

3 READING

- a Read the text quickly. What kind of mistranslations is it about?
- b Read the text again and match the missing sentences (A–H) to the spaces (1–6). There are two sentences you do not need to use.
- A The intention had been to warn them to **dismount** because of the uneven road surface.
- B This means that all official road signs have to be bilingual, resulting in a number of embarrassing **slip-ups**.
- C Everything these days seems to be written first in English and then translated.
- D ‘We’ve been running a series of these pictures over the past months.
- E Pedestrians have also been known to suffer at the hands of mistranslation.
- F The English version of the sign read ‘No entry for heavy goods vehicles. Residential site only.’
- G ‘We took it down as soon as we were made aware of it and a correct sign will be re-instated as soon as possible.’
- H Unaware of its real meaning, officials had it printed on the sign.

- c Look at the **highlighted** words and phrases. What do you think they mean? Check with your dictionary, then use them to complete the sentences.
- 1 One of my most embarrassing **slip-ups** recently was referring to a friend’s daughter as a boy.
 - 2 At first I couldn’t see my aunt, but then I _____ her at the other end of the platform.
 - 3 Our road is full of potholes because of all the _____ making their way to the building site at the end of the street.
 - 4 We were _____ when we saw that someone had transferred a million pounds into our bank account.
 - 5 The outbreak of flu meant that nearly half the class was _____.
 - 6 Riders are requested to _____ before entering the garage to leave their bikes.
 - 7 The judge signed a document _____ him from seeing his children for a year.
 - 8 Our secretary committed a terrible _____ when she sent all the bills to the wrong customers.

The pitfalls of translating into Welsh

Since the introduction of the 1993 Welsh Language Act, Welsh benefits from equal official status with English in the public sector in Wales, requiring all government information and documentation to be available in both languages. ¹ _____

The latest error was Swansea council’s attempt at erecting a sign **barring** lorries from using a road in a residential area. ² _____. The local authority was hoping for a suitable Welsh version when they emailed their in-house translation service.

The seeds of confusion were sown, however, when officials received an automated email response in Welsh from the **absent** translator saying: ‘I am not in the office at the moment. Please send any work to be translated.’ ³ _____ Welsh speakers were quick to find the error and municipal services took the ‘translated’ sign down post-haste. But not before the sign had been photographed and printed in the Welsh-language magazine *Golwg*.

Dylan Iorwerth, Managing Editor of the magazine, says ⁴ _____. They’re circulating among Welsh speakers because, unfortunately, it’s all too common that things are not just badly



translated, but are put together by people who have no idea about the language.’

The **blunder** is not the first time Welsh has been translated incorrectly or put in the wrong place. In 2006 cyclists between Cardiff and Penarth were left **baffled** by a sign telling them they had problems with an inflamed bladder. ⁵ _____ Unfortunately, however, the online translator had confused the word *cyclists* with *cystitis*, a painful urinary infection. The temporary road sign was removed as soon as the error was discovered.

⁶ _____ In Cardiff a sign giving conflicting advice to shoppers was **spotted** in the city centre. In English they were told to ‘Look Right’ whereas the Welsh translation instructed them to ‘Look Left’. Fortunately, no one was hurt as a result of the confusion, and the offending sign was replaced.

KEY: 1B, 2F, 3H, 4D, 5A, 6E || 2 spotted, 3 heavy goods vehicles, 4 baffled, 5 absent, 6 dismount, 7 barring, 8 blunder