

III.

Using the Five Plain Language Principles

How do we employ the five Plain Language Principles as writers and translators? For the first four Principles (Cohesiveness, Directness, Economy and Appropriateness), these can serve as guides as we write in a target language such as English. We can use them to determine how clear, or readable, a text sample is, and can use them as guidelines to transform unsuccessful text samples into successful text, just as we saw in the sentence pairs above, in Section I. Using the fifth Principle, Faithfulness (for translation), is slightly different, however. In the case of using the guidelines provided by this Principle of Plain Language, we would use these as a kind of checklist which we must cover before we begin the task of translation. In other words, we must first read (and reread) the original text carefully while we seek to answer the basic questions raised by the four focus areas

governed by the Principle of Faithfulness (purpose, facts, style and point of view.) After we have determined the answers to these “questions” as much as reasonably possible (understanding we will not always be able to answer all of these questions about the original texts we wish to translate), we are then ready to begin our translation task. As we write, of course, we would naturally follow the first four Plain Language Principles as well. Together, then, the five Plain Language Principles are designed to assist the writer and translator write clearly, accurately, precisely – promoting a one-to-one relationship between the original intended message, and that of the received, or perceived, message of the reader – whether the original text be written in the reader’s native language, or in a foreign language.

