

# Interpreting at the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal

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This paper gives an overview of the interpreting arrangements at the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal (1946–1948), focusing on some sociopolitical aspects of the interpreting phenomena, and discusses the behavior of the interpreters and monitors during the testimony of Hideki Tojo, Japan’s wartime Prime Minister. It provides a contextualized examination of court interpreting rather than a micro-linguistic analysis of interpreted texts. The study demonstrates how political and social aspects of the trial and wartime world affairs affected the interpreting arrangements, especially the hierarchical set-up in which three ethnically and socially different groups of “linguists” (language specialists) performed three different functions in the interpreting process. An examination of the linguists’ behavior during Tojo’s testimony points to a link between their relative positions in the power constellation of the trial and their choices, strategies and behavior in interpreting and monitoring. These findings reinforce the view that interpreting is a social practice conditioned by the social, political and cultural contexts of the setting in which interpreters operate.

**Keywords:** Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal, court interpreting, monitor, language arbiter, interpreter’s behavior, power relations

## Introduction

Over the past two decades, the scope and focus of Interpreting Studies has expanded to encompass more diverse interpreting settings and theoretical approaches. In earlier times, interpreting researchers mainly focused on conference interpreting, especially the cognitive processing aspect of interpreting, by drawing on such disciplines as psycholinguistics, cognitive psychology and neurolinguistics. With the increased visibility of court and community interpreting, however, research on dialogue interpreting has proliferated since the 1990s, focusing on interactional aspects of communicative activity and the functions of interpreters

as communication mediators. Such studies are often influenced by sociolinguistics, discourse analysis and pragmatics. There is also an increasing awareness of interpreting as a socially situated activity. Consideration is now given to the social, political, historical and cultural contexts of the settings in which interpreters operate. Cronin, for example, calls for a “cultural turn” in Interpreting Studies to pay more attention to “questions of power and issues such as class, gender, race in interpreting situations” (2002: 46). Pöchhacker (2006) observes this overall evolution as Interpreting Studies “going social”, embracing diverse forms of interpreting and broader contextualization.

The present study also views interpreting as a social practice and pays close attention to various factors such as politics, race and power relations to describe and explain interpreting phenomena at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE). The IMTFE, more commonly known as the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal, took place from May 3, 1946 to November 12, 1948 to try 28 Japanese war criminals. The most salient aspect of interpreting at the IMTFE was the hierarchical structure in which three ethnically and socially different groups of linguists<sup>1</sup> engaged in three separate functions: Japanese nationals interpreted the proceedings, Japanese Americans monitored the interpreters’ performance, and Caucasian U.S. military officers, as language arbiters, ruled over interpreting and translation disputes. Notwithstanding this distinct feature and the historical significance of the trial itself as the Japanese counterpart of the Nuremberg Trial, very little research has been done on the interpreters who worked at the IMTFE.

This paper, therefore, first provides a summary of the interpreting arrangements at the IMTFE and briefly introduces three important features found in the interpreting phenomena at the trial. The main part of the paper is an examination of the behavior of the linguists during Hideki Tojo’s testimony, focusing on a link between the linguists’ relative positions in the power constellation of the trial and their choices, strategies and behavior in interpreting and monitoring.

## **Interpreting arrangements at the IMTFE**

### *Languages*

In accordance with the IMTFE charter, interpretation between English and Japanese (“the language of the accused”) was offered throughout the trial. In addition, as a stand-alone arrangement, Russian simultaneous interpretation was provided for the Soviet judge, who did not understand English or Japanese. The use of a language other than English and Japanese and the practice of relay interpreting were controversial issues because of the shortage of competent interpreters and

the concern about the onerous procedure and accuracy of relay interpreting. Discussions over the use of “non-official” languages took much of the time inside and outside the courtroom during the initial stage of the trial. As a result, French and Russian interpreters were hired when prosecutors spoke in those languages, and Chinese, Dutch, German and Mongolian interpreters were also provided for witnesses who testified in those languages. Relay interpreting was used for Chinese and Dutch, with English as the pivot language, and Mongolian, with Russian as the pivot language.

### *Recruitment of linguists*

The IMTFE was essentially prepared for and operated by the U.S. military under the direction of U.S. Army General Douglas MacArthur as the Superior Commander of the Allied Powers. The Language Section of the Tribunal Secretariat had a U.S. military officer as its chief and arranged for interpreters and monitors to meet the language needs of the trial. The interpreters were recruited mainly from the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In addition, several Japanese nationals with bilingual family and/or educational background worked as interpreters. Although some orientation on court procedures was given to those who had passed the screening test (in which candidates had to interpret in a simulated trial), they received virtually no training for interpreting before being sent to the courtroom. The transcripts record a total of 27 Japanese-English interpreters, but only a handful worked regularly throughout the trial (Watanabe 1998: 10–11). The core members of the interpreter team were Toshiro Henry Shimanouchi (a Foreign Ministry official who had lived in the United States for 19 years), Kazumasa Eric Shimada (a former soldier who had studied French and English as a student), and Takashi Oka (a university student with a bilingual family and educational background). Shimada and Oka are the only known surviving linguists who were involved in the interpreting process during the IMTFE.

The monitors and language arbiters were recruited from those who had engaged in U.S. military intelligence as translators and interrogators and in other language-related functions during the war. Four *Nisei* (second-generation Japanese Americans) were selected as monitors, and two Caucasian military officers were appointed as language arbiter at different times.

### *Interpreting system*

The IMTFE was held in the auditorium of the former Japanese Military Cadet School (presently on the premises of the Defense Ministry of Japan) in Tokyo. After working from a table next to those for the prosecution and the defense for

the first month of the trial, the interpreters and monitors moved to a booth which was set up on the platform behind the seats for officers of the occupation forces. Although IBM equipment, identical to that used at Nuremberg, was installed, consecutive was the predominant mode of interpreting at the IMTFE because the tribunal had concluded that simultaneous interpretation between English and Japanese was impossible. Simultaneous interpreting was used only when the speaker read out a document and its translation was available. It was the monitors, not the interpreters, who were assigned the task of rendering the prepared translations such as the closing arguments and the judgment (verdict).

Use of the consecutive mode enabled the monitor, sitting next to the interpreter in the booth, to interject corrections when he found any problem with the interpreter's rendition. Two to four interpreters were assigned to each morning or evening session, and they took turns interpreting every thirty minutes (Oka 2005). One monitor was usually assigned to each session. The language arbiter, situated in the prosecution team's seating area, announced in court any rulings of the Language Arbitration Board on disputed translations and interpretations during its out-of-court deliberations.

### *Effect of interpreting on the proceedings*

There have been some comments by historians and actual trial participants on the effect that the interpreting had on the IMTFE proceedings. They generally refer to the excessive length of the proceedings (2.5 years as opposed to a little over ten months for the Nuremberg Trial) caused, in part, by the consecutive mode of interpreting and the language disputes (e.g. Dower 1999; Bradsher n.d.); the impact of interpreting on the manner in which lawyers examined the witnesses (e.g. "short sentences in elementary language"; Smith 1996); and the possible effect of inadequate interpretations on the outcome of the trial (e.g. Dower 1999; Maga 2001). None of them, however, argue that there were intentional misinterpretations or seriously flawed interpretations during the IMTFE. There has been virtually no argument that the trial would have had a different outcome if the interpreting had been handled differently or if the interpreters had been more competent.<sup>2</sup>

### **Sociopolitical aspects of interpreting at the IMTFE**

There are compelling interpreting phenomena at the IMTFE that direct researchers to go beyond a microlinguistic analysis of interpreting and consider the contextual factors of the setting in which the interpreted event took place. Below is a brief discussion of three such features, with reference to the political background

of the trial and the sociological dimensions of the setting in which the linguists worked.

### *Trust and control in the hierarchical structure*

When a party in power has to rely on interpreters who do not have shared interests or affiliations, the party may set up a system to regulate and control the interpreters out of concern over their trustworthiness. This scenario was evident in the interpreting arrangements at the IMTFE.

Prior to the IMTFE, there had been U.S. military trials against Japanese generals in the Philippines, during which serious problems with the military interpreters were uncovered. For example, the three Caucasian military officers who had been appointed as court interpreters refused to take the interpreter's oath at the trial of General Tomoyuki Yamashita, citing their own lack of qualification in spoken Japanese.<sup>3</sup> *Nisei* linguists who took over the task did not perform well either, due to their limited training in the Japanese language (Reel 1971; Ito 2006). Because of their slow renditions and a number of disputes over interpretations, the tribunal had to resort to Yamashita's personal interpreter, who was also a prisoner of war, to do whisper-interpreting for Yamashita just for the English-to-Japanese portions in order to save time (Reel 1971). With these problems communicated to Tokyo, the IMTFE must have recognized the need for competent interpreters, regardless of nationality, for the smooth operation of the trial that was attracting close attention from the international community. This can explain why the tribunal opened its interpreter search to Japanese nationals.

Many of the Japanese interpreters, however, were officials of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. There was also a former soldier with the Japanese Imperial Army. They were, in effect, interpreting in a trial in which their former superiors' lives were at stake. It is conceivable that the tribunal was concerned about its interpreters' "impartiality" and was loath to appear dependent on citizens of the defeated nation; hence the IMTFE established a system to regulate and control the interpreters' work. Since the head of the Language Section did not understand Japanese, four *Nisei* were selected to monitor the interpreters' performance (Shimada 2000).

The IMTFE turned to the Language Arbitration Board as a "referee" to settle disputes over translations and interpretations. The Board probably did serve to minimize the time spent discussing language disputes in court. In addition, the language arbiter most likely kept an eye on the monitors as well. All the *Nisei* monitors were *Kibei* (*Nisei* who returned to the United States after receiving education in Japan), who had been suspected of being "pro-Japanese" because of their background. The language arbiter, a Caucasian military officer, may have functioned

to deter the *Nisei* monitors from being too accommodating of the defendants' needs, and to give the appearance that the U.S. military was in charge of the trial procedures.

This hierarchical structure functioned as a display of authority and a check against any "bad faith" the Japanese interpreters and *Kibei* monitors were perceived to harbor. Asked if he believed that the monitors were needed for achieving a higher level of accuracy as some suggest (e.g. Watanabe 1998), Oka (2006) answered, "Whether or not the monitoring was needed has nothing to do with interpreting. It was a political matter. [The tribunal] didn't fully trust the Japanese interpreters, and that's why the monitor and language board were established."

### *Negotiated norms in the interpreting procedures*

During the initial stage of the IMTFE, there was a great deal of "trial and error" in the interpreting procedures, since interpreters were untrained "chance" or "natural" interpreters and the court participants were equally inexperienced in using the services of interpreters. At the beginning of the trial, the tribunal tried to enforce its expectancy norms (Chesterman 1993) as to how interpreting should be done. Those norms included allowing the speaker to complete his remarks, however long they might be, before the interpreter started his rendition in the consecutive mode; and allowing the speaker to read a prepared document aloud and to have it interpreted without submitting the translation beforehand.

The interpreters, however, could not interpret long passages in the consecutive mode or a speech that was read aloud from a document without access to the translation. Such cognitive limitations of the interpreters were communicated to the tribunal through the head of the Language Section and the language arbiter on behalf of the interpreters. To actually function and proceed with the trial, the tribunal's expectancy norms had to be negotiated and changed to accommodate the needs of the interpreters as expressed in their feedback. The new norms that developed through this negotiation during the first year of the trial included having speakers break their remarks into short segments; and providing the translation to the interpreter beforehand when the speaker was about to read aloud from a document.

This indicates that, unlike Toury's model (1995: 241–258) of natural/native translators (interpreters), in which bilingual speakers without formal training become interpreters by conforming to feedback from their users and commissioners, the interpreters at the IMTFE were among the parties who negotiated and agreed on how the interpreting should be done. Here, norm-building was an interactive process which required "socialization" both on the interpreter's part and the interpreter user's part. Further, the nature of the interpreters' feedback points to the

fact that norms in interpreting at the IMTFE were partly developed to address the cognitive limitations of the interpreters.

### *Nisei linguists as “in-between” interpreters*

The four *Nisei* monitors came to the IMTFE under difficult and complex circumstances. They were all *Kibei*, who had suffered even greater prejudice and discrimination than other Japanese Americans because of their prior education and experience in Japan. The monitors, excluding one who taught at the U.S. Navy’s Japanese school, were among the nearly 120,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans who were forcibly relocated to internment camps after Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. They were also among the *Nisei* who were recruited by the U.S. Army to teach or train at its Japanese school for military intelligence. During the war, these *Nisei* linguists translated captured documents, broke codes and interrogated Japanese prisoners of war, while their families and friends were still detained in the camps. They constantly had to confront the language and people of their own heritage in hostile settings, while fighting against the suspicion of disloyalty within the U.S. Army. They also feared being caught, tortured and killed as traitors by Japanese soldiers.

This complexity of the position of the *Nisei* linguists during the war can be explained by drawing on Cronin’s notion (2002: 54–59) of “autonomous and heteronomous interpreters”. On the one hand, they were “autonomous” (insiders) in the sense that they were Americans who were recruited and trained for military intelligence by the U.S. military during the war. On the other hand, they were “heteronomous” (outsiders) as reflected in some “native” characteristics: i.e. having been raised by “native” parents who in some cases sent them to the “native” land to acquire its language and culture as their own and later recruited by the U.S. military “through inducements” (to escape or avoid the internment camps and prove their loyalty to the country of their birth).

In the context of the IMTFE, the *Nisei* monitors were hired by the government that had treated them and their families as “enemy aliens”, in a trial against leaders of their ancestral homeland. And in their function as monitors, they used skills deeply rooted in their own heritage. There is no way to actually know what kind of emotional and psychological states the *Nisei* monitors were in during the IMTFE and how they viewed the trial itself, the defendants and their own role. Revisiting this “doubleness” or “in-between” nature of the position of the *Nisei* monitors, however, may shed light on issues involving interpreters who work in the world’s current conflicts.

## Linguists' behavior during Tojo's testimony

Following a contextualized examination of some interpreting phenomena at the IMTFE, the present paper now discusses the linguists' behavior during Hideki Tojo's testimony, focusing on whether the linguists' behavior in interpreting and monitoring was consistent with their relative positions in the power constellation of the trial.

Hideki Tojo was an army general who served as War Minister and Prime Minister during much of World War II. Of all the defendants, he was considered most responsible for Japanese war crimes, and was accused and found guilty on most counts of the war crimes at the IMTFE. After the reading of his affidavit, the examinations of Hideki Tojo took place from December 30, 1947 to January 7, 1948.

Tojo's testimony was selected based on the assumption that by the time he took the witness stand in the twentieth month of the courtroom proceedings only the competent, knowledgeable and experienced interpreters were working at the trial and that the interpreting procedures had been well-established. This is in an attempt to minimize the possible effect of the issues of interpreter competency and procedural glitches so that the present study can point to contextual factors as possible drivers for the behavior of the linguists.

Given the specific political nature of the IMTFE as a trial operated by the U.S. military as part of its overall strategy in the occupation of Japan (Dower 1999; Maga 2001) and the limited availability of audio records of the trial and potential problems of relying solely on transcripts (Gile 1999), this paper does not engage in the generalization or quantification of interpreters' behavior in courtroom settings. Rather, it presents a qualitative study of choices, strategies and behavior of interpreters, with reference to the social and political contexts of the setting in which they operate.

### *Linguists who worked during Tojo's testimony*

The following are the interpreters and monitors who worked during those six days of testimony by Tojo. U.S. Army Captain Edward Kraft worked as language arbiter throughout these sessions.

The monitors — David Akira Itami, Sho Onodera and Lanny Miyamoto — were all *Kibei* who had been interned in camps and recruited for military intelligence during the war. The length of their schooling in Japan was fifteen, seven and five years, respectively. They were 36, 30 and 26 years old at the time they worked as monitors during Tojo's testimony. Being the oldest person with the highest level of proficiency in the Japanese language, Itami was considered the leader of the monitor team. Itami's life, which ended with his suicide two years after the IMTFE,



**Table 1.** Interpreters and monitors during Hideki Tojo's testimony

Date	Monitor	Interpreters <sup>4</sup>
December 30, 1947 (PM)	Onodera	Masaki, Oka, Shimanouchi
December 31, 1947 (AM)	Onodera	Iwamoto, Taji, Shimanouchi
January 2, 1948 (AM)	Miyamoto	Shimanouchi, Oka, Taji, Yamanaka
January 2, 1948 (PM)	Itami	Shimanouchi, Shimada, Mori
January 5, 1948 (AM)	Itami	Shimanouchi, Oka, Taji, Mori
January 5, 1948 (PM)	Onodera	Shimanouchi, Oka, Mori
January 6, 1948 (AM)	Itami	Shimanouchi, Mori, Taji, Oka
January 6, 1948 (PM)	Onodera	Oka, Shimanouchi, Mori, Shimada
January 7, 1948 (AM)	Miyamoto	Shimanouchi, Iwamoto, Mori, Taji

has been a frequent subject for authors and researchers in Japan (e.g. Yamasaki 1983; Kinashi 1985; Kono 2003; Otake 2005).

A total of eight interpreters worked during Tojo's testimony. Shimanouchi, Tomio Mori, Hideki Masaki and Masao Yamanaka were officials of the Foreign Ministry; and the remaining four had bilingual family and/or educational backgrounds. Most of the interpreters were older than the two junior monitors, Onodera and Miyamoto. It should be noted that the interpreters had relatively privileged backgrounds and were among the elite in Japanese society as evidenced by prominent family members, education at private international schools and overseas posts as government representatives (Takeda 2007). This is in stark contrast to the backgrounds of the monitors who, as sons of immigrants, had to fight prejudice and discrimination in American society.

As to the background of Language Arbiter Kraft, the records of the U.S. Army's Japanese language school for military intelligence show that he studied elementary-level Japanese for one year.<sup>5</sup>

### *The interpreters' behavior*

According to Watanabe (1998: 19), during Tojo's testimony the interpreters interpreted a total of 1,178 English utterances (turns) into Japanese and 845 Japanese utterances into English. Although there is no written rule found in the archival records that prohibited the interpreters from speaking on their own behalf during the proceedings, the interviews with Oka (2005) and Shimada (2000) confirm that in principle they were not supposed to overstep the hierarchical boundaries to provide any input other than the actual interpretation.

Occasionally, however, the interpreters did interact directly with Tojo and the other participants in response to their questions and to help them understand interpreting and procedural issues. Those exchanges were quick and concise, and probably within the scope of what was tolerated by their supervisors.

The interpreters must have learned on the job over the course of the proceedings, through the interactions with the other court participants, to what extent they were allowed to engage in such activity. There is no indication in the transcripts or the audio records that the tribunal disapproved of such actions by the interpreters. In addition, although the number of instances is small, the interpreters interjected to offer the witness quick explanations on procedural matters, mainly concerning the exhibits and their translations.

The interpreters also tried to ensure that Tojo's statements were fully interpreted. Whenever the interpreter was interrupted and missed an opportunity to interpret Tojo's answer in its entirety, the interpreter inserted the missed interpretation in his next rendition. Further, on a few occasions, they interrupted the speaker to let Tojo complete his remarks. This type of action was probably driven by their eagerness to make sure that Tojo had fair opportunity to speak for himself, but this may have been perceived as inappropriate by certain court participants. On one occasion Chief Prosecutor Joseph Keenan questioned the interpreter's comments that Tojo had more to say.

#### Example 1

**Tojo:** Sore wa sono tori. Tadashi...  
(*That's right, but...*)<sup>6</sup>

**Interpreter:**<sup>7</sup> Yes, as you say, but—

**Keenan:** You finally, in your affidavit, have referred to it as a war, have you not?

**Interpreter:** Before Mr. Prosecutor's question was put, the witness was just about to state his next answer.

**Keenan:** I question that, Language Section, or whoever is making that statement, but if the witness wishes to make some other statement I do not wish to cut him off. I am looking at him.

This challenge by Keenan may have deterred the interpreters from interrupting the speaker again. There were no more instances of interpreters stopping the speaker for the remainder of Tojo's testimony.

During Tojo's testimony there were a number of cases in which the monitors rephrased seemingly error-free renditions of the interpreters or corrected interpretations erroneously. The transcripts and the available audio recordings indicate that the interpreters never objected to those interjections, with one exception that occurred when one of the monitors made the same mistake for the second time in offering his version and the interpreter corrected it.

In brief, the interpreters kept the instances of speaking on their own behalf to a minimum (a few times a session) and did not object to the monitors' seemingly unnecessary rephrasing or erroneous attempts of correction. This behavior can

be explained by the interpreters' position in the hierarchy of the linguists. Shimada (2000: 21, 23) claims that the interpreters were much more competent than the monitors, that the monitors, excluding Itami, were not competent enough to correct interpreting errors, and that the monitors actually depended on the interpreters. The interpreters, however, probably felt that they were not in a position to protest against or complain about the monitors' undue interjections. Shimada compares the relation of the interpreter and the monitor to a race horse and a jockey, implying that the interpreter (the horse) could not stop the monitor (the jockey) to tell him that his direction was wrong.

### *The monitors' behavior*

Although the functions of the monitors are not clearly defined in the IMTFE official documents, the transcripts and audio records of the trial indicate that their main activity was to monitor the interpreters' performance and correct any errors. During Tojo's testimony, the monitor corrected omissions, additions and meaning errors in the interpreters' renditions five to six times per session on average, and more than 90% of those corrections concerned interpretations from English into Japanese. Many of the corrections were not of the nature that would have changed the discourse of the proceedings or the substance of Tojo's testimony. The monitor's interjection in the following example, however, may have been considered significant by the court participants.

#### **Example 2**

**Keenan:** ... You have told us that the Emperor on repeated occasions made known to you that he was a man of peace and did not want war, is that correct?

**Interpreter:** ... Anata wa sude ni hotei ni taishite, nihon tenno wa heiwa o aisuru hito de aru to iu koto o maemotte anata-gata ni shirashimete atta to iu koto o moshimashita. Kore wa tadashii desune.

(... You told the court that the Japanese Emperor had made known to you that he was a man who loved peace. Is this correct?)

**Monitor (Onodera):** *Sore o kurikaeshite osshai mashita.*

([He] said that repeatedly.)

The phrase "on repeated occasions" was an important modifier for the prosecutor who was directed by MacArthur to grant total immunity to the emperor and tried to depict the emperor as a pacifist who delegated authority to his militarist advisors (Dower 1999: 459–460; Bix 2000: 610–612). This examination took place amid the great endeavor by the prosecution and Tojo himself, in coordination with MacArthur's office and the Japanese government, to offset the damaging slip

Tojo made during his testimony of December 31, 1947. Responding to a defense lawyer's question on that occasion, Tojo inadvertently implicated the emperor in Japan's war activities by testifying, "there is no Japanese subject who would go against the will of His Majesty: more particularly, among high officials of the Japanese government". According to Oka (2005), what made the most lasting impression of the entire trial for him was the laborious effort Keenan and Tojo made never to expose the emperor, and the exchanges between them and the frustrated Tribunal President, Sir William Webb, who had wanted to see the emperor indicted. Although it cannot be determined whether Onodera's interjection took place as part of his ordinary course of activity or with his keen awareness of the significance of the missing information, it must have been appreciated by those who were involved in the efforts to protect the emperor.

In addition to correcting patent errors found in the interpreters' renditions, the monitors presented their versions of renditions by changing the wording or sentence structures after the interpreters' seemingly error-free renditions (i.e. no omissions, additions, meaning or grammatical errors). During Tojo's testimony, such rephrasing interjections occurred about nine times per session on average and more than 90% of them concerned interpretations from English into Japanese. It is presumed that the monitors' intention was to provide more "clarity" in order to facilitate Tojo's understanding of the questions by offering more explicit versions of renditions. Occasionally such interjections contained explanatory information added by the monitors. There was a case in which the monitor's added explanation influenced the way Tojo responded and changed the discourse of the proceedings. It took place during the morning session of December 31, 1947.

### Example 3

**Keenan:** You advocated the process of peace terms being arranged between China and Japan in 1941 while there was a huge Japanese army occupying a large part of China, is that not correct?

**Interpreter:** Shina no hijo ni hiroi chiiki o bakudai na kazu no nihon-gun ga senryo shitsutsu aru aida ni ...

*(While an enormous number of Japanese troops were in the process of occupying a very large area in China ...)*

**Monitor (Onodera):** ... aida ni, anata wa 1941-nen nisshi-kan no wahei no joken o teiji shita no dewa arimasenka.

*(During that time, didn't you present peace terms between Japan and China in 1941?)*

**Tojo:** Motto hakkiri itte kudasai.

*(Please say it more clearly.)*

**Interpreter:** May I have that question repeated? It was not quite comprehensible.

**Keenan:** Will you please answer that question directly without making a speech?  
[NO INTERPRETATION]

**Monitor (Onodera):** We are trying to get an accurate translation on this last one. We have not done so yet.

**Tojo:** Ima no ron, mo sukoshi hakkiri itte kudasai.  
(*Please state the statement a little more clearly.*)

**Monitor (Onodera):** Shina no kodai na chiiki ni nihon no taigun ga chuzai shite oru toki ni oite, anata wa shina to nihon to no aida no heiwa joken, wahei kosho nado to iu koto o tsuzukete otta no dewa arimasenka. Soiu mujun shita jotai ni oite...

(*While a large Japanese army was stationed in a large area in China, weren't you continuing to have peace terms between China and Japan, peace negotiations or something? In such contradicting situation ...*)

**Tojo:** Hitotsu mo mujun shite orimasen ga, tozen tsuzukemashita.  
(*It is not contradicting at all, but naturally [I] continued.*)

**Interpreter:** There is no inconsistency in the situation. I naturally continued such efforts for peace.

In an effort to help Tojo understand Keenan's question, Onodera added the term "mujun shita" (contradicting), rather strong language in Japanese. Because of this term, which Onodera added of his own initiative, Tojo ended up responding directly to this added language instead of responding to the original interpretation of Keenan's question.

Besides seemingly unnecessary interjections to rephrase, there were instances in which the monitors missed interpreting errors or made erroneous corrections (Watanabe 1998; Takeda 2007). The tribunal, however, was probably not aware of those issues. As mentioned above, most of the interjections by the monitors were delivered in Japanese. Considering the fact that none of the people who supervised the monitors during Tojo's testimony had a good command of Japanese, the tribunal may have had the impression that the monitors were busy correcting the interpreters' errors, by satisfying its expectations, without actually understanding the appropriateness and effectiveness of those corrections.

There are several possible reasons why most of the monitor's interjections concerned English-to-Japanese interpretations. Watanabe (1998: 55) points to the difficulty the interpreters probably experienced in understanding the courtroom language in English and coming up with the Japanese equivalent. This is a plausible explanation. On the one hand, the Japanese interpreters may have had difficulty with legal terms and the language style specific to courtroom proceedings

in English, but they presumably had a complete comprehension of utterances in Japanese. On the other hand, the *Nisei* monitors may have struggled to understand Japanese terms and language styles specific to the Japanese military and imperial court system, but they presumably had a full comprehension of utterances in English. The fact that the monitors probably had a better understanding of the source language when it was English may explain why most of their interjections were for English-to-Japanese interpretations. Without understanding the source language, there would be no way of “correcting interpreting errors”.

There is another possible reason for the monitors’ self-restraint when it came to interpreting into English. When an interjection was uttered in English in response to Japanese-to-English interpretation, the tribunal could understand and compare the original interpretation by the interpreter and the monitor’s version. Concerned about the speed of the proceedings, as mentioned in the transcripts and a number of archival records, the tribunal probably did not have the patience to listen to two versions of interpretation unless they were materially different. Being sensitive to their employer’s needs, the monitors may have been more disciplined and selective when they interjected in English.

Lastly, many of the monitors’ interjections directed at English-to-Japanese interpretations can be attributable to their eagerness to help Tojo and their awareness that none of their supervisors fully understood the nature of their interjections in Japanese. The monitors seem to have tried to make sure that Tojo fully understood the questions he was asked by rephrasing the interpreters’ renditions and adding explanatory remarks when they felt he might have trouble understanding. Being aware that neither the language arbiter nor the chief of the Language Section during Tojo’s testimony had a good command of Japanese, the monitors probably did not feel very inhibited about assisting Tojo in Japanese. This can be seen as an example of interpreters — monitors in this case — exerting their “power” as the party that monopolizes and controls the means of communication (Anderson 1976: 218–221).

As for the possible reasons for seemingly unnecessary interjections, whether in Japanese or English, it could be that a given interpretation was delivered in such a way that it did not sound “quite right” to the monitor, who then jumped in to offer his own version. As Gile’s experiment (1999) suggests, the assessment of interpreting quality varies depending on whether the data is presented in audio form or in transcription. Even if an interpretation by the interpreter “looks” fine and error-free in transcription, it may have “sounded” problematic to the monitor.

In addition, these seemingly unnecessary interjections may simply be attributed to the monitors’ insufficient capacity to quickly and accurately evaluate the interpreters’ performance. The average number of rephrasing interjections per session (mostly for English-to-Japanese interpretations) was 6, 8.5 and 15 for Itami,

Onodera and Miyamoto, respectively (Takeda 2007). With his appreciation of the variety of lexical and semantic usage of the Japanese language based on his 15 years of education in Japan, Itami was probably better equipped than other monitors to accept the wide range of word choices and language styles rendered in Japanese by the interpreters. The fact that Miyamoto, who had the weakest command of Japanese (Shimada 2000; Oka 2005), rephrased the interpreters' renditions far more frequently than other monitors, and that Itami did so the least, may support the argument that these seemingly unwarranted interjections were partly due to limitations in the monitors' knowledge of Japanese usage and vocabulary.

This aspect of the monitors' competency also leads to another possible reason for the seemingly unnecessary interjections: the monitors' eagerness to demonstrate their own active involvement in the interpreting process. This is especially applicable in the case of Miyamoto. The fact that Miyamoto seemed eager to present his own version of renditions could be explained by his desire to prove that he was a functioning monitor despite his youth and his weak Japanese. The Language Division and the tribunal were not capable of assessing his interjections in Japanese and they may have thought that he was busy correcting the poor renditions by the interpreters.

Besides correcting interpreting errors and rephrasing interpreters' renditions, the monitors directly interacted with Tojo and other court participants during his testimony. They directly responded to questions asked by Tojo, the president and the examining counsel and asked them for clarifications concerning their remarks and procedural matters, presumably for the interpreters who were not supposed to speak on their own behalf. The monitors also functioned as communication coordinators by interrupting the examining counsel to let Tojo complete his remarks, asking Tojo to break down his remarks into shorter segments, requesting the court reporters to read out the record in order to assist the interpreters when they missed the original remarks, directing Tojo and the court to appropriate pages and passages in translated exhibits, and providing explanations on interpreting issues to Tojo and the court.

Among these direct interactions with Tojo and other court participants, the explanations the monitors provided to Tojo seem to have gone beyond the scope of their presumed role as checkers of the accuracy of interpretation. Some explanatory information added by the monitors sounded almost like advice to Tojo. Here is an example from the morning session of January 6, 1948.

#### Example 4

**Keenan:** But you still insist that when the Foreign Minister of Japan at that critical moment was sending a message to his own ambassador that he was employing diplomatic language that had various meanings and not using a direct instruction?

**Interpreter:** Sorede anata wa nao kono judai naru jiki ni oite Nihon no gaimu daijin ga sono taishi ni taishite tsushin o okuru toki ni, iroiro na imi ni toreru tokoro no gaikoteki jirei o mochiite ori, soshite chokusainaru kunrei o hasshite oranakatta to iu koto o shucho nasaru no desuka?

*(Then, do you still assert that at the critical time the foreign minister of Japan sent his ambassador a correspondence which used diplomatic language that could be interpreted in various ways and didn't convey a direct instruction?)*

**Monitor (Itami):** Chotto sono ten o setsumei shimasu. Shonin, gokai no nai yoni. Kono kunrei no nakani tsukatte aru kotoba wa gaikojo no kotoba de aruka doka, soretomo sonotori no koto o imishite orunoka to iu imi no shitsumon de arimasu.

*(Let me explain a little on this point. Mr. Witness, please do not misunderstand. This question means to ask whether the language included in the instruction is diplomatic language or it means what it says.)*

This type of behavior by the monitors was probably driven by their awareness that neither the chief of the Language Section nor the language arbiter had a full command of Japanese and by their eagerness to help Tojo understand the questions. An attempt to link the monitors' behavior to their personal ethical views, sympathy toward the former leader of their parents' country, and "respect for Tojo's honorable attitude in court" (Kinashi 1985: 112) would go nowhere without supporting evidence. It would also fall in the realm of speculation to suggest that Caucasian military officers would never have behaved in the same way as the *Nisei* monitors in assisting Tojo.

### *The language arbiter*

Despite his top position in the hierarchy of the interpreting process as language arbiter, Captain Kraft does not seem to have had a significant impact on the court proceedings. The transcripts reflect that during Tojo's testimony Kraft spoke on five language issues. Only one of them was addressed at the time the issue arose; the other four were addressed four to sixteen days after the issues had been referred to the Language Arbitration Board. Due to his limited Japanese capability, he was probably not aware of the nature of the interjections in Japanese made by the monitors and the interpreters and could not intervene spontaneously in any of their activities. He was a "figure head" (Kawamoto (an IMTFE translator) 2005) and was simply reporting the rulings of the Language Arbitration Board to the court.

The physical presence of Kraft, a Caucasian military officer, near the prosecutors' team, and his announcements of the rulings of the Language Arbitration Board in court, however, must have underscored the appearance that the



U.S. military was in charge of the court proceedings of the IMTFE. Based on the interviews and archival documents, it appears that, during Tojo's testimony, the higher a person was in the linguist hierarchy, the less competent that person was in his second language. The tribunal, however, still kept turning to the language arbiter for disputed translations and interpretations.

## Conclusion

The present paper has provided an overview of the interpreting arrangements at the IMTFE, focusing on some sociopolitical aspects of their features. The influence of issues such as power, race and class was apparent in the interpreting arrangements, especially in the hierarchical organization in which three ethnically and socially different groups of linguists engaged in three different functions in the interpreting process. This paper also analyzed the linguists' behavior during Tojo's testimony and suggested that some behavior of the linguists in interpreting and monitoring was consistent with their relative positions in the power constellation of the trial.

All these findings reinforce the notion that interpreting does not occur in a vacuum, and that it is conditioned by the social, political and cultural contexts of the setting in which the interpreted event takes place. For a fuller understanding of interpreting phenomena, including interpreters' choices, strategies and behavior, researchers should be encouraged to go beyond a microlinguistic analysis of interpreted texts and take a more holistic approach. As Pöchhacker (2005: 693) suggests in his "socio-cognitive perspective", attention should be paid to various contextual factors such as institutional constraints and professional norms in addition to interpreters' cognitive processes.

This study did not engage in a linguistic analysis of interpreting because of the limited availability of audio records. Admittedly, the IMTFE is a unique case, given its historical and political significance. Nevertheless, the author hopes that some issues in interpreting addressed in this paper, such as trust, control, negotiated norms, "in-between"-ness and power relations, will be revisited for an enhanced understanding of language-related issues in today's society.

## Notes

1. The term "linguists" is used in this study to refer to the interpreters, monitors and language arbiters as a whole, not to persons who study linguistics, since personnel who engaged in language-related functions at the IMTFE were called "linguists" in relevant archival documents.

2. One exception is the following comment by Sir William Webb, the President of the IMTFE. According to Kojima (1971), Webb said in an interview after his retirement that “[i]f the Japanese lawyers had been more proficient in English, or the interpreters had been more competent, it might have affected the judgment of the trial.” (Kojima 1971: 258; my translation)
3. Correspondence from CINCAFPAC ADV. to CINCAFPAC Manila, October 28 and 29, 1945. *Records of the Allied Operational and Occupation Headquarters, World War II* (Record Group 331). The U.S. National Archives & Records Administration, College Park, MD.
4. The interpreters’ names are in the same order as they appear in the Japanese transcripts of the court proceedings.
5. *Album and Roster of the Military Intelligence Service Language School*. Provided by Grant Ichikawa of the Japanese American Veterans Association in December 2005.
6. The utterances in Japanese are presented in romanized text and their English translations are provided in italics in parentheses by the author.
7. The transcripts do not indicate which interpreter interpreted a given portion of the proceedings.

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