

## SESSION 2

---

### CURRENT INITIATIVES: ACADEMIC TRANSLATION IN JAPAN

和英学術翻訳プロジェクトの現在

...

### SSRC Programs to Support Publications and Presentations in English

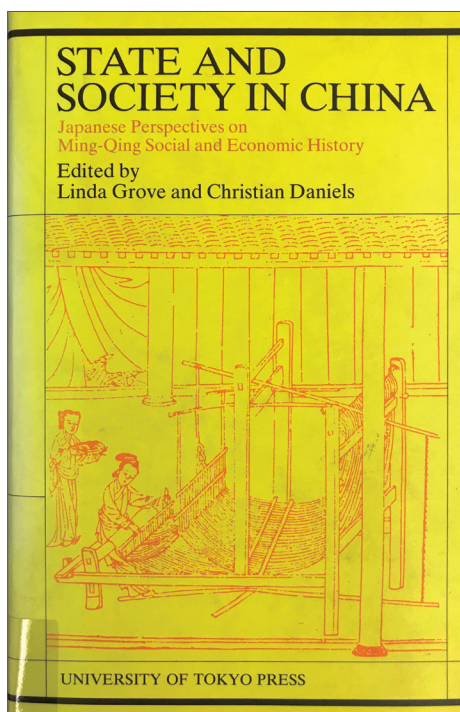
Linda Grove

SSRC の学術的ライティングのインストラクション

リンダ・グローヴ

Most of the presentations at this symposium on translation have focused on issues related to translation and publication in the field of Japanese studies. Like many of the others here, I have worked both as a scholar and as a translator. My own field of research is Chinese social and economic history, and my first work as a translator was a project to translate key works by Japanese scholars in Ming-Qing social history. When I first came to Japan to work on my dissertation, senior faculty in American universities commonly advised their graduate students in Chinese history to read the work of Japanese scholars, but cautioned them, arguing that Japanese scholarship should be read primarily to gain knowledge of the rich historical primary materials that Japanese scholars had uncovered. Argument or analysis, on the other hand, was too much influenced by Marxist paradigms, and so should be ignored.

As I studied with Japanese scholars and slowly learned how to read their very dense prose, I came to have great respect for the work—and not just the sources they used—and it was the desire to introduce the work of Japanese scholars to an international audience that inspired my first translation project, which was published as *State and Society in China: Japanese Perspectives on Ming-Qing Social and Economy History* (edited by Linda Grove and Christian Daniels, published by the University of Tokyo Press, 1984). The translation work took the better part of a year. While my fellow editor Christian Daniels and I each translated two essays, others were translated by for-



eign graduate students who were studying in Tokyo at the time. Each of them went on to establish careers as leading scholars in Ming-Qing studies: Timothy Brook, Cynthia Brokaw, Helen Dunstan, and Joseph McDermott. We were fortunate to be able to consult with the Japanese authors of most of the essays, and as we worked our way through draft after draft of the translations, the Japanese authors discussed with us the development of the field of Chinese history in postwar Japan and the issues that were at the center of scholarly discourse.

At the time there were no guides to translation of academic Japanese and so we had to find our own ways to convert the authors' prose

into readable English, debating among ourselves the translation of technical terms and questions about what additional information was necessary to aid an English reader. In the end we wrote a short introduction outlining the development of postwar Japanese scholarship in Chinese history and added two-page introductions to each essay that tried to set the essay we had translated within the on-going Japanese scholarly conversation on a particular interpretative issue. While the book never became a best-seller, generations of foreign graduate students diligently made copies of our translations and used them as an entry into the world of Japanese study of Chinese history.

In 2011 I retired from Sophia University, and in 2013 I began to work as Consulting Director for the Social Science Research Council's Tokyo office. At the SSRC I have been involved in the development of several projects that build on skills and insights directly related to that earlier translation work. The SSRC is the United States's oldest organization in the social sciences (<https://www.ssrc.org/>). It was established by a group of discipline-based academic associations in 1923 to promote common interests and to bring the

best of academic research to bear on public policy. Today it runs programs supporting scholarly research in the United States, but also in many other parts of the world including Japan. The SSRC manages a diverse range of fellowship programs, as well as operating various capacity building programs and workshops that guide younger scholars in dissertation research and offer advice on how to turn their dissertations into publishable books. In Japan, the SSRC is probably best known for its partnership with the Center for Global Partnership of the Japan Foundation, in running the Abe Fellowship Program, which marked its 25th anniversary in 2016.

In 2014 SSRC began a new program, initiated by and in partnership with the Sasakawa Peace Foundation, entitled New Voices from Japan (NVJ) (<https://www.ssrc.org/programs/view/new-voices-from-japan/#overview>) which provides training for young, policy-oriented scholars. Small cohorts of three members receive training in how to make effective English presentations and then visit the United States to deliver public lectures to university audiences and civic groups, and to engage in discussions with experts at American think tanks. The NVJ program aims to contribute to the training of a new generation of scholars, with interest in global public policy issues, who will be able to engage on an equal footing, in English, with experts from the United States and other parts of the world.

Our newest program, called Global Scholars, which has been in the planning stages for several years, will begin in the spring of 2018.<sup>1</sup> The Global Scholars initiative, which is being funded by the Luce Foundation, is a multi-faceted effort to strengthen the English language writing skills of Asian scholars working in Asia institutions, and to increase their success in publishing in English-medium international journals.

As we all know, globalization is transforming the Japanese and Asian academic worlds. For scholars in Asian universities and research institutes, academic globalization has brought increased pressure to teach in English and publish in English language journals. This pressure is expressed in many ways: for example, some universities require PhD candidates to publish at least one article in English as a qualification for their degree and in

---

1 This report has been revised and updated based on developments in the program since the symposium was held in 2016. The discussion that follows relates to the original presentation, but raises questions that are likely to be answered in much the same way for the revised presentation.—ed.

many institutions publication in English is a qualification for obtaining a tenured teaching position or for promotion. In many countries, performance evaluations give extra points for publications in international journals.

In Japan, as well as in other Asian countries, the pressures of globalization have led many organizations to establish their own English medium journals in an effort to present the research of Asian scholars to international audiences. So far, only a very small number of these new English medium journals have been successful in entering the ranks of truly “international” journals. Those that have been the most successful are affiliated with major Western publishers, for example Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press, Brill, Routledge, etc. While many of the successful Asian-based English-medium journals began with the intention to present “Asian voices” to the international academic community, a check shows that many, in some cases most, of their articles are by scholars based in North America and Europe. On the other hand, many of the journals sponsored by institutions publish primarily the work of scholars at the institution that supports the journal, translating into English materials prepared for a domestic audience. Most of these journals have failed to catch the interest of the international scholarly community and as a result even the sponsoring institutions refuse to count such publications as “international.”

The results of this situation—pressure on younger scholars to publish in English and the limited success of regional journals in gaining international visibility—impact not only the careers of individual scholars, but also the global community which does not fully benefit from the research and analysis provided by Asian scholars whose different perspectives can enrich scholarly discourses. At the same time, interaction and collaboration among Asian scholars working and publishing in their own native languages, has been hampered by the lack of a common linguistic base.

The Global Scholars initiative is approaching these problems with three support mechanisms: (1) Writing workshops for younger scholars which will be held in East and Southeast Asia; (2) Journal Editors Management Meetings, to be held annually, which will bring together editors of regionally based English-medium journals in the social sciences and humanities to discuss common problems and work on solutions to increase the quality and raise the visibility of existing journals; and (3) an interactive website providing support services for both scholars and editors, offering advice and guidance on publishing in English-medium journals.

Let me begin with the writing workshops. The techniques that will be used in organizing writing workshops will build on the experiences of the SSRC in running dissertation workshops, and those of Paul Kratoska, of the National University of Singapore, who has been running writing workshops in Japan and Southeast Asia. The writing workshops will be run in partnership with local organizations (universities, academic associations, etc.). Each workshop will invite participation by 15–20 scholars, each of whom will submit a draft English article that she or he is working on. During an intensive three-day workshop, participants will be divided into small groups for discussion, and each participant will also have time for individual mentoring with a member of the training team. The workshop sessions will include exercises that are designed to help participants see how their work is read and understood by other members of their group and will offer guidance in reformulating and rewriting for an international audience. The workshops will also provide practical advice on how to select appropriate journals for one's own research, how to submit articles to international journals, what to expect in the review process, and how to retarget, rewrite, and resubmit articles. At the end of the workshop participants will have received advice about their draft articles and will have worked out a plan for revising the drafts.

In thinking about how to design and carry out such workshops, SSRC and our partners, Paul Kratoska and his team, are building on our experiences as translators, writers, and editors. In what follows I would like to take up just two of the major issues: (1) how to frame an article for an English-medium audience, and (2) how to rethink what has been designed for a domestic audience for an international audience.

As we all know, there has been a proliferation of academic journals in the last several decades and every year thousands of articles are published in the humanities and social sciences. One of the first questions that any writer must ask is how to situate his/her own work so as to attract the interest of potential readers. Most scholars writing in their own language for a domestic audience have deep knowledge of their own academic field and the questions that are currently being discussed. In fact, their own contributions usually grow out of familiarity with those questions, and it is relatively easy to suggest where one's own work fits in an on-going scholarly conversation. However, when we turn to write for a diverse international audience, we need to put more time into discovering what the current issues

are, and how we might frame our own research to enter into a discussion with American and European scholars.

Thus, before beginning to write in English, the author needs to do an Internet search on his own field, check the profiles of leading scholars to see what issues they are working on, read back issues of leading journals, explore the websites of relevant think tanks, etc. to get a sense of current concerns. With that information gathered as background, the author then needs to seek what we call a “hook” that will provide an effective introduction to the envisioned article in a way best designed to attract the interest of the audience. This is very much like the process that freelance journalists describe as “pitching” an article to an editor; “pitching” is a process in which an author concisely describes what the piece is going to address and why it is important. Preparing a very short “pitch” is a good way for an author to think about the framing of the article and how it fits with issues that are currently being debated in the English-medium academic world.

The SSRC Global Scholars project is going to develop an interactive website that will provide both guides to this preparation process and advice from writers and editors about how to investigate journals and academic fields. While all scholars, both junior and more senior, dream of having their own work published in the leading journal(s) in their field, the competition is severe, and setting that as the target is likely to lead to discouragement and failure. There are, however, many quality journals in a field, some of them directed to sub-fields, that may be more appropriate for a scholar’s work. Our interactive website will provide advice, together with accounts of the successful efforts of individual scholars to find journals that are most appropriate for their own work. An author who has identified several journals that would be appropriate places of publication needs to read a number of back issues and check submission guidelines before beginning to write the article.

If framing was the first big issue, presentation is the next major stumbling block. There are many problems in trying to figure out how best to present one’s work to an international audience: here, I will only take up two of the issues. The first is an issue of style. In many Asian academic traditions, including the academic tradition of Japan, young scholars are encouraged to put all of their data out at the beginning of an article, putting their conclusion at the end. English reading audiences are accustomed to an almost mirror image of this structure: the argument has to be made at the

beginning, developed through presentation of data, and then wrapped up in a conclusion that will summarize what has been presented. When I have discussed this style or structural issue with younger Japanese colleagues, some have protested that this kind of structure is less “scientific,” since it may look like the author has only selected data that supports his own argument. Perhaps the audiences of English language articles and presentations are more impatient than those who read in Japanese or other Asian languages, but there seems little question that very few will continue to read much beyond the opening paragraph or two if they cannot see what it is that the author wants to say.

When we provided training for the NVJ participants, who were working on oral presentations rather than written ones, we constantly reminded them that they had to find a way to attract the audience in the first two or three minutes of their presentation: if they did not, busy members of an audience might simply leave. So, finding the “hook” that will catch your audience, and showing them at the outset why what you have to say is important, is essential.

The second major presentation issue has to do with how much background information needs to be added for an international audience. When we write for a domestic audience of our own colleagues, we have a very good idea about shared knowledge, and what we can assume our audience knows. When writing for an international audience, we need to fill in more background information, without turning every article into a kind of “general introduction.” When my colleagues and I translated Japanese essays on Ming-Qing history, we realized that there were many interpretive terms that the Japanese authors regularly used that needed some form of explanation for an American audience. This often meant adding phrases, or sometimes sentences, to make clear the implication of an argument. In a similar way, when writing for a foreign audience, an author needs to be more sensitive to the kinds of underlying assumptions that would be shared with a domestic audience, but not a foreign one. Some of these may have to do with use of technical terminology, some may be related to geographical or organizational knowledge of a particular place or time that all members of a domestic audience would take for granted but may seem very puzzling to those from outside the country or region. The addition of maps, charts, and short explanations can often provide in a very concise way the kind of information an international reader needs to make sense of an article. The

trick is to find an appropriate level of information: too much, and the article reads like a general introductory text; too little, and readers will not be able to follow the argument.

Let me briefly turn to the final part of the Global Scholars program, support to improve the quality and visibility of existing English-medium journals that are published in Asia. There are many English-medium journals published in Asia. Some, like *Monumenta Nipponica*, which published its first issue in 1938, are internationally established as leading journals in their fields. This category includes journals like *The International Journal of Asian Studies (IJAS)* and the *Social Science Japan Journal*; both of these journals are edited by institutes affiliated with Tokyo University, and published by leading university presses in the United Kingdom. But many more, even though they are open access (free to all readers), have failed to find an audience. We hope to work on this issue of visibility in several ways: first, by organizing annual meetings of editors of English-medium Asian journals, where the editors can exchange ideas and begin to collaborate in ways that will improve the quality of journals as well as their visibility. The website to be established and maintained by SSRC will serve as a platform for on-going exchange of ideas, while also publicizing journals as a way to increase their visibility. We also plan to work with librarians with expertise in information systems to develop platforms to promote Asian English-medium journals.

Needless to say, the project is only a small beginning in trying to tackle a major problem, but we hope that through the websites, the writer's workshops, and the editors meetings we can contribute to giving the best work of a new generation of Asian scholars greater visibility in global academic discourses.