



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

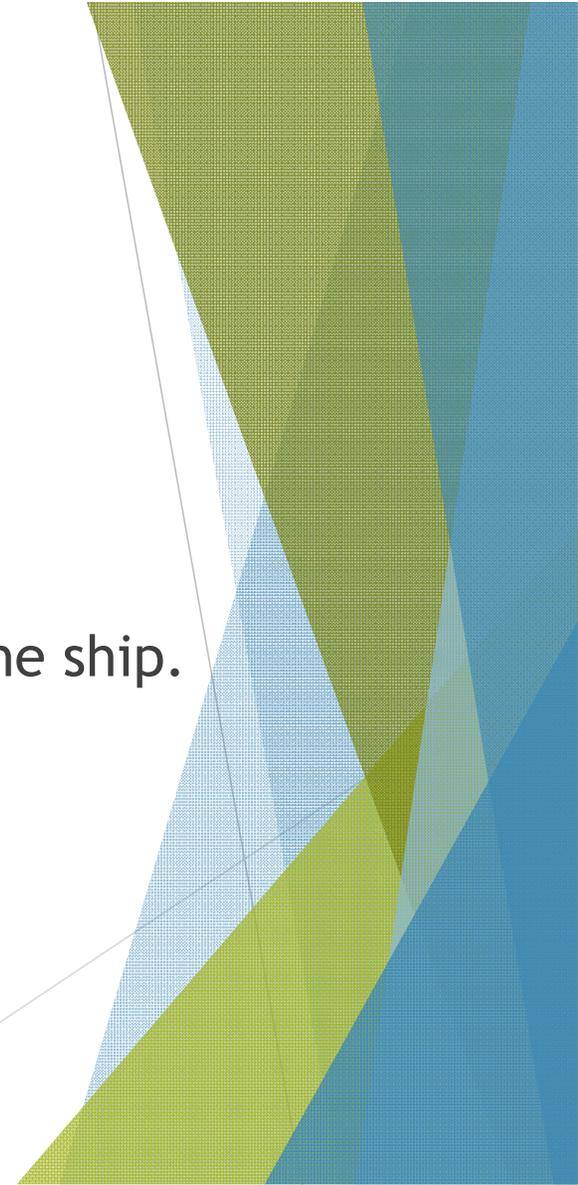
Sarah Alys Lindholm

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

# Why Quality?

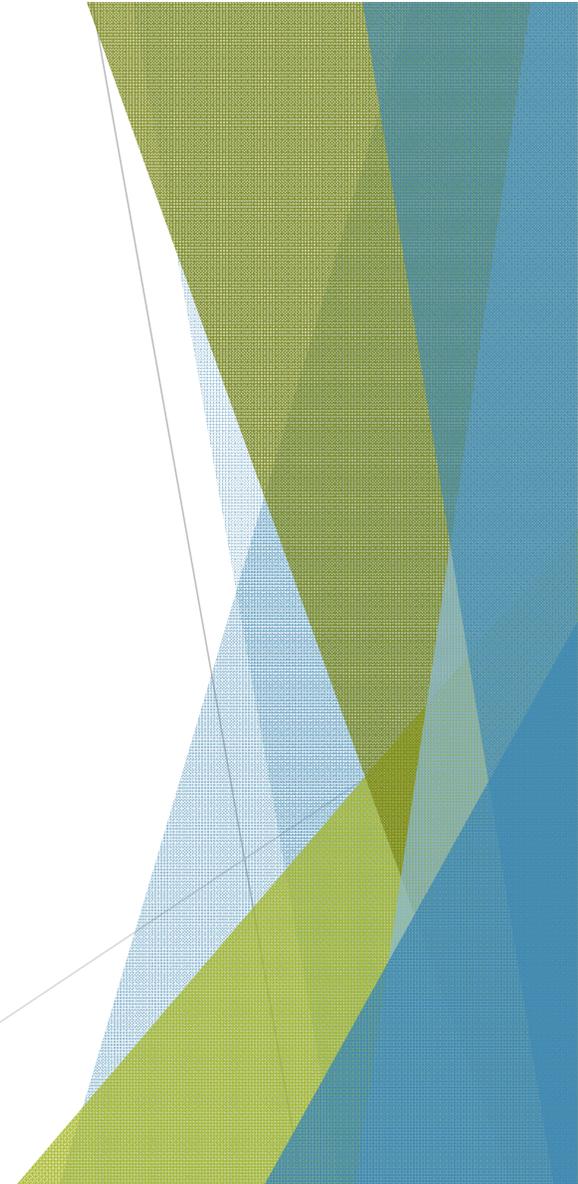
► Advantages of upping your quality:

1. Quality is awesome, and also profitable.
2. 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
- ▶ Whodunit?
- ▶ Not Identifying What's Important
- ▶ Being a Bad Fortune-Teller



## Question & Answer Mismatches

- ▶ The Q & A are in different subtitles, and you've let them separate in your brain.
- ▶ You rewrote one but forgot to adjust the other.



## Q & A Mismatch Examples

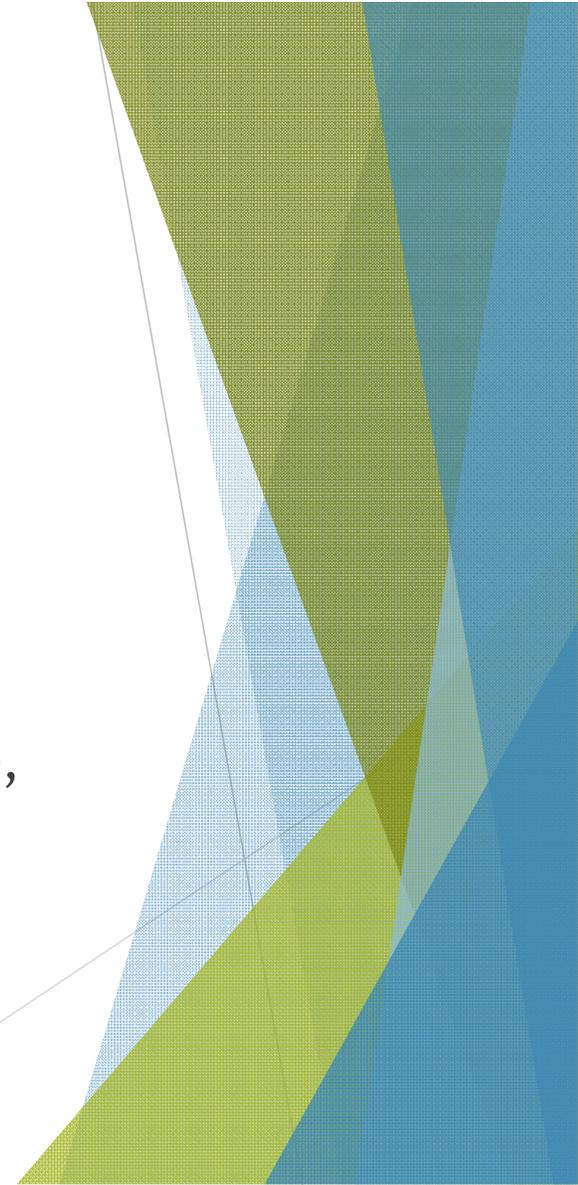
**Fred:** Didn't you hear?

**Bob:** No, I haven't.

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

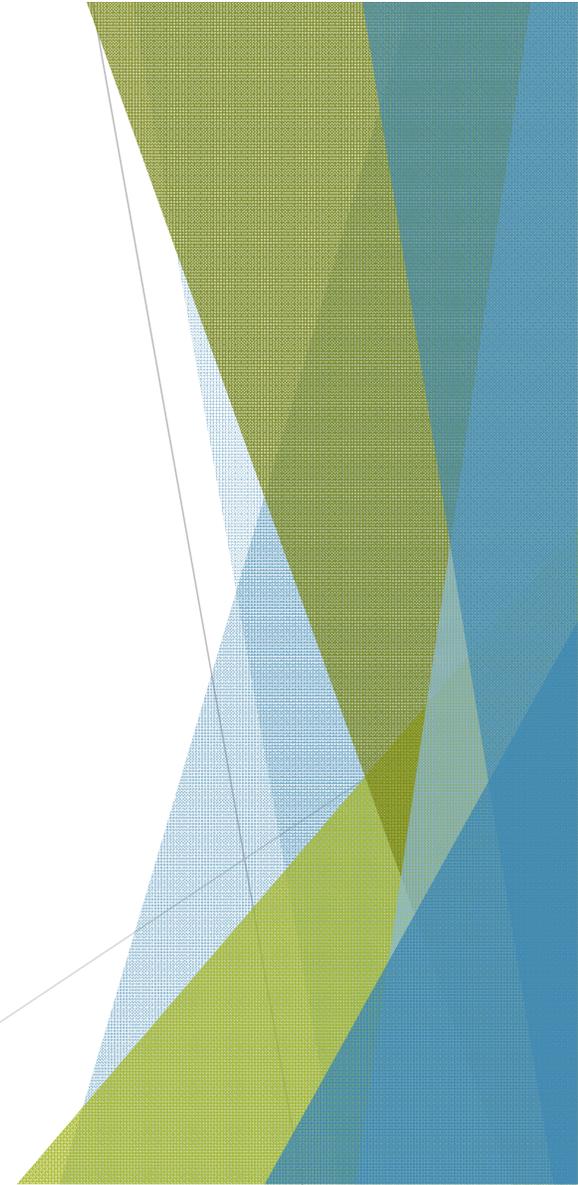
**MacArthur:** Don't tell me you didn't come watch our battle, Ichinomiya?

**Ichinomiya:** Of course not, General MacArthur!



## Missing Lines

- ▶ If it comes pre-timed/pre-spotted, don't trust that the file is complete
  - ▶ Everybody's human
  - ▶ The worst case: A show had 2 minutes left out!
- ▶ Missing short lines like "Yes" or 「そうだ」
  - ▶ Native speakers be especially careful



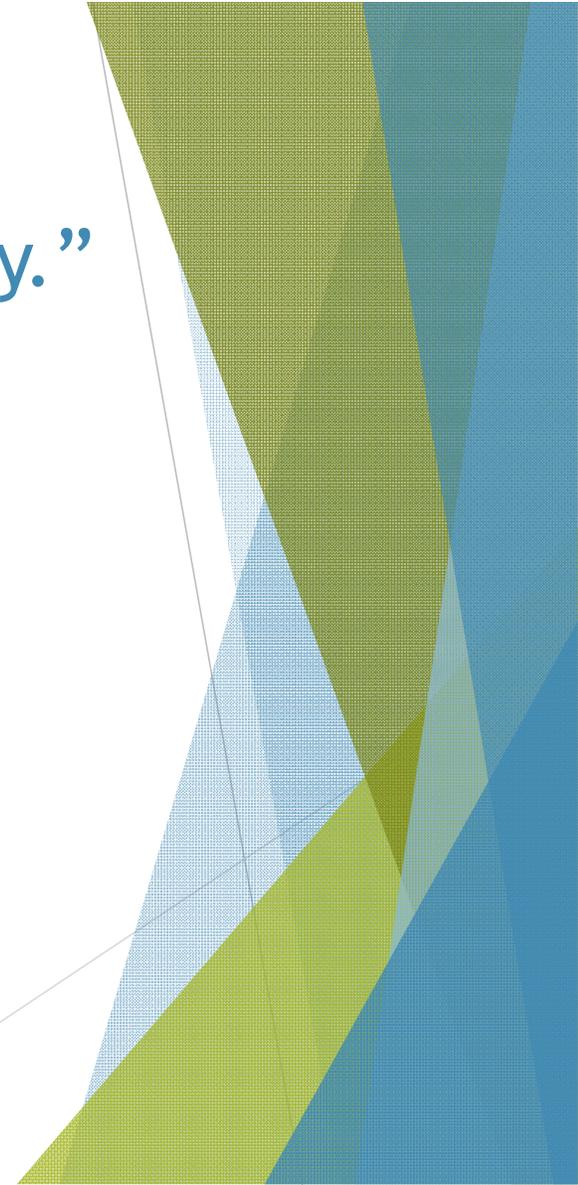
# Inconsistency, or: “Easy Things Are Hard. Do Them Anyway.”

## ▶ 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

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

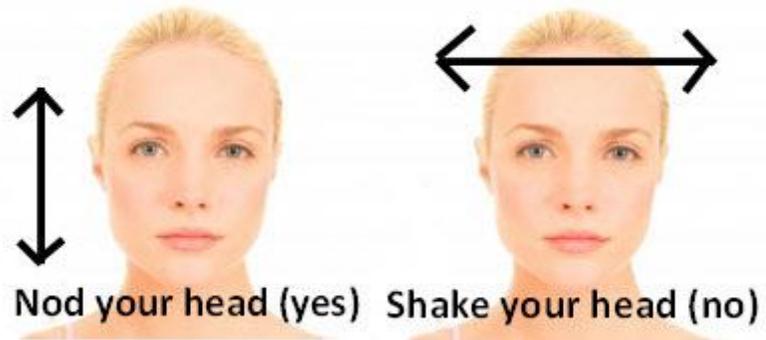
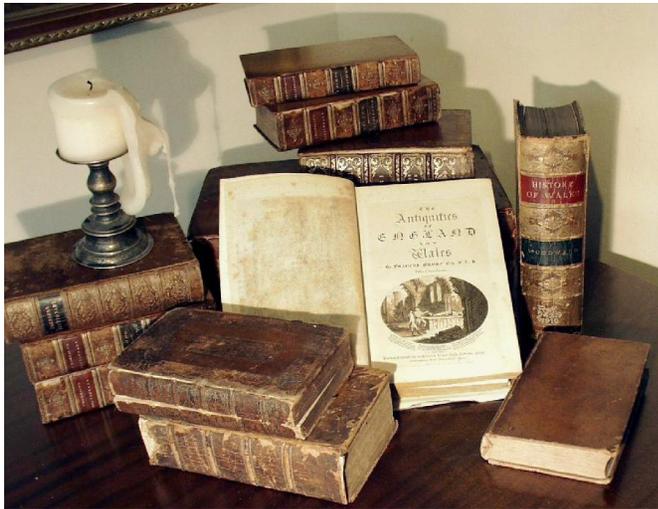
- ▶ Flashbacks
- ▶ Catch phrases
- ▶ Keywords, setups/payoffs



## Mismatch with the Visuals

- ▶ Result of attention problems/translating scripts
- ▶ Breaks the story *or* pulls viewer out of the story
- ▶ Can make the product incomprehensible

# Breaking the Story



Nod your head (yes) Shake your head (no)

## Breaking the Sense



The Devil is a Part-Timer! © WAGAHARA SATOSHI/ASCII MEDIA WORKS/HM Project.  
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# Whodunit? (Or, “Whose Story Is It?” Or, “It’s All About Relationships.”)

- ▶ Polite language
- ▶ あげる、くれる、もらう
- ▶ Causatives & passives
  - ⚠ Passives as polite language

## 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

# Black Butler

## 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。」

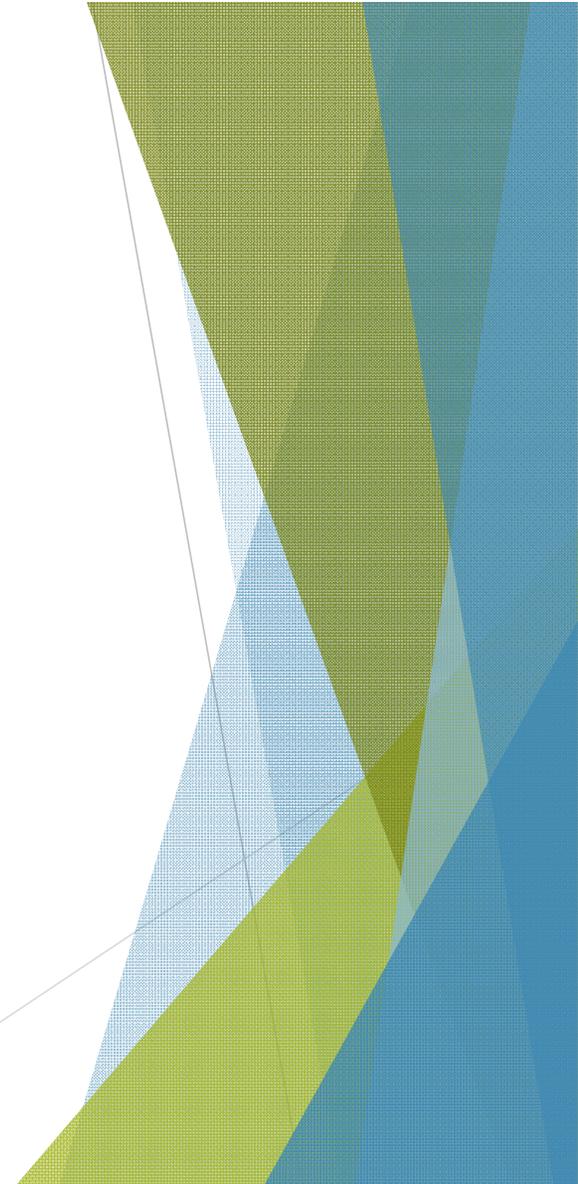
Double meaning alert!

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.”

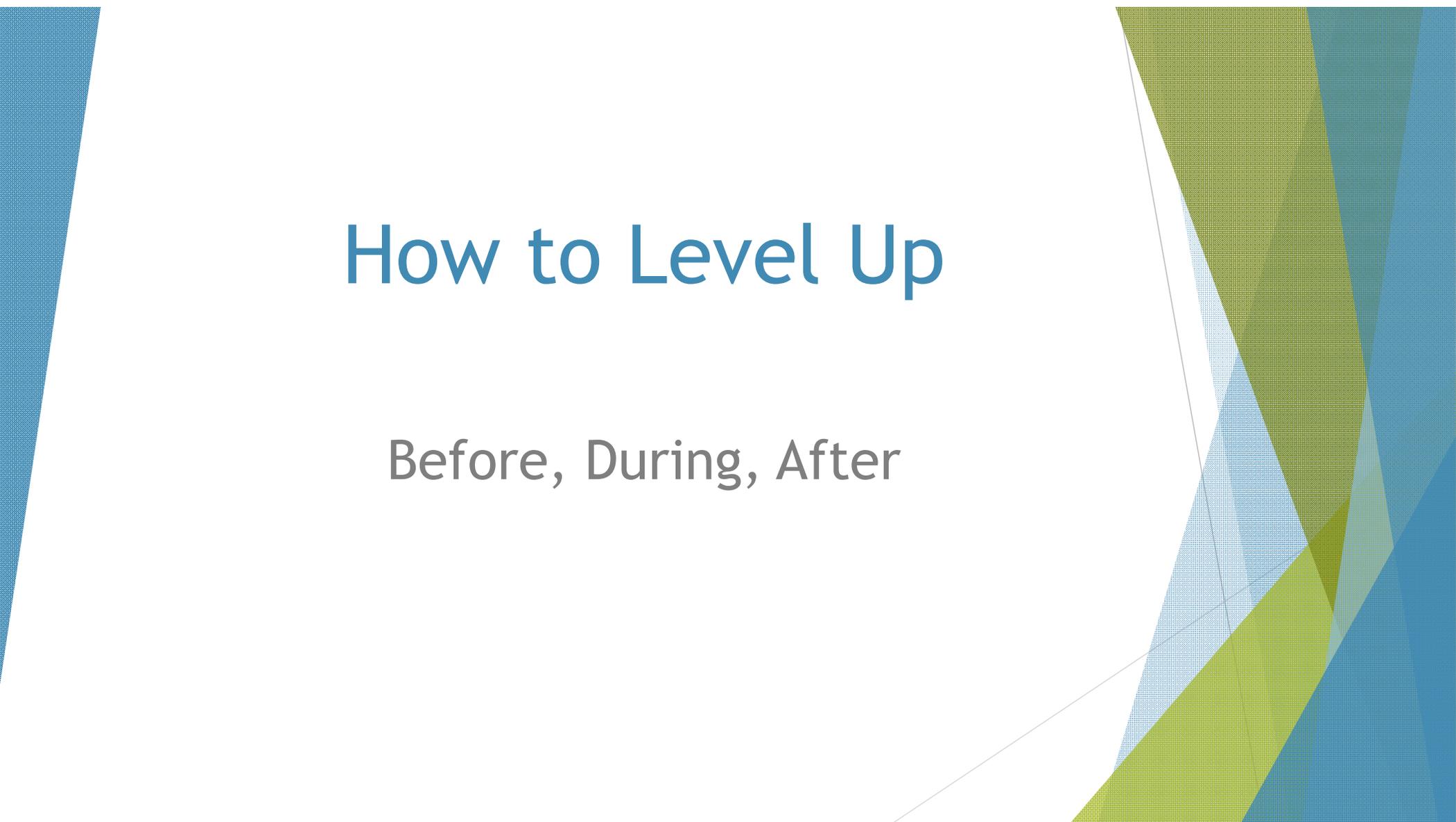
- ▶ Literal meaning retained so “outsiders” won’t see joke
- ▶ Demonic concept incorporated with “hell”
- ▶ You can tell something’s special about the line because butlers don’t usually say “hell”
- ▶ Another option I considered: “devilishly good butler”

# 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 add anything





# How to Level Up

Before, During, After

## Before You Start

- ❑ If you have only script or only video, make a request
  - Working in advance from scripts: some can “fix it later”; some can’t. **Tip:** if you need 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 problems
- ❑ Prep a terms list

## As You Translate

- ❑ Update your terminology list
- ❑ Copy/paste correctly, every time
- ❑ Double-check what you tinkered with
- ❑ Be conservative about assumptions/predicting the future
  - What does 「事故で死んだ」 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?
- ❑ Did I miss any lines?
- ❑ Is it too fast? What should I cut?
- ❑ Did I draw any conclusions accidentally?
- ❑ Spell checking... wisely

# Thank you!

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