

English Translation Skills

Translation is an art, and, like all other arts, it is difficult to master, for it seeks to convey the exact meaning of what is expressed in one language into another. Its very nature, therefore, requires an intimate knowledge of both the languages concerned – a requisition not easily to be met with. Knowledge is here intended to imply capacity to comprehend and express. We must first be able to understand exactly what is intended to be conveyed, and then to express the very same thought in the other language. So the whole art of translation lies in expressing exactly and precisely without either omitting thought from the original passage or adding any unnecessary or superfluous idea to it, the sense and meaning of the Vernacular passage in simple, idiomatic English.

Some Important Hints:

Study carefully the following hints:

- (1) First read the vernacular passage carefully, marking all such words or phrases as you do not clearly understand. Remember that words do not have a fixed meaning. They have more than one meaning, and you have to find out exactly the meaning intended by the writer. Then and then only will you be able to translate exactly into English the main thought of the writer given in the vernacular passage.
- (2) Now you are in a position to translate the vernacular passage into English. In translating try to express as a whole the sense of the vernacular passage into English, employing exact English equivalents for vernacular words, phrases and idioms.
- (3) But avoid *literal* translation. You are never required to give a word-for-word translation. If you do so, you will not be able to convey exactly the meaning and intention of the writer. We do not think or speak in words: we think and speak in sentences. Translate a sentence as a whole; do not translate words.
- (4) But if too literal and translation is to be avoided, at the same time you should guard yourself against too free a translation. An excessively free translation sometimes lacks the essential thought without which the whole translation looks absurd.
- (5) Do not use either unfamiliar or archaic words. Choose only such words as you know well. The use of bombastic, high-sounding words, and of foreign words and terms does not in any way add to the beauty of translation.

- (6) Try to avoid the use of many words when a single word, rightly chosen, will do. The whole art of translation lies in the careful choice of exact words.
- (7) If a sentence is inconveniently long or bears an involved construction, break it up in your mind in three or four shorter sentences, and then translate them into English but see that in doing so you have not sacrificed or mutilated the sense of the original.
- (8) Lastly, see that your English translation reads like a continuous piece of prose, written in simple, idiomatic English. It should give exactly the same impression as the vernacular passage.

Test of a Good Translation

What are the tests of a good translation? Your translation is a success if:

1. It is a faithful translation of the original into English.
2. It conveys exactly the sense and meaning of the original.
3. It reproduces all the details, omitting nothing.
4. It is a translation as a whole.
5. It is a continuous piece of good English.
6. Its total impression is the same as that of the original.