

From the Judges About the Contest Assignment

First of all, we would like to say congratulations to the first and second place winners of this contest, and thank you to all who participated and submitted their translations. For this contest, we looked for submissions that had good word choice, balanced line breaks, and subtitles that adhered to the character limit while communicating the necessary nuance in a way that was easy to understand. We also looked for submissions that included dialogue that sounded natural and captured the tone and personality of the characters while not being overly casual.

Although the scene in the excerpt may seem simple, there is a surprising amount of detail that might be missed without careful examination of the video. We can see from the first line that Masami is directing her comment at only the female critic as she sees the critic carefully swirl the noodles onto her spoon. As Masami voices her disbelief at her, Maririn steps in to defend the critic, saying that she is a 非常に優秀なラーメン評論家, but she has one flaw. As Maririn says this line, she gestures the number “one” with her finger. While there are many ways to translate this line, the most successful approaches were ones that included the correct subject, the nuance of 非常に優秀な, and also included a phrase like “one flaw” or “one quirk” to match Maririn’s hand gesture.

Another section that had an added layer of complexity was line 5. The original Japanese line says, ラーメン評論家が麺すすれないとはどういうことだ. While it’s not technically incorrect to translate this line as is, adding the extra information of how slurping is important in judging ramen helps viewers, who may not be as familiar with ramen-eating culture, understand why Masami is so incredulous at the fact that a ramen critic can’t slurp noodles. When translating subtitles, it’s often easy to forget that the subtitles only appear on the screen for seconds at a time, unlike text translations that can be absorbed at the reader’s own pace. Because of the nature of subtitles, any extra considerations like these can mean the difference between good subtitles and great subtitles that lead to a smoother viewing experience.

—Namiko Nagayama