

Why You Should NOT Order Japanese Document Translation From a Company with No Proven Records

Brochures, manuals, product catalogs, and websites.... Obviously, these are extremely important tools for communicating the company's philosophy and product information. Many Japanese companies, however, create their English-language tools by simply pasting a translated text into a format optimized for the Japanese language with no reconfiguration to ensure that the words are expressed in proper English. This often leads to an English-language end product with a number of flaws evidenced by simple English text pasting, without consideration of layout adjustment. This falls well short of qualifying as a presentable English medium to discerning native readers. Accordingly, attracting the attention of overseas customers requires a systematic approach for English document production that is totally different from that for Japanese.

Even top-tier Japanese businesses, such as companies listed on the stock exchange and global-based multinationals, usually seem unaware of this fact. Indeed, many are likely to translate their Japanese websites into English versions full of rudimentary mistakes, in terms of grammar, wording, punctuation, and symbols. Regardless of the language, it shows inattention to detail and carelessness that there are obvious mistakes in the wording and expressions of the websites and brochures that are central to the company's advertising strategy.

Those expressional mistakes are made worse by compounding layout-related errors. Website production is not excepted, either. This is due to operators with no English literacy who nevertheless paste simple, translated English text onto a website page. The inevitable result is that the page is displayed with an amateurish appearance, with obvious errors, such as two consecutive words with no space inserted; and text arranged in an incorrect order, which hardly makes sense. Worse still, it often goes unchecked and published as such. To prevent this embarrassing display, a professional proofreading must be conducted each time a page is completed and prior to the website launch.

If you are not a native English reader, imagine a website created in your language. What impression would you form of the owner of a website that has many spelling and grammatical errors and an awkward-looking layout, but still on display in public view unchanged? The same principle applies to English websites, of course. Nevertheless, as for Japanese companies preparing their English-version websites, their supervision and proofreading are surprisingly shoddy, in clear contrast to the end product when creating Japanese one in their native language. Such shoddiness would work against the company rather than appeal to customers in overseas markets. If we cannot use English correctly and comprehensively, we are not supposed to task ourselves with managing English-language media. When it comes to various sorts of documents, without mastering the rules governing English document production, we should not produce nor handle any English-language documents.

Please see the following pages for examples and explanations of common mistakes in preparing English documents.

Examples of common mistakes

Incorrect English

Introduction of Low Emission Vehicles

XXXX Co.,Ltd. continues its innovation with the introduction of "low emission vehicles" into its service fleet. A survey conducted in June 20XX, revealed that 40~50% of vehicles owned by companies and organizations were low emission vehicles^{※1}, a vast increase over the approximately 19% in the fiscal 20XX survey.



Correct English

Introduction of Low Emission Vehicles

XXXX Co., Ltd. continues its innovation with the introduction of "low emission vehicles" into its service fleet. A survey conducted in June 20XX, revealed that 40–50% of vehicles owned by companies and organizations were low emission vehicles^{*1}, a vast increase over the approximately 19% in the fiscal 20XX survey.

What is wrong?

Point 1

After a comma, insert a half-width space.

Incorrect Co.,Ltd. **Correct** Co., Ltd.

Besides commas (,), each of the following punctuation marks must have a half-width space after itself: periods (.), colons (:), semicolons (;), parenthesis (()), brackets ([]), etc. (Parenthesis and brackets must have a preceding space as well.)

Point 2

Use curly quotes (""") but not vertical quotes (""").

Incorrect "low emission vehicles"

Correct “low emission vehicles”

Vertical quotes (""") are used in HTML (a language used for website production). These should not be used in English documents.

Point 3

Wavy lines (~), a Japanese symbol, must not be used in English documents.

Incorrect 40～50% **Correct** 40–50%

Use an en dash (–) instead of a wavy line (~) to indicate a range of values.

Point 4

Komejirushi (※), the Japanese equivalent to an asterisk (*), must not be used in English documents.

Incorrect ※1 **Correct** *1

Use an asterisk (*) instead of komejirushi (※) to denote annotations, etc. in English documents.

As with Japanese documents, there are established rules in English document production. Unfortunately, however, many English media created and accessible in Japan—websites, book bindings, advertisements, let alone documents—dispense with these rules.

Please see the following examples of common mistakes.

Incorrect English

Natural gas-powered terminal shuttle bus

Reducing CO₂ Emissions from Service Vehicles

Our company is pushing ahead with its Eco - Drive campaign, reviewing its service fleet requirements and replacing vehicles with low emission models*¹.

*¹ Low emission vehicles: Natural gas vehicles, hybrid vehicles, electric vehicles and approved low fuel consumption/emission vehicles



Correct English

Natural gas-powered terminal shuttle bus

Reducing CO₂ Emissions from Service Vehicles

Our company is pushing ahead with its Eco-Drive campaign, reviewing its service fleet requirements and replacing vehicles with low emission models*¹.

*¹ Low emission vehicles: Natural gas vehicles, hybrid vehicles, electric vehicles and approved low fuel consumption/emission vehicles

What is wrong?

Point 1

Use a hyphen (-) to connect words.

Incorrect gas–powered **Correct** gas-powered

Use a hyphen (-) instead of an en dash (–) to connect words.

Point 2

Do not insert a space before nor after a hyphen to connect words.

Incorrect Eco - Drive **Correct** Eco-Drive

A space is not required on both sides of a hyphen when connecting words.

Point 3

A colon requires a following space, but not a preceding space.

Incorrect vehicles : Natural **Correct** vehicles: Natural

Typically, a space is required after a colon (:), but not before it. The same rule applies to a semicolon (;). As an additional note, Japanese-font full-width colons (:) are often being used by mistake. Japanese-font characters, including this colon, of course must not be used in English documents.

In Closing

To create a professional English document, as described, we need to conduct a meticulous review to find out what should be corrected, based on a conversant knowledge of English document production. Even when the customer provides us with translated English text, we can usually find mistakes to be corrected in the text itself, as exemplified by the abovementioned examples. In that case, we report it to the customer, and make necessary corrections after obtaining approval for doing so. We have received high praise from our customers for these attentive efforts to improve the quality of our English document production.

There are many rules for English document production and points of focus to seek sentence improvement that only skilled professionals could master and practice. We at ILC Limited are seasoned professionals, with translation and DTP teams who have an intimate knowledge of English document production. Both of these teams perform double-faceted proofreading, from the different perspectives of text and layout improvements. This achieves the best effective collaboration of "Translation x DTP." We can therefore provide the customer with a correct and beautiful English document.

If you are projecting the English translation of your Japanese tools, such as product catalogs, brochures, manuals, websites, and so on, please feel free to contact us. We are always standing by to assist.