

C2.1 – MTSL

(Week 2)

GETTING STARTED

TASK 1: CORRECTING STYLISTIC ERRORS

Worksheet 1:

Ambiguity, Absurdity

The following sentences and short texts, written by native English speakers, contain stylistic errors. Locate, explain and correct the error in each case.

1. Flying planes can be dangerous.
2. We saw many bears driving through the forest.
3. (Sign seen on board an airplane): If you are sitting in an exit row and you cannot read this card, cannot speak English, or cannot see well enough to follow these instructions, please tell a crew member.
4. Mr. Yoshiko said the donkey owners should clearly state why they want to keep the animals. "If they cannot give good reasons why they need the donkeys, then they will be shot."
5. It is estimated that one out of every one hundred women between the ages of 12 and 25 are anorexic, one out of seven are bulimic, and between five and ten percent are male.
6. Visiting professors may be tedious.

7. The chickens were too hot to eat.
8. (In a recipe): Mix gelatin as directed on box. Sit in refrigerator for about half an hour till it starts to gel.
9. (In a doctor's report): The patient was somewhat agitated and had to be encouraged to feed and eat himself.
10. (In a doctor's report): The patient was found to have twelve children by Dr. Smith.
11. (In a doctor's report): On the second day the knee was better and on the third day it had completely disappeared.
12. (Ad in newspaper): Remember: you get what you pay for. And at Hub's Furniture Store, you pay less.
13. (Want ad in newspaper): FOR SALE: Braille dictionary. Must see to appreciate! Call Jerry.
14. (Headline in newspaper): Man found beaten, robbed by police.
15. (Church newsletter): The Ladies' Aid Society of Unitec Church will hold its annual potluck dinner Saturday in the church hall. Dinner will be gin at 5:30 P.M.

TASK 2: DETECTING AND EXPLAINING TRANSLATION ERRORS



Worksheet 2:

I beg your pardon?

The following are evidently faulty translations containing mistakes of many different kinds (e.g. spelling, grammar and nonsense errors) Locate, explain, and correct the errors in each case.

1. (On the label of a tablecloth): *This article has been made in our workshop using a high quality fabrics stamped by hand. For this reason, it can be posible to found some little differences between the same article which it also makes the product more attractive.*
2. (On the label of a "Lake City" brand T-shirt): *After November ninetyone, LAKE CITY was born. Tu see life. The new adventurer, stands by his range.*
3. (In a multilingual brochure placed on the nightstand of a hotel in Castellón): *We welcome you and are pleased that you have chosen our hotel for your stay in Ibiza.*
4. (In a brochure published by the Valencian Tourist Information Bureau): *Prehistorical Museum and of Valencia Culture: It exposes the fund most significatives of the archeological excavations and contains the cultural evolution of our earth since the paleontological era to the romans era. Moreover it exhibits abundants collections of etnographical culture of the Valencian.*



Text 1: Read the following text, paying special attention to the passages highlighted in bold.

LOST IN THE TRANSLATION

According to the signs, foreign translators trying to accommodate their English-speaking visitors may run into problems.

With Americans making more and more trips abroad, it is interesting to note that foreign nations are making greater attempts to accommodate their English-speaking visitors. Unfortunately, there is still a significant language gap, and translations made into English by restaurants, hotels and stores often fall short of their intended meaning, frequently with disastrous — and sometimes riotous — results.

2) Patricia Besner, president of All-Language Services, a large translation firm based in New York, recently asked several members of her staff to take note of any incorrect translations they might come across while traveling in their native countries. The resulting list, she thought, might make future employees more aware of the many pitfalls that translators face in their daily work.

3) Two absurdities came from clothing stores — one from Italy and one from France. The Italian shop had a sign in its window to catch the eye of the American tourists. It read: **"Dresses for street walking."** The one in the Paris window said: **"Come inside and have a fit."**

4) A staid Berlin hotel left a card in its rooms for guests that said: **"Because of the impropriety of entertaining guests of the opposite sex in the bedroom, it is suggested that the lobby be used for this purpose."** It may well have been the busiest lobby in all of Germany.

5) One airline advertised the **"rendezvous lounges"** on its flights in Brazil and lost customers as a result. The reason for this became clear when someone finally remembered that "rendezvous" in Portuguese is a place to have sex.

6) One of our translators who visited his homeland of Austria did more than jot down what he read on the menu for American tourists. He brought it back with him to prove that, in Vienna, the fare for English-

speaking customers included **"Children Sandwiches"** and **"Chopped Milk."**

7) He said he could not bring home another offering and declaration to tourists because the sign was nailed to the restaurant wall. It read: **"You will be singing the praises of the food served to you here to your grandchildren even as you lie on your deathbed."**

8) A Russian linguist at All-Language Services told us he stayed at a Moscow hotel where a notice exclaimed: **"If this is your first visit to the USSR, you are welcome to it."**

9) And when this Russian linguist was amusing a Czech friend about the sign, he was given a laugh in return when the friend reported to him that he had seen a sign in Czechoslovakia that urged visitors: **"Take one of our horse-driven city tours. We guarantee no miscarriages."**

10) A British-born employee of our organization was amazed on his European tour when he passed a café in Warsaw that read, **"Five o'clock tea served all hours."**

11) A Romanian hotel, according to one of our translators, had its elevator broken. To let him and the other visitors know of the inconvenience, a sign was posted on the elevator door reading: **"The lift is being fixed. For the next few days we regret that you will be unbearable."** The guests probably were, depending on what floors their rooms were located.

12) A Barcelona hospital let it be known to those coming to see patients that the rule was inviolate: **"Visitors: Two to a bed and half an hour only."**

13) Perhaps the most amusing error was back in Paris, where one of our staff members saw a hotel sign that sought to discourage Americans from wearing slacks in its plush dining room. It read, **"A sports jacket may be worn to dinner, but no trousers."**

Worksheet 2:

Translation Bloopers

The translation bloopers listed below have been extracted from Text 1. In the space provided after each one, 1) give a brief explanation of what makes the error funny, that is, explain what word or phrase has been used inappropriately, and 2) suggest an alternative, sensible formulation of what you believe the translator's intended meaning was.

1. “Dresses for street walking.”

Why the translation is funny:

Alternative formulation:

2. “Come inside and have a fit.”

Why the translation is funny:

Alternative formulation:

3. “Because of the impropriety of entertaining guests of the opposite sex in the bedroom, it is suggested that the lobby be used for this purpose.”

Why the translation is funny:

Alternative formulation:

4. “rendezvous lounges”

Why the translation is funny:

Alternative formulation:

5. “Children Sandwiches”

Why the translation is funny:

Alternative formulation:

6. “Chopped Milk”

Why the translation is funny:

Alternative formulation:

7. “You will be singing the praises of the food served to you here to your grandchildren even as you lie on your deathbed.”

Why the translation is funny:

Alternative formulation:

8. “If this is your first visit to the USSR, you are welcome to it.”

Why the translation is funny:

Alternative formulation:

9. “Take one of our horse-driven city tours. We guarantee no miscarriages.”

Why the translation is funny:

Alternative formulation:

10. “Five o’clock tea served all hours.”

Why the translation is funny:

Alternative formulation:

11. “The lift is being fixed. For the next few days we regret that you will be unbearable.”

Why the translation is funny:

Alternative formulation:

12. “Visitors: Two to a bed and half an hour only.”

Why the translation is funny:

Alternative formulation:

13. “A sports jacket may be worn to dinner, but no trousers.”

Why the translation is funny:

Alternative formulation: