

II.

The Fifth Plain Language Principle, Faithfulness, and Translation

When translating Japanese into English, where does the system of Plain Language Principles fit? In translation we have two texts: (1) (The original) Japanese text; and (2) The derived (English) text. I assume that the readers targeted by translation of original Japanese texts into English forms are of course readers of English (who may be native speakers of English or readers who are using English as a second or foreign language). In any case, the resultant, translated text, should be clear and understandable to the English reader. As such, the four principles and 80 rules of Plain English are just as relevant to the art of translation as they are to any other act of professional English writing. The derived (translated) text in English should still be just as clear, concise and correct as any other professionally written English text.

However, in the process of translation there is more going on than simply writing a highly readable and understandable final draft. In translation we are also very concerned about the correspondence, or faithfulness, that exists between the original source text and the final translated form. Similar to our concern about a one-to-one correspondence between a writer's intended message and the reader's perception of that message in single language communication, we are also concerned about how close the correspondence is between the original and derived forms, which involve two languages.

As for each of the other four Plain Language Principles (Cohesiveness, Directness, Economy and Appropriateness), the Principle of Faithfulness (for translation) includes four basic

sub-principles: (1) Focus on the purpose; (2) Focus on the facts; (3) Focus on the style; and (4) Focus on the point of view. Essentially, the Principle of Faithfulness (for translation) governs how faithful the translated form is to the original according to the sub-principles. In the next few paragraphs we will take a brief look at each of these sub-principles governed by the Principle of Faithfulness, and consider just a few of the many rules which are governed by this Plain Language Principle.

II.1. Focus on the Purpose

The first sub-principle of Faithfulness is "Focus on the purpose" of the original text. Thus, before the original can be successfully translated, the translator must determine what the overall intended message of the original is, what the "big" (basic) message was, what the objectives were, and what type of text it is (was its purpose to stimulate, persuade, activate, inform or entertain?). This sub-principle (Focus on the purpose) suggests a manner of working from big to small, from general/ broad to specific/narrow and from outline to detail. It assumes the translator will have of course read the entire document, as well as any other relevant supplementary materials available, before undertaking the task of translation. A sample rule governed by this sub-principle is:

- Work from big to small.