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Senior Play: Translation

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## Senior Play reflection

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I have decided to join the senior play after watch last years' senior play. As a student in Fu Jen English department, I think it is necessary to participate in a play at least one time. By the time we had to decide which group to join, the play was already selected. The reason why I chose to join translation team is that I have taken English – Chinese Translation course for two semesters. I am interested in translation and joining senior play translation group is a good chance to practice what I've learned in the class. Besides, we never translated fairy tales in the class before, so I thought it would be an interesting experience.

We had a meeting to discuss the rules that all members need to follow and the workload distribution after we were certain about who would be in the group. Since the play *The Secrets in the Wings* is composed by several tales, we decided to let each member be responsible for two stories. As for the lyrics, we all agreed it would be better if we finish it together since it is more difficult than stories. Avery is our group leader. He was in charge of communication with other groups, the director assistants, and other people if necessary. Before we began to work, he had already talked to the instructor and showed us some examples of the fairy tales translation for our reference.

The first stage of our work was to finish the first draft of parts we were responsible for individually. Since we all agreed it would be better if we could go through our drafts together before showing it to the director assistant, we were kind of under a tight deadline. Although the first draft was an individual work, if anyone encountered any problem or needed any suggestion, we would bring it to our regular

meeting on Friday morning for discussion. Speaking of which, I really have to thank my team members for waking up early on every Friday. Since I had an internship job, Friday morning was the only time I was available. Arriving at school at 8:30 on every Friday was hard for me, but I think it is good that we had that regular meeting. Thanks to the meeting, we finish our job more effectively. Knowing other teammates' progress also helped reminding me not to fall behind. In addition, some difficulties can be solved earlier and this saved us some time when revising our works afterwards.

We did well on following our schedule. Therefore, after finishing our first draft, we really had time to look at each part together. Except from making sure that we translate the content correctly, we worked hard to make improve the quality of our work. There were three drafts on our google document, but actually we kept making adjustments whenever we came up with a better idea till the performing days. When revising our second and third draft, we adjusted our word choice according to different roles. For example, one of the main characters, Heidi, is supposed to be a little girl, so words she uses should be easier. In addition, considered these stories are fairy tales, we tried to avoid words that are too difficult for a child and make use of Chinese idioms when needed. In order to make the subtitles easier to read, we kept trying to make each line as short as possible.

Since this is a play, it was important to match our translation with the actors' performance. In fact, we made a lot of changes after finishing our third drafts after we finally went into the theater and watched the actors' rehearsal. First of all, I didn't realized that subtitles are very different from regular text until I saw them being projected on the screen. We had to consider if a line is too long to read when the actor's speak fast. If a line was too long, we had to avoid causing misunderstanding due to our phrasing when trying to make it shorter. In my opinion, translation of the play itself is not very difficult because the stories are easy to understand and

conversations in this play is pretty simple either, but adjusting phrasing of each line according to actors' speed of speech was not easy. I was responsible of a part which the princess was very angry, and a very long sentence coming out of her mouth without pausing. There was no way I can change the lines so fast, and even if I could, the audience would not be able to follow the speed. Therefore, we did our best to separate the long sentence into several lines and shorten the length without changing the meaning, but kept the intense emotion at the same time. I found it is sometimes difficult to convey the completed message within certain words. There were also occasions when many actors spoke at the same time. The display of the subtitle was difficult in this case. Second, the director made some changes to the plot. Some plots were deleted and some lines were changed, too. There used to be a joke in the story "The Princess who wouldn't laugh." The joke is actually quite easy to understand to those who know simple English. However, it was difficult to translate it into Chinese version. I tried, but it was not funny at all. Therefore, I was happy to know they decided to use their own jokes. Judging from audience's reactions, I think that was a good decision.

The only thing I want to complain about was that unlike other teams, most of the time director and director assistant didn't pay much attention to us. After all, what we are doing won't affect actors' performance directly. Sometimes they forgot to tell us they've made changes. I wanted to remind those who want to join the translation team that they have to communicate with director assistant actively in case they miss some important changes. Another thing I want to mention is that the two director assistants did come to offer us some advices on our translations. They wanted us to revise some word choice sentences. Some of the advices we agreed and did made changes. However, most of the time we decided not to change after discussed with each other. I think it was good that they tried to give some advices, but we should decide which

one was better.

While they were rehearsing, we practiced how to display the subtitle, too. This part was not easy, either. Sometimes the speed was very fast, and sometimes actors would suddenly skip one or two sentences and jumped to other line. We had to be very familiar with each line and remember the important timings such as sound effects, lighting effects or specific lines to remind ourselves when to display right subtitles. Honestly, I was not good at this part. In addition, the rehearsal progress was delayed, so we didn't see their complete performance until a few days before the formal show. Fortunately, there was no serious mistake during the three days.

We designed a questionnaire for the audience. The purpose of the questionnaire is to evaluate our work. It is important to know audience's opinions and feelings if we want to know whether our work is good or not. If the audience is not familiar with English, can they understand the plot with the help the subtitle we provided? Observing audience's reactions, I am glad to see most of the audience gave us positive feedbacks. Most of them were satisfied with the speed we display subtitles, the color and size of the words. The purpose of providing subtitle is to help audience understand the whole play, and it feels good seeing feedbacks saying they actually made use of the subtitle we provided. Aside from compliments, there are some advices to us, too. Some said that he cannot the screen clearly from his seat, and some hoped we can provide both English and Chinese subtitle when the actor are speaking Taiwanese. I think some of the suggestions are beyond our capability, but it is still helpful to know they feel.

Although there were some difficulties and accidents during the process, this is a good experience and I've learned a lot from the progress. That is, you can never be too careful and it is necessary to double check every detail beforehand. There are two serious mistakes happened during the three days. First, at the first day, at the middle

of the play, the projected screen suddenly started scrolling down. We were all freaked out and didn't understand what happened. However, later on we realized the projector screen is controlled by a bottom in the central controlled room we stayed when the teaching assistant dashed into the room and pressed on the bottom. The controlled bottom was on the corner of the desk. Although none of us were leaned on the desk at the moment, maybe we touch it without noticing. Fortunately, the play reacted to the accident very well so most of the audience thought we did it on purpose. We should figure out all equipment and their functions beforehand. Second, at the second play, the subtitle of one of the plot was not displayed because we missed to put it in the file. Actually, I felt I have to take most of the responsibility of the mistake. When the first day was over, we all made some adjustment to our files. I stayed at my friend's house that night, so I borrowed her MAC. Because of the different system, we found my documents didn't work on the notebook we used to play the subtitle. I had to redo all the work and download the files all over again when others' were already finished. When others were putting my documents back into the file, he or she missed one of them. I should had check to see if every plot were already out in the file. Luckily, it is a very short part that has only a few lines. Anyway, aside from these two incidents, the show went quite well.

Looking back at our final draft now, I am quite satisfied with what we have achieved. Since we used shared google document to edit our drafts and we kept the revising records, it is easy to tell the differences between every versions. The quality of our final draft is clearly better compared to our first draft in terms of word choice, length of the sentence, accuracy, etc. Of course there's still room for improvement, but we did make a big progress during the process. If I can choose again, I will join the translation team, too.