Guidelines for Translators

a) Read the text all the way through, without thinking of how to translate it. Get a sense of what it is about and the perspective of the author.

b) Find a similar document in the language you will translate the text into (the target language, or TL) to review how these ideas are expressed in the TL.

c) Assemble references on the topic, such as monolingual dictionaries (both general and specialized) and usage guides in both languages.

d) Start a glossary for the job. Then send it to your colleague who reviews it. Then update it, and attach it to the final translation so it can help the next people.

e) Draft the translation. This is a rough draft. Name it something distinctive such as BirthCertificateDraft.docx

f) Take a break to do something else and clear your mind.

g) Review your draft, comparing it with the source text. Imagine you are a reader who sees this text for the first time. Is it clear? Does it make sense? Does it flow smoothly? Does it reflect the perspective of the original? Make any changes necessary.

h) Proofread the document again to make sure you have not skipped anything, there are no misspellings, the punctuation is correct, etc.

i) Check the document against the source text (ST) for accuracy. Check sentence by sentence, phrase by phrase. Remember, you are translating a message with a meaning, not individual words.

j) Send the translation to a colleague who works in your language pair for review. Your colleague may come up with better ways to express some of these concepts.

k) Check the comments and changes your colleague made, and accept or reject them based on whether or not they are accurate and improve the translation.

l) When possible, read your translation to a pilot group and include the necessary changes in your translation. Keep in mind that this document may be recorded as an audio version and distributed in audio format.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties appreciates the network of professional translators and interpreters that produced this document as a resource in support of Operation Allies Welcome, the U.S. operation welcoming vulnerable Afghans to the United States.
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