

A famous writer who was visiting Japan was invited to give a lecture at a university to a large group of students. As most of them could not understand spoken English, he had to have an interpreter.

During his lecture he told an amusing story which went on for rather a long time. At last he stopped to allow the interpreter to translate it into Japanese, and was very surprised when the man did this in a few seconds, after which all the students laughed loudly.

After the lecture, the writer thanked the interpreter for his good work and then said to him, 'Now please tell me how you translated that long story of mine into such a short Japanese one.'

'I didn't tell the story at all,' the interpreter answered with a smile.

'I just said, "The honourable lecturer has just told a funny story. You will all laugh, please."'