

FIRST ANNUAL JAT CONTEST FOR NEW AND ASPIRING TRANSLATORS

Japanese-to-English Division Winners and Reviews

When the JAT Board of Directors decided to sponsor this first JAT Translation Contest in an effort to encourage new translators and interpreters, we had no idea how the contest would be received within or outside of JAT. Our first challenge was recruiting judges and finding a suitable text. Literature and those signs that are oh-so-humorous to the native speaker typically come to mind first when the general public thinks of “translation.” But most JAT members don’t pay the rent translating novels, and there are other translation contests for literary translation.

So we decided to sponsor a contest directed to what we do: translating the nitty gritty texts used in business and government. Those texts that often come with such informative instructions as “translate this” or can be changed by the customer while the job is in progress. Education is another important aspect of the contest, which led to limiting entry to anyone with less than three years of professional translation experience.

The text selected for the J->E part of the contest was a government white paper that was presented with the typically informative real-world instruction of “translate accordingly.” The content should be understandable to a college educated person with an awareness of current events. There are likely some unfamiliar technical terms that should be findable with a little Internet research.

The following comments from the judges illustrate the translation problems confronted and how a translation is typically evaluated by commercial clients, i.e. how a client decides whether to send another job to the same translator. These comments do not relate solely to the winners, and are offered as constructive, hopefully educational, criticism.

In the end there were 24 eligible entrants in the Japanese-to-English division. We thank all for their effort. Of those 24, the following four advanced to the final round (Entrants were numbered from 1 to 24 to retain anonymity).

1st Place Mori Hiroyo (Meguro-ku, Tokyo) No. 20

2nd Place Jed Schmidt (Boston, MA, USA) No. 5

Other Finalists: Avery Fischer Udagawa (Azaiba, Oman) No. 1, Linda Turner (Austin TX, USA) No. 9

The source text, translations, and comments follow.

日英部門課題文

The following is a government document written for a general audience. Please translate accordingly.

Judge’s comment:

This instruction is very important. It doesn’t mean “Translate this for a general audience”. It means “Translate this as appropriate for a government white paper”. White papers are important documents setting out future policy. They are picked apart in detail by financial analysts and business planners who are looking for significant changes from previous statements, so to be appropriate, a translation needs to stay very close to the Japanese. Some of the translators understood that point and others didn’t. For me, the winner has to be a translator who understood and followed the instructions.

安心して子どもを生き育て、意欲を持って働ける社会環境の整備

第1章 次世代育成支援対策

第1節1 次世代育成支援対策の取組み

<Chapter 1, Section 1-1>

2002(平成14)年1月に国立社会保障・人口問題研究所が公表した「日本の将来推計人口」<Check <http://www.ipss.go.jp/index-e.html> for the English title of the report>では、出生率低下の要因として、これまで指摘されてきた晩婚化や未婚化に加えて、新たに「夫婦の出生力そのものの低下」<the actual number of births per couple; not their ability to have children.>という現象が明らかとなり、今後、少子化が一層進行する見通しが示された。具体的には、2006(平成18)年をピークとして、総人口も減少に転じ、このままの状況が続けば、2050(平成62)年には1億59万人にまで減少することが予測されている。また、生まれてくる子どもの数についても、第2次ベビーブーム時に比較すると、現在は約半分の115万人(2002年)となっているが、今後50年間で更にその半分になることが見込まれている。

このように、今後、我が国において少子化が急速に進行する一方で高齢化が同時進行し、我が国の経済社会に深刻な影響を与えることが見込まれる中で、2002年5月に、小泉総理大臣から坂口厚生労働大臣に対して、これまでの少子化対策を改めて点検し、少子化の流れを変えるための実効性ある対策について、改めて検討するよう指示がなされた。

これを受けて、厚生労働省 < Many applicants did not refer to the official English title of the ministry > では、2002年9月に、「少子化対策プラスワン」(以下「プラスワン」という。)を取りまとめ、2003(平成15)年3月14日には、少子化対策推進関係閣僚会議 < ”Ministerial Conference on the Promotion of Measures to Cope with Fewer Number of Children” was the English title used in the 1999 version of the White Paper > において、政府としての「次世代育成支援に関する当面の取組方針」(以下「取組方針」という。)が定められた。プラスワンや取組方針においては、「子育てと仕事の両立支援」を中心としてきた従前の対策に加え、「男性を含めた働き方の見直し」、「地域における子育て支援」、「社会保障における次世代支援」、「子どもの社会性の向上や自立の促進」といった4つの柱に沿った対策を総合的・計画的に推進することとし、政府・地方自治体・企業等が一体となった取組みを進めることとした < This sentence was tricky and many applicants misunderstood and/or mistranslated. >

特に、「男性を含めた働き方の見直し」については、子育て期間中にある者の残業時間を縮減するとともに、多様就業型ワークシェアリングに取り組むこと等を掲げたほか、育児休業取得率について、男性10%、女性80%(2002年度は男性0.33%、女性64.0%)という社会全体としての目標を設定するなど、「家庭よりも仕事を優先する」というこれまでの働き方を見直すことに本格的に取り組むこととした。

また、「地域における子育て支援」について、児童福祉法に「子育て支援事業」を位置づけ、市町村による子育て支援サービスを推進すること、専業主婦家庭の急病、育児疲れ等に対応した一時預かりサービスを推進すること、子育て中の親子が集まり交流・相談できる「つどいの広場」や「地域子育て支援センター」の設置を推進することなど、すべての子育て家庭に対する支援の充実を図ることとした。<Check <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/shingi/2003/03/s0318-6e.html> for the details of 「子育て支援事業」>

平成16年版 厚生労働白書「現代生活を取り巻く健康リスクー情報と協働でつくる安全と安心ー」より (C) 厚生労働省

Translated texts (注: レイアウトは原文どおりではありません。一部復元できなかった文字もあります。)

[Avery Fischer Udagawa](#)

[Linda Turner](#)

[Jed Schmidt](#)

[Mori Hiroyo](#)

Avery Fischer Udagawa

Building a society in which one can work with ambition and parent with peace of mind

Chapter 1: Measures to support the nurture of the next generation

Section 1: Undertaking measures to support the nurture of the next generation

In January of 2002 (Heisei 14¹), the report Population Projections for Japan: 2001–2050² was released by the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research. It became clear that the declining birth rate stems not only from increased postponement and rejection of marriage, which have been noted previously, but also from a decrease in the very ability of married couples to have children. It was also predicted that the birth rate will continue to fall steadily. Concretely speaking, the general population is projected to peak in 2006 (Heisei 18) and decrease to 100.59 million by 2050 (Heisei 62) if current conditions prevail. The number of children born annually (1.15 million in 2002) is already half of what it was during the second baby boom³; in the next 50 years, that number is expected to halve again.

It is now widely anticipated that, in this way, the birth rate will continue to fall even as the population continues to age, in a pattern that will gravely affect our nation's economic system. For this reason, in May 2002, Prime Minister Koizumi⁴ directed Minister of Health, Labor and Welfare Sakaguchi⁵ to reexamine existing policy on the declining birth rate and to review countermeasures with real effectiveness in curbing the problem.

In response, the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare put together “Measures to curb the declining birth rate, plus one”⁶ (“Plus One”) in September 2002. On March 14, 2003 (Heisei 15), a special cabinet conference announced the government-wide “Initiatives for direct support of the nurture of the next generation”⁷ (“Initiatives”). Under Plus One and the Initiatives, in addition to standing policy that has focused on improving compatibility of childrearing and work, policy that stands on the following four pillars is to be pursued comprehensively and deliberately:

- rethinking how people work, including men
- providing local support for parenting
- providing for the next generation through social security
- accelerating the improvement of children's sociality and their transition to independence

These goals are to be pursued through efforts that unite central government, regional and local authorities, and private enterprise.

Notably, with regard to “rethinking how people work, including men”, policymakers called for reduction of overtime hours for workers raising children, as well as implementation of diversified work sharing arrangements. The target percentage of workers who take paternity or maternity leave was set at 10

percent for men and 80 percent for women. (In fiscal 2002, the percentage of workers who took parenting leave was .33 percent of men and 64 percent of women.) It was determined to rethink in earnest the prevalent notion that workers must put work ahead of family.

In addition, with regard to “providing local support for parenting”, leaders called for including parental support providers in the Child Welfare Law; for bolstering parental support programs administered by local governments; and for promoting temporary childcare services that respond to problems such as sudden illness and parenting burnout in homemaker households. The setup of “meeting spots” and regional parenting support centers, where parents and children would gather for fellowship and consultation, is also to be promoted in a push to facilitate maximum support for families raising children.

Translator’s notes:

1. Year in the era of Emperor Akihito, the Heisei emperor, who acceded to the throne in 1989.
2. Institute’s English translation of the title, Nihon no shorai suikei jinko. See <http://www.ipss.go.jp/English/ppfj02/top.html> (English) and <http://www.ipss.go.jp/Japanese/newest02/newest02.html> (Japanese). Internet addresses accurate as of 30 September 2004.
3. A period in the early 1970s when annual live births increased to about 2 million.
4. Junichiro Koizumi, Prime Minister since April 2001.
5. Chikara Sakaguchi, Minister of Health, Labor and Welfare from January 2001 to September 2004. Current health minister Hidehisa Otsuji follows Sakaguchi in the post.
6. Shoshika taisaku purasu wan. See <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/houdou/2002/09/h0920-1.html> (Japanese).
7. Jisedai ikusei shien ni kan suru tomen no torikumi hoshin. See <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/topics/bukyoku/seisaku/syousika/0314-1.html> (Japanese).

From Health, Labour and Welfare White Paper Gendai seikatsu o torimaku kenko risuku – joho to kyodo de tsukuru anzen to anshin (Health risks in modern lifestyles: Achieving security and peace of mind through information and cooperative action),

C 2004 (Heisei 16) Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

Linda Turner

Toward a New Social Environment: Helping Parents Balance Child Care and Work

Chapter One: Measures to Support the Development of the Next Generation

Chapter One, Section One: Initiatives

Late marriage and the increasing number of people choosing to remain single have been indicated as causes of Japan’s decreasing birth rate. However, an additional phenomenon ? a decline in marital fertility itself ? has newly come to light, according to the January 2002 National Institute of Population and Social Security Research report entitled “Population Projections for Japan.” The report forecasted further declines in the future. Specifically, the total population is expected to peak in 2006 and decrease thereafter to

100,590,000 by 2050, should the current trend continue. The 11.5 million children born in 2002 are approximately half the number born during the second baby boom. In 50 years, the number of births is expected to be halved yet again.

In this manner, the aging of Japan's society will progress as the birth rate plummets. Fearing a serious impact on Japan's economy, in May 2002 Prime Minister Koizumi urged Health, Labor and Welfare Minister Sakaguchi to examine current measures to halt the declining birth rate and investigate new, more effective strategies.

In response, the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare compiled the Plus One Measures to Halt the Declining Birth Rate (Plus One) in September 2002. On March 14, 2003, the government's Immediate Action Plan to Support the Development of the Next Generation (Action Plan) was established at the Cabinet Minister's Conference on the Declining Birth Rate.

Plus One and the Action Plan promote a comprehensive and systematic strategy based on four objectives: 1) reforming workplace practices, including those of men; 2) increasing community support for families with children; 3) supporting the next generation through the social security system; and 4) improving children's socialization and fostering their independence. These four objectives are in addition to pre-existing measures to aid parents in balancing work and child care. Joint efforts by the government, local governments, and businesses are also recommended.

Measures to reform the workplace adopt a serious stance in overhauling current practices that give work precedence over the home. In addition to reducing overtime during child-rearing years and introducing flextime and work sharing programs, the measures set a target for the percentage of men and women who take child care leave, namely 10% for men and 80% for women (in 2002, the percentages were 0.33% for men and 64% for women).

Strategies for increasing community support include plans to enhance all services for households with children. Child care is now included in the Child Welfare Law. Local governments are urged to provide services such as child care centers, consultation for parents, and temporary day care for full-time mothers in case of sudden illness or fatigue.

Jed Schmidt (No.2)

Creating a society that encourages balance between enjoying a career and raising children

Chapter 1: Measures to support child rearing

Chapter 1, Section 1: Establishment of measures to support child rearing

In January 2002, the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research released Population Projections for Japan: 2001–2050, a whitepaper forecasting further decline in the national birth rate. Reasons given for the decline included those previously cited, such as recent tendencies to delay or avoid marriage, as well as an actual decline in the fertility rate. Specifically, assuming current trends continue, the total population is predicted to peak in 2006, and then fall to just over 100 million by 2050. Likewise, the number of live births, at 1.15 million in 2002, has fallen to roughly half that during the second baby boom, and is expected to halve again in the next 50 years.

With significant economic and social impact expected from the combination of rapidly declining birth rate and aging population, in May 2002, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi instructed Health, Labor and Welfare Minister Chikara Sakaguchi to review existing measures to cope with the declining birth rate, and to look into more effective ways to halt this trend.

In response, the Ministry drafted the Plus One Proposal to End the Low Birth Rate in September 2002, and established a near-term governmental policy regarding support for child rearing, at the National

Conference for the Promotion of Measures Against the Declining Birth Rate on March 14 of the following year. With this, the Ministry broadened its focus from support for balance between work and child-rearing, to include measures centered around four themes: rethinking the working styles adopted by both women and men, enhancing regional child-care support, preparing the social security system for the next generation, and raising children to be better socialized and more self-reliant. To achieve a comprehensive implementation of these measures, the Ministry also called for a joint effort between the central government, local governments, and the private sector.

In particular, the Ministry adopted a significant stance on re-evaluating the status quo working style, in which one's career often takes precedence over one's family. Related efforts include reducing overtime for those raising children, promoting so-called "work-sharing through diversified styles of work," and setting society-wide targets for the percentage of parents taking child-care leave. Specifically, the Ministry aims to increase the percentage of men and women taking child-care leave to 10% and 80%, respectively, from 0.33% and 64% in 2002.

The Ministry also seeks to enhance the support infrastructure for families raising children, by placing child-rearing support enterprises under the Child Welfare Law, and promoting municipal child-support services, including temporary day-care services for stay-at-home mothers experiencing sudden illness or "parental burn-out." The Ministry is also encouraging the establishment of community gathering spaces and regional child-care support centers where parents can gather to exchange information, or receive consultation.

Mori Hiroyo (No.1)

Creating a social environment in which people feel confident about balancing work and child rearing

Chapter 1 Measures to support the development of the next generation

Section 1-1. Efforts toward supporting the development of the next generation

Population Projections for Japan: 2001-2050 released by the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research in January 2002 predicts that the declining birthrate in Japan will continue to fall. Low fertility among married couples has emerged as a new contributing factor to the drop in birthrate in addition to the often-mentioned trend toward later marriage among young adults and a rise in the celibacy rate. The total population of Japan is expected to reach its peak in 2006, and then begin to fall. If the current pace continues, the population is expected to decrease to 100.59 million in 2050. In 2002, 1.15 million babies were born. This number is only a little over half the annual number of births during the second baby boom. Even this figure is predicted to shrink by half 50 years down the road.

An unprecedented combination of an aging population and a quickly declining birthrate threatens to have a serious impact on the structure and well-being of Japan's society and economy. Amid the growing concern, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi directed Health, Labour and Welfare Minister Chikara Sakaguchi in May 2002 to review the measures being taken to cope with the falling birthrate and explore ways that work effectively in boosting the birthrate.

Given this direction, the ministry put together an action plan titled "Plus One Proposal to Stop the Falling Birthrate" (hereinafter "Plus One") in September 2002. Then, "The Immediate Action Plan to Support the Development of the Next Generation" (hereinafter "the Action Plan") was formulated in the Ministerial Conference on the Declining Birthrate on March 14, 2003. In addition to the conventional measures that mainly focus on supporting women to juggle work and child rearing, these plans address the falling birthrate in a comprehensive and systematic manner. To create a parenting-friendly environment through the concerted efforts of the government, municipalities and businesses, the initiatives have set four goals:

review of current working practices for both men and women, community-based childcare support, support of the next generation in social security, and promotion of children's social skills and independence.

Review of current working practices, in particular, calls for thorough reexamination of the conventional employment practices and corporate culture where a "putting business before family" mentality prevails. Proposed plans include the reduction in overtime work by employees engaged in childcare, and introduction of flexible working arrangements through a diversification of employment. For the percentage of men and women taking childcare leave, goals were set at 80% for women and 10% for men, up from the 64.0% for women and 0.33% for men recorded in 2002.

Community-based childcare support is established as "childcare projects" in the 2003 amendment of the Child Welfare Law. The law requires municipalities to step up their efforts to provide better services to all families with children. The projects include temporary daycare services that are available for stay-at-home mothers in case of sudden illness or for mothers exhausted from child rearing. Childcare facilities include "public squares" for parents and children to meet and mingle with each other, and childcare support centers that provide counseling and advice on raising children, as well as other forms of assistance.

The 2004 White Paper from the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare

Health Risks Associated with Modern Life – Safety and Security Obtained through Information and Cooperation

Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare All Rights Reserved.

Judges' comments (excerpts from E-mail messages)

Summary: I would eliminate Nos. 1 and 9. No. 1 doesn't read as well as the others, and No. 9 has more errors than No. 5 or 20. I prefer 20 to 5, but both still close. I just liked the way No. 20 sounded. Friedemann's argument about the addition in the last paragraph does have merit. I deducted 8 points in the 0-16 ATA scheme for that addition, and No. 20 still came out ahead. I have to admit 5 and 20 are pretty close, though. If anyone wants to debate about it further, I'd be glad to hear what they have to say.

No. 1 (Not tentative): I agree with Malcolm that No. 1 didn't follow the directions (which were appropriate) and shouldn't have included the nengo. I also didn't like the half a page of notes for less than 1,000 words of translation. Overall, I didn't like the English, starting with the ear-grating "Measures to support the nurture of..."

No. 9: I went over the three remaining contenders with the ATA grading criteria for lack of another technique. (I liked Malcolm's critiques, but I'm just not accustomed to using that technique.) No. 9 accumulated more error points than 5 and 20 and notably misunderstood the last paragraph worse than No. 5. Also, No. 9 didn't make as many topic sentences as 5 and 20.

No. 5: No. 5 and No. 20 were both very close (37 and 46 error points, respectively). Given the subjectivity of the ATA system, this difference is not too meaningful. Gutaiteki ni, I marked off for the following:

Heading:

Lack of chapter/section hierarchy: -2

Paragraph 1

recent tendencies: -1 (addition)

actual decline in the fertility rate: -8 and -4 for mistranslation. Left out the fact that this was a new finding and didn't mention married couples (fertility rate is usually expressed in births per woman).

Paragraph 2

Didn't mark off for Ministerial Conference

working styles adopted: -4 mistrans (could mean any aspect of working)

regional_child-care_support: -8 mistrans (not parenting or raising children; usually taking care of others' children)

social security: -4 mistrans (same deduction for No. 20) between (three entities) -1 usage

Paragraph 3

adopted a significant stance on the status quo working style: -4 mistrans/too free (vague)

Paragraph 4

support enterprises: -1 mistrans. But this misconception may be more important because it may have led him/her to misunderstand the rest of the paragraph.

structure of entire paragraph: -8 misunderstanding. Didn't show that there were generally programs and then four specific programs.

Note: I was almost thinking the fourth paragraph should be considered a bonus question until No. 20 seemed to unravel it (with a little addition).

Anyway, it's pretty amazing that any native candidates figured out the last paragraph at all.

No. 20. I somehow like the overall sound of number 20. However, this person was pretty cavalier about adding things, even where a little extra glue was not needed. I gave No. 20 39 error points and 2 "quality" points.

Paragraph 1

often-mentioned trend: -2 mistrans

celibacy rate: -1 word choice

Paragraph 2

unprecedented combination: -1 addition

structure and well-being: -1 addition This was Malcolm's "inspired" sentence, which it is, but I felt like these were unnecessary additions that amounted to changes in this part of the text. "Combination ... threatens" is the inspired part, I think. boosting the birthrate: -4 mistrans/too free

Paragraph 3

given this direction: syntax -1 (sounds like “given that this policy predisposition exists”)

Ministerial Conference: +2. The only finalist to find identify this as such.

supporting women: -2 too free

social security: mistrans -4 (same as No. 5)

engaged in childcare: usage -1

flexible working arrangements...: -4 mistrans (worksharing is a defined practice)

Paragraph 4

2003 amendment...: -8 addition

separating the functions of the hirobas and centers: -4 mistrans/too free

<In everyday job> Translators who present work with easily-verifiable errors are the first to be eliminated from consideration from future jobs. Customers giving even a perfunctory check will typically spot such errors.

Example: Does the translator really think there were only 115,000 births in Japan in 2002?

Executive summary:

At each part of the first stage, I saw No.20 as the outright winner, primarily for a combination of appropriateness to task and lack of major errors.

Overview:

This was a good test. Several years ago I gave up employing translators with only three years full-time experience and started insisting on at least five years. The level of the entries matches my perception that three years is not enough to become a good translator. In that sense, my expectations differ from Ken's, as I never thought we would get any translations that would be good enough to be used as a model.

However, what we received is good enough to show talent and lack of talent. Some of the shortcomings we saw are fixable by experience -- a translator can learn to double-check numbers or look up names properly, but if he/she can't see why “chilled raising” or a population suddenly shrinking to half its size is wrong, no amount of practice is going to fix the problem. In reviewing the translations, one of the biggest factors is whether all the problems are likely to be fixable. Next, I look for occasional inspired translations that still meet the “appropriateness” criterion. Translating the end of paragraph 3 (これまでの...対策を改めて点検し、...実効性ある対策について、改めて検討する) as “to review the measures being taken ... and explore ways that work effectively ...” [No.20] is one example. Finally, I look for readability -- the translation should not be less readable than the original.

It's interesting to note that the final has produced two entries that largely focus on remaining faithful to the Japanese, and two that focus on style. When I edit a direct translation for style, I generally expect a 15% reduction in word-count, and this is borne out by the word-counts we see here. (No.1 and No.20 had

the same word count; No.5 and No.9 were 85% and 82% of that size.)

The instructions on the website said: “The following is a government document written for a general audience. Please translate accordingly.”

That’s very important. It doesn’t mean “Translate this for a general audience”. It means “Translate this as appropriate for a government white paper”. White papers are important documents setting out future policy. They are picked apart in detail by financial analysts and business planners who are looking for significant changes from previous statements, so to be appropriate, a translation needs to stay very close to the Japanese. Some of the translators understood that point and others didn’t. For me, the winner has to be a translator who understood and followed the instructions.

Specific comments on the four final translations:

****** Translation No.1**

Understanding and following instructions [1]:

– Translator No.1 failed this test when he/she “retained and explained nengo in order to provide a kind of cultural aside for the high school students, and in order to give the storyteller a sense of the original presentation style.” That’s not appropriate for a translation of a government white paper.

Understanding of document structure[1]:

– “Chapter 1: Section 1:” -- fails, missing part of the hierarchy altogether.

Number errors [1]:

– Other than the missing sub-section number, there were no significant number errors.

Name errors [1]:

– No.1 did not use the Ministry’s preferred spelling for the Ministry’s name.

Mistranslations [1]:

– “decrease in the very ability of married couples to have children” -- I think this just means the actual number of births per couple; not their ability to have children.

– “if current conditions prevail” -- it’s the trend that needs to continue, not

– “gravely affect our nation’s economic system” -- not just the economic system

– “review countermeasures with real effectiveness” -- ‘review’ implies looking again, but we are talking about new measures.

– “including parental support providers in the Child Welfare Law” -- Did the translator understand what was being said?

– “it was determined to rethink the notion that workers must put work ahead of family” -- It’s already been rethunk by the Ministry, this should be a call for others to do something about it.

Examples of inspired translation [1]:

– Bullet list

– “diversified work sharing arrangements”

***** Translation No.5

Understanding and following instructions[5]:

– Acceptable

Understanding of document structure[5]:

– “Chapter 1: Chapter 1, Section 1:” -- fails. translating both “sho” and “setsu” as Chapter”. (Translator did at least notice that this was a three-level hierarchy, though.)

Number errors [5]:

– No significant number errors.

Name errors [5]:

– “National Conference for the Promotion of Measures Against the Declining Birth Rate” -- this is not just wrong; it’s actually the translation used by the ministry for something else (「少子化への対応を推進する国民会議」). (You can confirm this by Googling on the translator’s suggestion to find the English page, then finding the equivalent Japanese page on the same website.)

<http://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/org/policy/p26-28.html>

<http://www.mhlw.go.jp/general/work/koyou.html>

– Also, No.5 did not use the Ministry’s preferred spelling for the Ministry’s name.

Mistranslations [5]:

– “an actual decline in the fertility rate” -- OK as far as it goes, but omits the all-important “per-couple” qualification

– “preparing the social security system for the next generation” -- the focus should surely be on changing the social security system to make it easier for the current generation to have more children

– “rethinking the working styles adopted by both men and women” -- ‘styles’ doesn’t get across the key nuance that instead thinking that child-care is women’s business and that men should stay at work, attitudes need to change so that men place more priority on involvement in the family. (Remember the “育児をしない男を、父とは呼ばない。” ad campaign.)

– “placing child-rearing support enterprises under the Law” -- arguably this is correct, but if the translator had really understood the Japanese, he/she wouldn’t have been this ambiguous.

Example of inspired translation[5]:

– “the private sector”

***** Translation No.9

Understanding and following instructions[9]:

- Acceptable

Understanding of document structure[9]:

- “Chapter One: Chapter One, Section One:” -- fails, translating both “sho” and “setsu” as “Chapter”. (Translator did at least notice that this was a three-level hierarchy, though.)

Number errors [9]:

- Translated 2002 births as “11.5 million” instead of “1.15 million” -- This is not just a transcription and checking error; it fails the read-through reality check too. If there really were 11.5 million children born in 2002, Japan wouldn't have any of the problems being discussed.

Name errors[9]:

- No.9 did not use the Ministry's preferred spelling for the Ministry's name.

Mistranslations [9]:

- “an additional phenomenon has newly come to light” -- Not ‘newly’, the report had been out for over two years at the time this was written.

- “In this manner, the aging of Japan's society will progress” -- Not “in this manner”, nothing had been said about aging until this point.

- “Fearing a serious impact on Japan's economy” -- not just the economy

- “Koizumi urged Sakaguchi” -- It was an order, not just a suggestion.

- “Joint efforts ... are recommended” -- Isn't this a mistranslation of 進める? ‘Recommended’ would have been a different kanji.

- “Measures to reform the workplace adopt a serious stance ...” -- a) it's not the workplace that needs reforming, it's the job descriptions. b)

Grammar: If ‘Measures to reform the workplace’ is an ‘objective’, this should be ‘adopts’ (otherwise we have the issue of whether or not ‘measures’ can ‘adopt a stance’).

- “flextime and work sharing programs” -- nice try, but flextime is not what's been talked about here.

- “Child care is now included in the Child Welfare Law.” -- Did the translator understand what was being said?

Examples of inspired translation [9]:

- “overtime during child-rearing years” -- this is the only one of the finalists to get this bit right -- one of the aims is to reduce overtime for fathers not currently engaged in childcare so that they *can* become involved. “Overtime for workers raising children” doesn't get that across.

- “Initiatives” for the Section title

***** Translation No.20

Understanding and following instructions [20]:

- Good

Understanding of document structure[20]:

- “Chapter 1 Section 1-1.” Good -- one of only 5 entries to produce a legitimate translation for this.

Number errors [20]:

- No significant number errors.

Name errors [20]:

- No significant name errors. (Ministry name spelled appropriately.)

Mistranslations [20]:

- “Community-based childcare support is established as “childcare projects”” -- arguably correct, but it doesn't really get across the key point that the law is to be revised to include a specific role for a category of projects labeled 「子育て支援事業」.
- “is established as “...” in the 2003 amendment of the Child Welfare Law.” -- Factually correct, but that's not what the genko says. This paragraph is reporting on what happened in March 2003, so it just says it was decided to incorporate the change into the Law, without defining when. It's not legitimate to change the perspective to a point after the Law was revised.

Example of inspired translation [20]:

- “An unprecedented combination of an aging population and a quickly declining birthrate threatens to have a serious impact on the structure and well-being of Japan's society and economy. Amid the growing concern, ...“

Spelling [20]:

- House wives

Comments common to all:

- None of the final entries had significant omissions, grammar errors, or dubious additions other than mentioned above.
- Names excluded from consideration -- In a commercial translation I would expect a translator to either get all proper nouns right or to provide details of which were confirmed correct and which were just guesses. Some of the proper nouns in this genko probably do not have a fixed translation, and others may have a number of different renderings. For the purposes of judging, I disregarded all names unless they were demonstrably wrong. One exception was the name of the ministry. For the translation of a white paper, at the very least the name of the ministry should be right, and that is particularly useful in this case as it tests the ability to not 'correct' the spelling of proper nouns.
- Number rounding etc. excluded from consideration -- If I were editing this for a customer, I'd have altered the way numbers were rounded, etc., but for the purposes of judging, decided to accept any form of expressing the number as acceptable, provided the translator clearly understood what he/she was saying.

I think you made a good point regarding #1. I didn't like the rendering of the nengo either, but I thought at least he/she thought about the target readership (which is rare enough) and gave an explanation in the comments, so I didn't hold it against him/her.

But all in all, you are right, and seeing that I was the only one having this entry among the final three, I think we should discard this one.

So we're down to 5, 9 and 20.

Here are the reasons why I discarded #20:

The title: "Creating a social environment in which people feel confident about balancing work and child rearing"

Wordy and not exactly elegant; in particular I didn't like the "feel confident about" bit.

Compare this with e.g. #9: "Toward a New Social Environment: Helping Parents Balance Child Care and Work"

The subtitles: "development of the next generation" I can't quite make up my mind if this is a mistranslation.

At the very least, it is not a good translation. When I hear "development" in the context of children, I think Jean Piaget, and not birth rates.

The text itself is smooth enough, but again, compare the first sentence of #20 with #9:

#20: Population Projections for Japan : 2001–2050 released by the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research in January 2002 predicts that the declining birthrate in Japan will continue to fall.

#9: Late marriage and the increasing number of people choosing to remain single have been indicated as causes of Japan's decreasing birth rate.

If I didn't have to, I'd stop reading #20 right after the first sentence.

Going on, I didn't like "celibacy rate" in the first paragraph. I think the primary meaning of "celibacy" is abstaining from sex. My Webster also lists "abstaining from marriage" as an alternate meaning, but still, this results in a dual meaning that may give many readers cause to pause and think about what is meant here. I also didn't like "down the road" in the first paragraph, but that may just be my personal taste.

I didn't find much wrong with the middle paragraphs. To the last paragraph. Just take the first sentence:

"Community-based childcare support is established as 'childcare projects' in the 2003 amendment of the Child Welfare Law"

I'm sorry, but I just can't find anything about a "2003 amendment" in the original. Kudos for figuring out what is going on (namely making changes to the CWL), but introducing a number that is not in the original crosses a certain line for me, namely that between translation and rewriting.

Also, I think the overall translation of the last paragraph is a good example of what I like to think of as the "Scrabble Approach" to translation: hack a long sentence into pieces, and put the pieces together so that

they sound good in English.

This will often result in English that sounds good, but has little to do with the original. Consider the second sentence of the last paragraph: “The law requires municipalities to step up their efforts to provide better services to all families with children.”

It does? The original says nothing of this sort. Also, note how the sentence ties the municipalities (市町村) to all families with children (すべての子育て家庭) and have a look where those bits are in the original. Grammatically, there’s no connection at all between the two in the original.

Also, the perspective of this last paragraph is wrong. The translation talks about actual changes that were implemented (“2003 amendment”). The original merely says that there was the intention to implement those changes (図ることとした。)

But I agree that, apart from the last paragraph, there are no serious mistranslations as in the other entries.

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