



BORDERLESS DEFINED

Newsletter of Borderless Interpreting & Translation, LLC



Avoiding Literal Translation with "Help" + Object + Verb" Syntax

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Today's newsletter is meant to serve as a reminder for myself more than anything.

In my opinion, there is no silver bullet to translating the syntax in question, "help" + object + verb (as is the case with just about any sentence structure).

The reason that I hope to draw your attention to it, however, is the sheer frequency of "役立つ" (*yakudatsu*) appearing in

the translation almost as a default choice.

In fact, this tendency has been regarded as being somewhat problematic among the Japanese reviewers that I work with. To illustrate different scenarios in which this syntax can appear, I would like to share some examples. (These are my own examples with my own translation.)

1. Regularly reviewing your expenditure against your budget will help you predict your future costs.

定期的に自身の出費を予算に照らし合わせると、将来のコスト予測に役立ちます。

This version removes much of the translationese through part of speech conversion (verb to noun for "predict") even with the use of "役立ちます."

定期的に自身の出費を予算に照らし合わせると、将来のコスト予測が立てやすくなります。

This is perhaps a more refined rendition of the same source text. My aim here was to unpack the underlying meaning of "...will help you predict your future costs" as much as possible rather than applying "役立つ" in knee-jerk fashion.

2. We help small business owners safeguard their most important assets.

中小企業経営者の一番大切な資産を守るお手伝いをします。

中小企業経営者の一番大切な資産を守るサポートをします。

When the same syntax is used with a pronoun being the subject, I usually expect to see "お手伝いをします," "サポートをします," "協力します," "支援します," etc. in the target text. Needless to say, the word choice is largely context- and meaning-dependent.

In this case, the subject (probably an insurance company) most likely provides services and/or products to small business owners. Given the marketing context, "お手伝いします" or "サポートをします" is probably more fitting than other choices.

3. This program is designed to provide information to help communities grapple with the pandemic.

この制度は、情報提供を通じて地域社会がパンデミック（世界的大流行）に取り組むのに役立ちます。

This is a classic example of "役立ちます" with an awkward noun phrase, "・・・取り組む."

As a result, the relationship between "providing information" and "helping communities grapple with the pandemic" is blurred, compromising both meaning and readability.

この制度は、情報提供により地域社会のパンデミック（世界的大流行）対応を促進することを目的としています。

This is a result of, again, unpacking the meaning and compressing "grapple with the pandemic" into "パンデミック対応" instead. "[P]rovide information to help communities grapple with the pandemic" in this case means "providing the necessary means to facilitate communities to grapple with the pandemic." This supports my choice of "促進する" for "help."

On a different note, the next delivery date for the Borderless Defined is currently not certain due to personal reasons. I appreciate your readership and support as always and I look forward to getting in touch with you soon!

Take care,

Noriko Rogers

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