is the Devil’s Work”
- ▶ Being a Bad Fortune-Teller

Scripting Mismatches

- ▶ The usual suspects: tense agreement, subject/verb agreement.
- ▶ The special audiovisual challenge: question/answer agreement.
 - ▶ Happens because the Q & A are in different subtitles, and you've let them separate in your brain.
 - ▶ Happens when you rewrite one but forget to adjust the other.

Q & A Mismatch Examples

Fred: Didn't you hear?

Bob: No, I haven't.

[context: Ichinomiya went to watch MacArthur's battle]

MacArthur: Don't tell me you didn't come watch our battle,
Ichinomiya?

Ichinomiya: Of course not, General MacArthur!

Missing Lines

- ▶ If the show comes pre-timed/pre-spotted, don't trust that the file is complete.
 - ▶ Everybody misses something sometime!
 - ▶ The worst case: A show had 2 minutes of dialogue left out at the beginning because the spotter “assumed that would be the opening song,” and no one checked.
- ▶ Missing short lines like “Yes” or 「そうだ。」
 - ▶ Native speakers should be especially careful.

Inconsistency, or: “Easy Things Are Hard. Do Them Anyway.”

- ▶ Terminology
 - ▶ Inconsistencies caused by not keeping a list, mismanaging your list, or failing to check your list
 - ▶ The curse of Season 2
 - ▶ Potential legal issues
 - ▶ When inconsistency is thrust upon you
- ▶ Flashbacks
- ▶ Catch phrases
- ▶ Keywords, setups/payoffs

Mismatch with the Visuals

- ▶ Result of attention problems or translating from the script only
- ▶ Breaks the story
- ▶ Makes the product incomprehensible

Breaking the Story



「それだけじゃ不満か?」

“Isn’t that enough for you?”



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“Is that so dissatisfying?”

- ▶ The scene is restored
- ▶ The English doesn't sound as good. ☹

Breaking the Sense



Choosing the Wrong Thing to Cut

To choose what to cut,
first identify what *must not* be cut.

- ▶ What's important, and what's not?
 - ▶ Repetition
 - ▶ Names
 - ▶ Setups and payoffs
 - ▶ Tone



Wordplay Is the Devil's Work

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Black Butler Facts

- ▶ Set in Victorian England, 1888
- ▶ Main characters:
 - ▶ Sebastian, a demon serving in the role of butler
 - ▶ Ciel, his human master

「あくまで執事ですから。」

Double meaning alert!

Ostensibly he's saying 「飽くまで執事ですから」

(“You see, I am but a mere butler”)...

...but the audience is in on the joke 「悪魔で執事ですかから」 (“You see, I am a demon and a butler”).

Start by deciding what's important.

- Funny/not funny
- Dirty/not dirty
- Should different listeners take it differently?
- Actual meaning
- Specific keywords/specific concepts
- Parody or reference
- Miscellaneous factors that strike you

「あくまで執事ですから。」

- ✓ Listeners take it differently based on their *knowledge* that Sebastian's a demon
- ✓ Actual meaning—if you don't know he's a demon, you take the line for its actual meaning
- ✓ Specific concepts: demon, butler/servitude
- ✓ Miscellaneous factor: smugness

**“You see,
I am merely
one hell of a
butler.”**

- ▶ Literal meaning retained so “outsiders” won’t see joke
- ▶ Demonic concept incorporated with “hell”
- ▶ You can tell something’s special about the line because butlers don’t usually say “hell”
- ▶ Another option I considered: “devilishly good butler”

Being a Bad Fortune-Teller

The Future Is Out to Get You

- ▶ When the future is already out there
 - ▶ Know, don't guess!
- ▶ When nobody knows the future
 - ▶ Maintain appropriate ambiguity
 - ▶ Avoid guessing genders
 - ▶ Check your assumptions (are you projecting?)
 - ▶ Don't guess the client's language requirements
 - ▶ Don't add anything



How to Level Up

Before, During, After

Before You Start Translating

- If the client only sent you the script or only sent you the video, request the missing piece.
 - Working in advance from scripts: some can “fix it later” and some can’t. Tip: if you need/want to work from the script in advance, don’t attempt the parts you can’t visualize.
- Watch/read whatever material is available to get the story straight in your mind.
- As you prewatch, look out for what problems will come up.
- Prep a terms list.

As You Translate

- Use the script as a tool, not as the text.
- Use terminology lists & copy/paste correctly, every time.
- The danger point is when you tinker; always double-check.
 - This is where many typos & text mismatches happen.
- Avoid mixing different countries' phrasings.
- Be conservative about drawing conclusions/predicting the future.
 - What does 「事故で死んだ」 or “He died in an accident” tell you?
 - Are you speaking for the character or for yourself?
 - Avoid guessing genders.

After You Translate

- General proofreading
- Does anything in the video mess with the words I chose?
- Did I miss any lines?
- Is it too fast?
- Did I draw any conclusions accidentally?
 - I noticed the 事故 one during final checks earlier this weekend!
- Spell checking

Thank you!

You can find the PDF on:

- The JAT website
- <http://sal.detailwoman.net>