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Final Project Critique

Virtual YouTubers, or Vtubers for short, have garnered a large fanbase of non-Japanese speakers, despite how most of them only stream and speak in Japanese. To help make these Vtubers' content more accessible to non-Japanese speakers, many YouTube channels have sprung up translating clips of their streams into English. David's video, uploaded onto his YouTube channel MTheory Subs, is one of those videos. Focusing on a conversation between the Vtuber Nishizono Chigusa and the *manga* artist Akasaka Aka, the video is translated so that it is easily understandable to non-Japanese speakers, although fully appreciating the video requires a certain level of background knowledge on Vtubers, *manga*, and video games.

The overall style of translation utilized in the video is quite loose, as David clearly prioritized having more natural-sounding lines over directly translating each word spoken. One good example is the phrase "business is booming!" which appears 31 seconds into the video. The original Japanese phrase is *keiki ga ii* (景気がいい), which literally means "good economic climate." However, David opted for the more natural sounding English phrase "business is booming," which allows non-Japanese speaking viewers of the video to understand more easily what is being said. Overall, the translation seems to have been received well, as there are many comments on the video thanking David for his translation.

To further aid understanding, David includes translator notes or inserts pictures into the video at various points to help contextualize what is being said. Some translator notes explain some of the more untranslatable aspects of Japanese, such as varying pronouns or suffixes which

express the subject's gender. Other times, David edits in pictures to help illustrate Chigusa or Akasaka's point. One particularly effective use of picture inserts was during the discussion on Akasaka's name, starting at 3:14. David includes a picture of the flick keyboard layout commonly used on Japanese phones, and even simulates typing Akasaka's name using that layout by editing in a series of red boxes around the characters that make up his name. Edits like these help non-Japanese speakers understand some of the more culturally nuanced and difficult to translate aspects of the Japanese language.

Other times, these translator notes or picture inserts are used to explain a reference to a particular character or manga that Chigusa or Akasaka brings up. Since Akasaka is particularly well-known for his *manga* series *Kaguya-sama: Love is War*, some of the questions Chigusa asks him concern that series. David does assume the audience has prior knowledge of *Kaguya-sama*, and therefore edits in pictures of the characters whenever their names are brought up. He makes a similar edit for Akasaka's reference to *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure*, and includes brief translator notes to explain the references to the *manga* series *Glass Mask* and *Oshi no Ko*. However, these edits are not always consistent; for example, David does not include a translator note for the reference to *One Piece*. The lack of a translator note here may be due to the incredible popularity of *One Piece*, and he therefore might have felt it was not necessary to explain such a famous series. While these small notes might somewhat aid understanding, background knowledge on these *manga* series are often still required to fully appreciate the conversation. Indeed, one comment on the YouTube video responds to Akasaka's statement that his favorite character from *JoJo* is Kishibe Rohan: "I'm glad [Akasaka] likes Rohan, I barely watched Diamond is Unbreakable but that character and his episodes were the most memorable to me." Whereas the discussion on *JoJo* characters might have flown over the heads of viewers

who had not seen *JoJo* before, this commenter was able to appreciate Akasaka's answer more deeply because they had prior knowledge of the *JoJo* series. This comment clearly demonstrates that to fully appreciate some parts of the video, one should have some level of background knowledge on the many subjects referenced.

Indeed, one particular moment that clearly requires background knowledge that is not provided in the video is the discussion on Ishigami Yū's rank in *Apex Legends*. The references to the various tiers of ranks in the video game *Apex Legends* are not explained, nor is the reference to the weapon, the Wingman. David instead assumes the viewers have enough background understanding to understand the discussion on the various ranks of *Apex Legends*, as well as to know that the Wingman is a notoriously difficult weapon to use. Another similar moment is Akasaka's reference to using a "shield battery" for his heart – viewers who do not know that shield batteries are a recovery item in *Apex Legends* likely will not understand that Akasaka is implying that he was emotionally hurt. Viewers who do not have some background knowledge on *Apex Legends*, therefore, might be left in the dark, which makes the overall video more difficult to comprehend.

The overall mood of the video is quite lighthearted, with a few serious moments throughout. Viewers who came expecting new insight into the world of *Kaguya-sama* are likely to be disappointed, as many of the questions are not related to *Kaguya-sama* whatsoever. Most of the questions relate to Akasaka himself, such as his first crush, the origins of his name, his favorite *manga*, and where he gets inspiration for his content. Another significant portion of the video focuses on Chigusa herself, such as what kind of *manga* she would star in or her methods of mental self-care. Of course, David has no control over the questions Chigusa decides to ask Akasaka or the overall flow of their conversation. However, given that he marketed his video as

a “Nijisanji x Kaguya-sama” collaboration, viewers might be misled to believe there is more *Kaguya-sama* related content than there actually is. Still, judging by the comments under the video, most of the viewers came from a background interest in Vtubers, and therefore are not particularly disappointed by the contents of the video given that Chigusa continues to play a major role.

Overall, David’s video represents an effective translation of Japanese media which can allow even those with almost no knowledge of the Japanese language to easily understand what is being said. However, the video relies on a certain level of background knowledge on various *manga* series and the video game Apex Legends to gain a full appreciation of the conversation. Nevertheless, the video appears to have been quite well received by its viewers; possibly because the audience most likely to watch this video will indeed have such requisite background knowledge. While it has not garnered as many views as some of David’s other videos on his channel, this video is still highly entertaining for fans of Vtubers and *manga* alike.