



BORDERLESS DEFINED

Newsletter of Borderless Interpreting & Translation, LLC



Why Word Order is Worth
Talking About

Recently, I came across an interpreter's tweet saying that they were advised by their interpreting teacher to wait for the end of the sentence to place the verb when interpreting into Japanese.

While some educators and professionals of interpreting and translation from English to Japanese advocate this practice and it seems more than valid from strictly a grammatical standpoint, I personally do not think it can be applied as a one-size-fits-all approach.

I suppose it would be sufficient if the linguist's only aim were to produce a grammatical facsimile of the source in the target language. In most cases, however, that is not our aim, at least in my understanding.

To further this rationale on the topic of word order, I need to discuss a [seminar](#) for which a colleague of mine kindly shared her notes last summer. (Disclaimer: I did not attend the session myself.)

From her notes, I discovered eye-opening notions about word order.

-What word order means to the translator (in case of translation) is what to write next whereas, to the reader, it is the order in which new information is introduced

-The statement above implies that the translator can be unconcerned with the order of introducing the information as he/she delivers the translation with full knowledge of the information

-It is, therefore, incumbent on the translator to have the ability to produce several potential translations for a given sentence and select whichever option provides the reader with the optimum introduction of information

I think all of these apply to interpreting at a fundamental level. Of course, word order is only a vehicle with which to achieve the desired effect. Through the conversion process (related to the third pointer above), we as linguists might opt to change the part of speech of a word or modify the register to better fit the target audience, for example.

And this brings us back to my initial thought on the verb placement practice advocated by some. The equivalent effect in the target language is the final product that we should seek after and word order is an important consideration in the process, not the deliverable, in my opinion.

The next Borderless Defined will be in your inbox in the week of May 31st!

Noriko Rogers

Borderless Interpreting & Translation, LLC

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Borderless Interpreting & Translation, LLC

Plain City, Ohio, USA

+1 (614) 705-5068

URL: www.borderlessinterpreting.com

Contact: noriko@borderlessinterpreting.com

mailer lite