Pop Team Epic: A case study on the difficulties involved in translating Japanese comedic texts into English

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Abstract

This dissertation will seek to understand the difficulties and issues encountered when translating Japanese comedic texts into English, using the manga Pop Team Epic (Okawa, 2015) as a case study. As interest in Japanese culture and media continues to expand into the West, there is a growing demand to translate various forms of Japanese comedic material including anime, manga and television programs for western audiences. Fans of this content have also grown to expect a certain quality in these translations, and often have their own expectations of how a text should be translated. The translation of this content, however, is not always a straightforward process. Apart from linguistic and dialectic challenges, various historical and cultural factors must also be considered which could make translating these mediums more difficult or even impossible without considerable explanation. This dissertation will attempt to look at what makes comedy difficult to translate and highlight factors which can make translating Japanese comedy and manga particularly challenging, by using the manga Pop Team Epic as a basis. It will also try to understand if Japan's unique style of comedy can be successfully translated, despite significant cultural and linguistic barriers, and without significant changes or explanations for western audiences.

Introduction - The difficulties of comedic translation

A study conducted by a team of researchers on the Himba tribe of northern Namibia in 2010 concluded that laughter is a universal reaction in humans, which was proven have the ability to transcend cultural and linguistic barriers (Sauter, et al., 2010). Although laughter itself can be considered universal, exactly what makes people laugh is highly subjective and can be heavily culturally dependant. This makes the translation of comedy between any languages a fascinating yet delicate process. Owing to comedy's diverse nature and the various factors which make something funny, comedic texts can be among the hardest to translate. Translators walk a fine line when translating comedic material; a good translation can accurately convey the comedy of the source text and prove highly effective at linking cultures via humour, whereas a bad translation can potentially fall flat, or even be offensive.

Comedic translation could therefore be considered a balancing act between being easily understandable, funny and culturally appropriate, however the difficulty of this process can lead to the notion that comedy is fundamentally untranslatable, or that jokes simply get lost in translation. Low (2011, pp. 59-70) strongly disagrees and argues that this belief can be attributed to narrowly defining translation as being purely linguistical and having an unrealistic expectation that the joke will be as effective in the target language than it was in its native language. A translator should therefore try not to focus on matching the linguistic elements of a piece, but rather try and either convey the same sense of the joke or find a pre-existing equivalent in the target language.

Although cultural or situational elements can often be the key to what makes a comedic text funny, comedy itself is not always culturally dependant and comedic styles are not exclusively bound to any one culture or region. Despite this, translating a situational or cultural context can be difficult without excessive explanation, which would ultimately ruin the comedy of the text. Bellos (2012) suggests in order to counteract over explanation, the translation of comedy should be seen more as a process of matching elements from two languages or cultures than just transferring information from one to the other. In order to effectively convey the humour of a joke or comedic text, the two cultures or languages must share the same fundamental concepts or elements which make the text or joke funny in the first place (Bellos, 2012). If these conditions are met, details can be changed to be culturally or geographically suitable and the rest can be rewritten to suit this localisation without significant explanation. In

this manner, the core comedy of the piece can be preserved, and the joke can be easily adapted to any number of cultures or languages (Bellos, 2012).

In spite of this, some forms comedy like wordplay and puns are significantly more difficult to translate, owing to their heavy linguistic dependence. Since the comedy of both is derived from exploiting the meanings of words or phrases that sound alike, they may only make sense in a certain language or when viewed from a certain cultural perspective. Bellos (2012) illustrates this point when attempting to translate the wordplay "there are seven words in this sentence" into French. Even though the sentence can be translated as "*Cette phrase est consisté du sept mots*", which both conveys the same general meaning as the English and retains the seven words which make it work, it is not a direct translation of the original as it uses slightly different phrasing to achieve the same effect (Bellos, 2012). This example is an excellent way of illustrating issues that can arise when translating this type of comedy. Although linguistically dependant comedy like puns can technically be translated in a way which preserves their meaning and intention, by altering the phrasing and changing the words they would no longer be considered puns or wordplays when translated into the target language.

Japanese comedy in translation

The fundamental linguistic differences between Japanese and English can make the effective translation of comedy between the two languages an innately difficult undertaking. Ulatus (2016) highlights several key grammatical differences between Japanese and English which complicate the translation process, including the absence of direct and indirect articles, plural nouns and occasionally subjects in Japanese, and Japanese grammatical elements not present in English such as structural particles and honorifics. In addition, analysing the semantics and understanding the nuance of a Japanese source text is crucial to capturing its meaning, and producing a natural sounding English translation (Ulatus, 2016). This emphasis on nuance can fundamentally make translating abstract concepts like comedy incredibly difficult, but the deep historical and cultural significance of comedy in Japanese culture adds an additional layer of difficulty to an already challenging process.

Comedy is a long-standing and deeply rooted tradition in Japanese culture, with the earliest comedic texts being dated back as far as the Nara period (710 – 794AD) (Sigmundsdóttir, 2016). Over centuries, comedy began to branch out evolve into a more refined

discipline, eventually becoming deeply engrained in Japanese society and omnipresent in daily life (Sigmundsdóttir, 2016). The cultural significance of comedy in Japan poses a dilemma for translators. Since cultural elements and references are integral to Japanese comedy, these also need to be translated effectively in a way that both preserves their humour and does not ruin the comedy with excessive explanation. This issue can be seen with the significance of the Kansai dialect in Japanese comedy. The accent from the Kansai region of southern Japan, in particular Osaka and Hyōgo prefecture, was often considered course and associated with low income merchants (SturtzSreetharan, 2015, p. 429). Spurred on by an explosion in popularity of *manzai*, a traditional Japanese stand-up double act which hails from the region, the Kansai dialect became the de-facto language of Japanese comedy and started being used throughout Japan for comedic emphasis in everyday life (SturtzSreetharan, 2015). Arguably, translating the cultural meaning behind this accent and its usage could be more challenging than translating the Japanese itself, as it would be unreasonable to expect each reader to have this cultural knowledge before reading the text.

Hoffman (2012) remarks that the two biggest stumbling blocks that translators often encounter when dealing with comedic texts are wordplays and cultural references, which coincidentally are two major constituents of Japanese comedy. Despite its historical and cultural significance, Japanese comedic material was often overlooked when it came to translation into English, in favour of more serious pieces of literature until fairly recently. Arguably, dealing with the with the cultural references, in addition to the linguistic difficulties of translating between Japanese and English, make the process of translating Japanese comedic material more challenging and less appealing than translating more serious forms of literature. This could ultimately contribute to a lack of awareness and, therefore lack demand, for translated comedic texts among western audiences.

Due to the widespread success of series like *Astro Boy* and *Gigantor* throughout the sixties and early seventies, anime became the most prominent form of Japanese media in the West (Macwilliams, 2008). However, despite its mostly upbeat and comedic nature, anime was largely considered more as light entertainment for children than comedic material, and thus translated and dubbed in a manner so they more closely resembled western cartoons (Macwilliams, 2008). The watershed moment for Japanese comedic translation came with the widespread international success of the now infamous variety show *Takeshi's Castle*, which saw widespread syndication on TV stations across the world from the late eighties to the present day (Karatsu, 2018, p. 71). *Takeshi's Castle* is not only credited with introducing western

audiences to the variety show format long popular with Japanese audiences, but it also marks the first instance of explicitly comedic media being translated from Japanese for an English-speaking audience (Michel, 2013). In order to enhance the show's comedy, some broadcasters intentionally translated the show poorly or chose to forgo its storyline entirely, by editing out segments and coming up with a completely new narrative (Michel, 2013). Despite this, *Takeshi's Castle* stirred up much intrigue abroad in less conventional and more comedic forms of Japanese media and ultimately laid the groundwork for Japanese comedy's expansion into the West (Michel, 2013).

In later years, the advent of more widespread internet adoption and the introduction of more powerful computers saw an explosion in Japanese comedic content being subtitled by fans, in a process known as fansubbing (González, 2007, p. 265). As awareness of more comical anime genres grew, coupled with *Takeshi's Castle's* continued success, fansubbed Japanese comedic content began spreading rapidly through online forums, peer-to-peer filesharing services, and later video sharing websites like YouTube and Dailymotion (Lee, 2011, p. 1138). More recently, the *manzai* duo Downtown's enduring series *Gaki no Tsukai ya Arahende!* (commonly known as *Gaki no Tsukai*) has become one of the best Japanese comedy shows outside of Japan alongside *Takeshi's Castle*, due in large part to fansubbing. The show's subversive and often bizarre skits and challenges, such as its *Batsu Games* and annual twenty-four hour no-laughing challenges, have become extremely popular among English speaking audiences online, particularly in Europe and America. *Gaki no Tsukai*'s rabid online popularity has even prompted the formation of dedicated fansubbing groups like Team Gaki, who often translate, subtitle and publish episodes online not long after they air on Japanese TV (Team Gaki, 2019).

Despite the continued success and growing popularity of Japanese comedic material online in the West, most Japanese production companies continue to cater exclusively to Japanese audiences, and often have no interest in translating or making their content more accessible to foreign audiences (Brown, 2006). As a result, it could be argued that the extensive efforts by groups of collaborative translators online have not only significantly contributed to the diversity of content available to western audiences but have been the driving force behind the prevailing interest and growing awareness of Japanese comedy in the West.

The History of Manga Translation

Despite anime becoming hugely popular in the West throughout the 60s and 70s, manga remained largely unheard of outside small groups of devout Japanese speaking fans (Thompson, 2013). Although manga began being translated into other languages throughout the 70s, the turning point in its popularity among English speakers came with the release of the translation of two volumes of Riyoko Ikeda's *The Rose of Versailles* in 1981 (Schodt, 1986). Although originally released in Japan as resource for teaching English, copies of *The Rose of Versailles* eventually made their way to the West, where they gained a small cult following and ultimately introduced manga to western audiences (Thompson, 2010).

Although interest in manga in the West continued to grow into the 80s, a skewed and largely unfavourable perception of manga began to develop, spurred on by the often lewd and overly violent titles being translated (Gravett, 2004). As a result, manga was often marketed at more mature audiences and remained a largely underground phenomenon, yet to achieve the same level of mainstream success as anime (Jüngst, 2008). Although translations of series like Kozure Ōkami's *Lone Wolf and Cub* and Keiji Nakazawa's *Barefoot Gen* became popular among small groups of Western fans, the English release of Katsuhiro Otomo's *Akira* is largely credited with launching manga into the western consciousness (Iglesia, 2014).

In addition to focusing on effectively translating its story, Epic Comics put a significant amount of consideration into making *Akira* more appealing to western audiences, by making it more closely resemble a western comic book stylistically (Iglesia, 2016). Some of the significant changes Epic decided to make included "flipping" the manga, which involved reversing the page order and mirroring some panels to suit the western left-to-right reading direction and adding colour to the traditionally black and white manga (Iglesia, 2016). Although the translation was initially criticised for being unfaithful and "Americanising" the original Japanese text, *Akira* ultimately became hugely popular among western readers and became the first manga to achieve widespread mainstream success in the West (Iglesia, 2016).

The widespread popularity of the *Sailor Moon* and *Dragon Ball* anime series in the early 90s led western publishers to look into translating more upbeat and comical manga genres, in an attempt to appeal to a wider audience (Napier, 2007). The success of series like Rumiko Takahashi's *Ranma ½* and Kōsuke Fujishima's *Oh My Goddess!* helped establish a demand for more light-hearted manga series, which more closely resembled western comic books (Thompson, 2013). However, despite the growing similarities, manga's distinctive art-style

and engrossing storytelling helped set itself apart from its western counterparts, causing its popularity to skyrocket (Thompson, 2013). The advent of more widespread internet access allowed devout fandoms, completely independent from other comic book-based fandoms of the time, to develop and spread rapidly through online forums (Thompson, 2013). These fandoms began to play a crucial role in influencing how manga was being translated, as western publishers began to translate and release more series throughout the 90s, (Jüngst, 2008, p. 50). Due to their deep passion and extensive knowledge of the source texts, many fans were highly critical of the quality of officially published translations of their favourite series, regardless of whether they could speak Japanese or not (Jüngst, 2008, p. 50). This caused publishers to shift away from merely adapting manga to suit western audiences, and instead forced them to translate in a way which fit within fans' expectation, by preserving the humour, cultural references and inherently Japanese qualities of the original texts (Jüngst, 2008, p. 60).

Despite manga's record sales and circulation in the late 90s, many fans were beginning to grow tired of long waits between releases and the still relatively small selection of translated content (Manovich, et al., 2011, p. 200). Scanlation (a portmanteau of "scan" and "translation") emerged in the late nineties, as a means of translating titles that either had not yet been translated or were deemed not viable or too inappropriate by publishers to receive a formal translation (Manovich, et al., 2011, p. 201). Scanlators quickly evolved from lone translators into highly organised and efficient groups who, despite having little to no formal translation experience, managed to release decently translated manga scripts on a regular basis (Lee, 2009, p. 1015). As scanlation continued to grow and develop into the early 2000s, the gap between fandoms in the West and publishers in Japan began to shrink substantially (Lee, 2009, pp. 1018 - 1019). Despite lying on opposite sides of the legal spectrum, both scanlators and publishers have developed a profound respect for one another and have become increasingly interconnected (Lee, 2009, p. 1018). Scanlation groups are typically driven by their passion and love for manga rather than profit, and often uphold strict codes of ethics, like refusing to translate any titles which have previously been translated previously or have been licenced to a western publisher (Lee, 2009, p. 1017). It could be argued that despite its illegality, scanlation has helped publishers considerably, in terms of significantly boosting the awareness of manga in the West and indicating a demand for which titles should be officially translated.

Scanlation could therefore be attributed to helping popularise series like Pop Team Epic, which may never have received an official translation and release in the West otherwise.

Pop Team Epic – A Case Study

The runaway success of Pop Team Epic could be considered one of the most recent Japanese cultural breakthroughs into the West (Zero, 2018). Not only is it a testament to the power Japanese culture and comedy can exert overseas, but it also highlights the key role fan translation has played in the popularity of series in the West in recent years.

Pop Team Epic (also known as *Poputepipikku*) started as a four-panel web comic written and illustrated by Bkub Okawa (2015). The comic was serialised on the Japanese publisher Takeshobo's *Manga Life Win* website from 2014 to 2015, before being compiled and published as a manga later that year, later being adapted into a widely successful anime series in 2018 (Pineda, 2017). The main characters of the series are two 14-year-old Japanese schoolgirls named *Popuko* and *Pipimi* (Okawa, 2015). *Popuko*, the shorter of the two, is fair haired with an almost sociopathic personality, often becoming infuriated and violent very quickly (Okawa, 2015). In contrast, *Pipimi* is taller, with long blue hair and a much calmer demeaner, occasionally stepping in to defuse any aggressive situations *Popuko* has gotten herself into (Okawa, 2015).

The runaway success of Pop Team Epic, both within and outside of Japan, has bewildered and polarised parts of the anime and manga community (Zero, 2018). Unlike most other series, Pop Team Epic has no discernible plot, storyline or character development. Its structure is more akin to that of a comedy sketch show, solely consisting of non sequitur four-panel skits. These skits are often completely nonsensical, laden with pop culture references, parodies of anime and manga tropes, and thinly veiled criticisms of the anime and manga industry as a whole. In addition, the tone of the series is strikingly different to many others, heavily utilising dark humour and coarse language, in comedic style which could be classified as vulgar, absurd and even surrealist at points.

Pop Team Epic marks a significant departure from other more upbeat and accessible series, such as *Pokémon* and *Sailor Moon*, which have become wildly successful in the West. However, it could be argued that this stark contrast could ultimately be the key to Pop Team Epic's western success. The series' irreverent and mindless sense of humour gives fans a much-needed break from the often monotonous and predictable nature of recent anime and manga series (Zero, 2018). The series not only offers readers a respite from complex overlapping story arcs and often excessive irrelevant character details present in other manga, but even highlights

and lampoons these tropes and others like them, through a heavy use of references and fourth wall breaks (Vincent, 2018).

Although Pop Team Epic's perception as an anti-manga of sorts led it to become an unlikely hit in Japan, scanlation ultimately proved crucial to its success in the West and helped it become an online sensation (Zero, 2018). Soon after the webcomic gained traction in Japan, fan translations into English began being uploaded to Western websites like Tumblr, Reddit and 4chan (Flawfinder, 2018). The comic's fast-paced and self-deprecating comedic style aligned well with the senseless nature of online meme culture, and the series quickly became extremely popular within the online community. *Popuko* and *Pipimi's* simplistic design, combined with the typically vulgar translations of the Japanese text, saw many of the comic's panels becoming memes and being used as reaction images across the internet (Know Your Meme, 2018).

Pop Team Epic's success in the West is not only a testament to the influence scanlation communities can have on the popularity of a series, but also highlights some of the significant difficulties involved in effectively translating Japanese comedic material for western audiences.

Analysis of the translation

A number of factors must be taken into account before analysing Pop Team Epic and its translation, due to the nature of its content and the unconventional means behind its popularity. Pop Team Epic's layout differs greatly from a typical manga, with each page being comprised of two unnamed skits, consisting of four panels each. The series' comedic style is also surrealist or post-ironic in nature, making it difficult to deduce whether the comedy of a skit is coming from a specific cultural reference or the inherent absurdity of the skit itself. Scanlation has also been a major factor in Pop Team Epic's success popularity in the West with only the first volume of the manga receiving an official English release (Ressler, 2017). As a result, the scanlation by Stan Miller (2018) is the most read English translation, and is often considered the de facto English version of the manga by most fans.

Bearing this in mind, for the purpose of this dissertation, three "skits" from the first volume of the original Japanese manga will be analysed and compared with their corresponding chapters in Miller's (2018) scanlation, to see what potential difficulties could prevent the

comedy of the original skits from being translated effectively, what compromises were made if any, and how they could possibly be translated better, if at all.

1: “Beef or Chicken?”

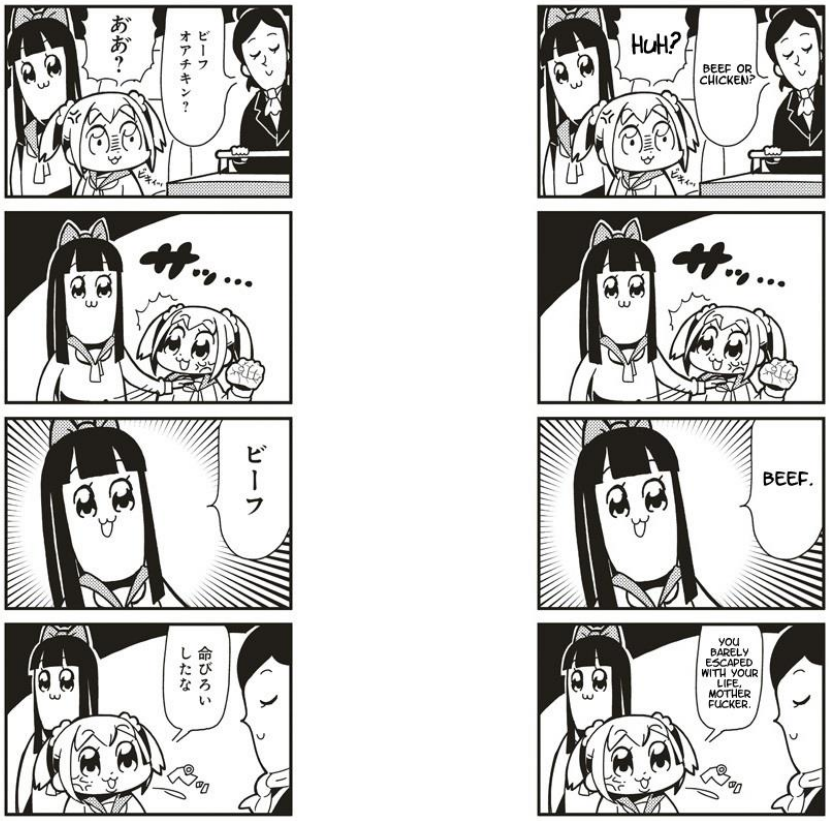

Figure 1"Beef or chicken" in the original Japanese text (left) and Miller's scanlation (right)

The manga’s second skit is one of the most well-known from the series and is commonly known among fans as “beef or chicken?”. The skit depicts Popuko and Pipimi seated on a plane, where they are approached by an airhostess offering passengers “*Bīfuoachikin?*”. Popuko becomes incredibly violent towards the hostess, causing Pipimi to step in and defuse the situation by saying the pair will have the beef meal, leading Popuko to make one final threat against the hostess (Okawa, 2015).

The main comedic focus of the skit is derived from the double entendre “beef or chicken?”, which has two vastly different implications depending on the context. Although most commonly associated with flight attendants, “beef or chicken?” is also a Japanese slang term used to provoke someone into an altercation, with “beef” indicating an intention to fight and “chicken” used to imply that the other person is a coward if they refuse (Bluesky, 2018).

In the Japanese text, "*Bīfuoachikin?*" is written using katakana, an alphabet mostly used when transcribing foreign language words. In Miller's (2018) scanlation, the phrase is transliterated as "beef or chicken?", which does not effectively convey the joke from the original, since the phrase does not carry the same double meaning in English as in Japanese. A possible solution could be to translate *Bīfuoachikin?* as its closest English equivalent "Are you a man or a mouse?", however would require the skit to be completely rewritten, ultimately ruining the fundamental comedy of the piece.

Another difficulty involved in translating the skit is how to effectively convey Popuko's threat in the final panel. In the Japanese text, Popuko says "*Inochibiroi shita na*" which can be loosely translated as "You've just narrowly escaped with your life" (Okawa, 2015). The panel's comedy in the Japanese text is not only derived from Popuko's overly violent reaction to a simple misunderstanding, but also her use of an incredibly course register when addressing the hostess, which contrasts with her relatively unintimidating appearance. The Japanese language contains various levels of politeness and formality, which if misused can be deeply disrespectful or highly offensive. In addition, within Japanese culture, intentionally using informal or impolite language towards someone is often more insulting and offensive than cursing or calling them names. Thus, to successfully translate this panel, the cultural significance of the disrespect Popuko is showing towards the flight attendant must be effectively conveyed, in addition to the content of the threat itself.

The threat is translated in Miller's (2018) scanlation as "You barely escaped with your life, mother fucker". Although this could be considered mostly accurate, it ultimately fails to adequately capture the disrespectful and insulting tone when addressing someone in this manner in Japanese. Miller (2018) adds an obscenity in an attempt to achieve the same level of offensiveness as in the Japanese text, however this arguably changes the nature of Popuko's threat entirely, into an overt personal insult rather than a subtle threat. Since the misuse of registers in a similar manner can also considered rude and offensive in English, a more accurate translation of the panel might be to forgo the profanity and leave it as "You've barely escaped with your life". Although this still doesn't entirely convey the same level of disrespect as in Japanese, it maintains the same manner of the insult in the original and is overall more linguistically faithful.

2: LINE Stickers

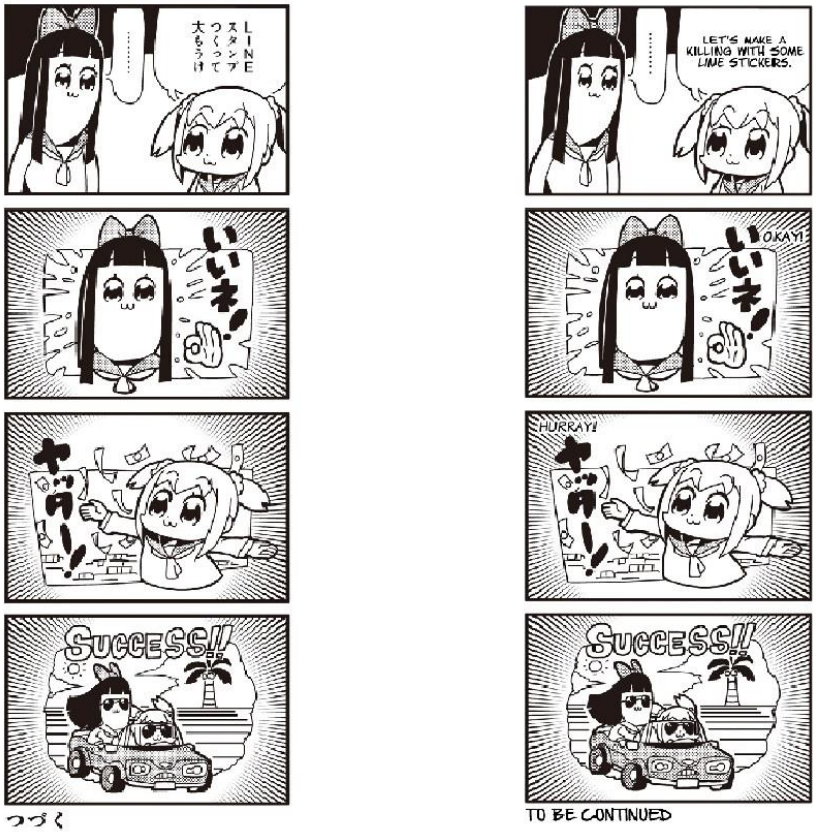

Figure 2 The LINE Stickers skit in the original Japanese text (left) and Miller's scanlation (right)

Despite its relative simplicity, the culturally specific nature of the manga's twenty-second skit could make it incredibly difficult to, or even impossible, to effectively translate into English. The skit depicts Popuko telling Pipimi "*LINE sutanpu tsukutte ōmōke*", with the rest of the skit showing the pair posing in a variety of stickers (Okawa, 2015).

In order to fully understand the comedic premise of the skit, the reader must have a knowledge of LINE and understand its significant cultural reach within Japan. LINE is the most popular messaging platform in Japan, which due in large part to its ease of use and ubiquity among younger generation, has become a social phenomenon in recent years (Kunaboot, et al., 2015, p. 261). Aside from messaging and making calls, LINE offers an extensive virtual store, where users can buy themes for the app and, most notably, virtual stickers they can send in messages (Lee, 2017, p. 399). Some of these stickers are free, however many of the more popular ones, usually depicting licenced characters or musicians, can cost between one and four euro per set (Lee, 2017, p. 399). Despite being nothing more than

glorified emoji, these stickers are a highly lucrative business, generating hundreds of millions of euro a year in revenue for the company (Naidu, 2013).

The skit's humour is based on a thinly veiled criticism of Japan's blind obsession with these stickers, and the inordinate amount of money companies can make by selling essentially worthless virtual items. Despite the Japanese being translated perfectly in Miller's (2018) scanlation, the culturally specific core concept of the skit arguably prevents it from being effectively translated without some amount of pre-existing knowledge or significant explanation. A possible solution could be to replace LINE with a western equivalent, such as Facebook Messenger or Snapchat, however, since having to pay for stickers on these platforms would be an alien concept to western audiences, the skit would no longer make sense. In addition, the series' loyal fanbase would likely not appreciate such a change as, despite being the only feasible option, the localisation would ultimately ruin the inherent Japanese quality of the original skit.

3: Kuchisake-onna

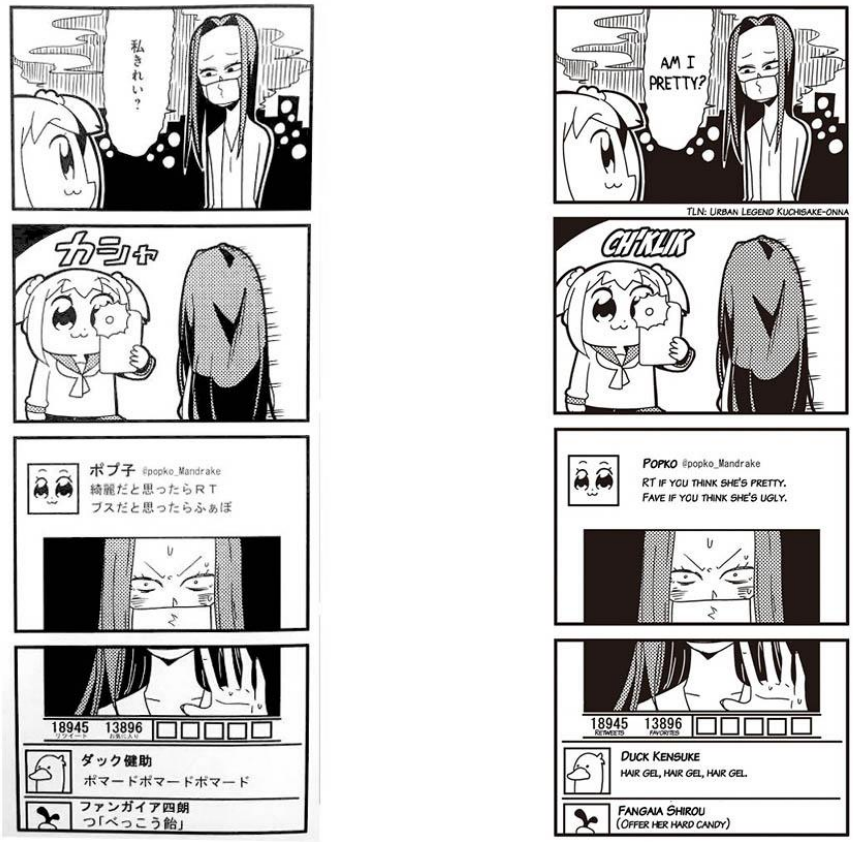

Figure 3 The Kuchisake-onna skit in the original Japanese text (left) and Miller's scanlation (right)

Due to its heavy reliance on Japanese folklore, the one hundred and thirty first skit in the manga is one of the most difficult to translate and could arguably be considered untranslatable without significant explanation. The skit depicts a slender woman wearing a mask asking Popuko "*Watashi kirei*?". Popuko takes a photo of the woman and posts it onto Twitter, with the caption "*Kireida to omottara RT, busuda to omottara fuabo*", which receives two replies; "*Pomādopomādopomādo*" and "*[tsu] Bekkōame*" (Okawa, 2015).

The skit is a direct reference to the Japanese tale of the *Kuchisake-onna*, or the "slit-mouthed woman". According to legend, she would approach people alone at night wearing a mask, asking if they thought she was beautiful (Roland, 2007). If the person replied "yes", she would take off her mask revealing a mouth slit from ear to ear and ask if they still thought she was beautiful (Roland, 2007). If the person replied "no" or ran away, she would kill them by slashing their mouth, so it resembled hers, however if they replied "yes", she would let them go free, only to kill them later that evening in their own home (Roland, 2007). The skit's comedy is derived from Popuko's refusal to answer the *Kuchisake-onna* directly, instead choosing to let her followers on Twitter answer and thus face any possible consequences. The replies under the tweet are references to two of the ways an attack by an attack by the *Kuchisake-onna* can potentially be avoided according to legend; by loudly shouting "Pomade Pomade Pomade" in her face or by offering her Bekkoame, a form of traditional Japanese hard candy (Foster, 2009).

Miller's (2018) scanlation offers a decent linguistic translation of the skit, including accurately translating the *tsu* character, often used in Japanese internet slang to indicate giving or receiving something, which appears in one of the replies. However, aside from a small translator's note under the first panel encouraging readers to do additional research, Miller (2018) makes no attempt to explain the *Kuchisake-onna* story or its significance to the skit. As a result, the English text appears nonsensical as is largely unreadable without any prior knowledge or context. Given its nature, this would arguably be the most efficient way to translate the skit without significant explanation, which would ultimately ruin its format and premise.

Conclusion

Although by no means impossible, comedic translation requires significantly more consideration and attention than other forms of translation. Even when careful consideration is put into finding a suitable match in the source language or culture, there is still no guarantee

that it will have the same level of effectiveness or comedic appeal once translated. Japanese comedy shares many fundamental concepts with comedy from other regions and languages. However, the deep historical significance of comedy in Japanese culture in addition to its reliance on linguistically dependant forms of comedy can present major challenges when translating Japanese comedic material for foreign consumption. Although these cultural and linguistic factors greatly impact how a text is translated, the addition of a deeply emotionally attached fanbase, which has been cultivated through years of personal involvement, presents difficulties unique to the translation of Japanese comedic material.

Although an unconventional example, Pop Team Epic not only encompasses many of the fundamental attributes of Japanese comedy, but has also spawned an intensely loyal fanbase abroad, who have expectations for how the manga should appear and be translated. Miller's (2018) scanlation is a good example of how the fans' expectations can have a huge influence over how a comedic text gets translated, and how this level of fan engagement can present its own difficulties when translating a text.

Pop Team Epic's western audience largely consists of fans who have some knowledge of Japanese popular culture, and who are drawn to the manga by its nonsensical and eccentric nature and overtly offensive tone. Miller's (2018) scanlation does not always contain the most accurate translations from a linguistic perspective, however this could be an intentional decision made to cater an audience who expect the manga to be over-the-top and nonsensical, rather than nuanced and subversive like in the original Japanese text. Ultimately, there are many ways Japanese comedic texts can be translated more faithfully and adapted to be made more accessible to western audiences, however, any changes which may impact the Japaneseness of the original would likely be unpopular among fans, thus limiting the potential reach of the content further afield.

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