VI. Translation

Introduction

The Team Translation guidelines address, at a general level, the steps and protocols recommended for survey translation efforts. A team translation effort consists of draft translation production, translation review and refinement, finalization of the translation(s) for pretesting (qualitative and quantitative testing, as the case may be), conducting pretests, translation revision after pretesting, and finalization of the translated instrument for fielding.

Please note: Some of these sub-modules are still under construction.

For other aspects of translation, please refer to:

Translation Assessment
Language Harmonization and Shared Languages
Finding, Selecting and Briefing Translators
Translation Budgeting
Translation Scheduling
Translation Tools

Guidelines

Goal: To follow optimal procedures to produce, assess, and document the process and outcomes of survey questionnaire translation.

1. **Prepare the study thoroughly.**

   Rationale

   Survey translation efforts are usually part of a larger project, the study for which the translated instrument is produced. Major efforts call for forethought and a sense of direction. With forethought, the core elements can be identified and plans developed to address them.
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   Procedural steps

   - Define the following:
     - Larger vision (e.g., a successfully implemented survey).
     - Concrete goal (e.g., a well developed translation for the context and population).
     - Important values (e.g., a population appropriate translation, comparability with source questionnaire, efficiency and feasibility of translation procedures).

    - Relevant factors (e.g., schedules, budget, personnel available, unexpected events).
    - Tasks involved (e.g., assembling personnel and translation documents, preparing tools, producing and reviewing translation, testing, copyediting).

- Identify core team players (those people required for any team translation effort).
    - Translators, who:
        - Prepare individual translations in preparation for the review session.
        - Take notes on translation and source texts in preparation for the review session (documentation to inform the review).
        - Participate in review sessions with other members of the review team.
        - Consult on any translation revisions at later stages.
        - May assess source questionnaires for comparative viability.
        - May assess other survey translations.
        - May assist in copyediting.
    - Reviewer(s), who:
        - Organizes review session meetings (unless a co-coordinator does this).
        - Organizes materials for the review session(s) (unless a co-coordinator does this).
        - Leads review sessions, including attending to group dynamics, appointing note takers, coordinating contributions to the discussion, ensuring the meeting runs to schedule, and ensuring each relevant topic is discussed and resolved or noted as unresolved.
        - Organizes and supervises the documentation of review session outputs. Review session outputs will principally consist of refined translation versions and accompanying documentation, queries and comments; they may also include action points arising from the review meeting(s), such as the need to consult with question designers or other subject matter experts.
    - Adjudicator(s), who:
        - Appraises and officially signs off on translations, usually after the review meeting(s).
        - Appraises the review outputs in consultation with a senior advisor (the senior reviewer) and approves a final version for pretesting; if the adjudicator is also the senior reviewer, review and adjudication may follow directly upon one another.
        - At a later stage, approves the final version for fielding.
        - May, if the senior person on a project required officially to sign off on a translation is not appropriate to appraise translation quality and decisions, delegate adjudication to another senior

person better equipped for this task. Alternatively, in the same situation, the adjudicator may use consultants and documentation from the review session(s), to work through the translation and documented decision points and notes before signing off.

- Copyeditor(s), who:
    - Check for correctness in the target language, including spelling, omissions, wrong formatting, consistency of formulation, and repeated phrases (e.g., “please tick one box”), and for completeness of revision. When multiple versions are in circulation, teams can become unclear, for example, about which one is indeed intended to be the final version.
    - Check against the source document for such errors as inadvertent omissions or additions or reversals, mistakes resulting from copy-and-paste activities, misread source questions, and filter numbering correctness.
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- Identify any other team players who may be required, based upon the size of the project, the mode of data collection, etc.
    - Co-coordinator
        - Large translation efforts, centrally organized studies or efforts conducted within a large organization may have a coordinator to manage the translation effort in an organizational management sense (schedule coordination, personnel identification, budgeting, etc).
        - In other instances the senior reviewer may organize the translation effort.
    - Substantive and other experts
        - Substantive experts may be needed to provide advice on a variety of matters, such as the suitability of indicators or the formulation of items with regard to measurement goals.
        - Question designer experts might be consulted about changes in format necessitated by translation.
        - Interviewers might be consulted for fielding matters relevant to translation.
    - Programmers
        - If the questionnaire is computer assisted, consult with programmers, or those familiar with programming requirements, to ensure that the translation document or file is marked appropriately. Numerous programming details may need to differ from one language to another to accommodate different language structure requirements.
    - Back-up personnel
        - People fall ill or go on vacation. Projects sometimes run beyond agreed times of availability of personnel. It is always a good idea to have strategies in place to organize back-up personnel.

- External assessors
  - If some parts of the translation process or translation outputs are to be subjected to external assessment, suitable assessment personnel will be required (see Translation Assessment).

- Determine whether regional variance in a language or shared languages need to be accommodated; decide on strategies for this as needed (see Language Harmonization and Shared Languages).

- Select, brief, and train personnel (see Selection, Training and Briefing Translators).

- Identify, acquire, and prepare the materials for translation. Apart from the source questionnaire(s), these may include interviewer manuals, statements of informed consent, and information leaflets about the study.

- Clarify payment arrangements (see Translation Budgeting).

- Create a time schedule and phases for members of the team (see Translation Scheduling).

- Arrange for back-up team members in the event of unavailability or illness.

- Decide on the mode and schedule of meetings (face to face, web casting, or conference calls) and materials to be used at meetings (shared templates, software tools, documents deposited in e-room facilities, paper and pencil notebooks).

- Decide whether each translator will prepare a full translation or whether the material to be translated will be divided among the translators (so-called split translations [2]).

Lessons learned

- In major efforts, the bigger picture must first be considered to confirm which routine or special tasks are vital and which are not. It is easy to focus on aspects with which you are familiar and thus inadvertently miss other vital elements. Planning and assessment/evaluation are two sides of one coin. When planning the project or procedure, it is also time to plan the assessment/evaluation of the project or procedure.

2. Have two or more translators produce first draft translations.

Rationale

Using one translator may appear to be cheaper and faster than using several translators and might seem to eliminate the need to coordinate teamwork. However, relying on one person to provide a questionnaire translation is problematic, especially if no team-based review is undertaken. A translator working alone and simply 'handing over' the finished assignment has no opportunity to discuss and develop alternatives. Regional variance, idiosyncratic interpretations, and inevitable translator blind spots are better handled if several translators are involved and an exchange of versions and views is part of the review process.

In addition, survey translations often call for sensitivity for words people speak rather than words people write. Group discussion (including input from survey fielding people) is likely to highlight vocabulary or register problems.

Furthermore, team-based approaches aim to include the translators in the review process. The cost of using two translators to translate is then offset by their participation in assessment. Already familiar with the translation challenges in the texts, they make the review more effective.

Procedural steps

- Determine lines of reporting and document delivery and receipts.
  - Translation coordinators typically deliver materials to translators. Coordinators should keep records of the delivery of materials and require receipt of delivery. This can be done in formal or less formal ways, as judged suitable for the project complexity and the nature of working relationships.
  - The project size and complexity and the organizational structure (centralized, for example) will determine whether translation coordinators or someone else actually delivers materials and how they are delivered.

- Determine the protocol and format for translators to use for note-taking and providing comments on source questions, on adaptations needed, and translation decisions.

- Establish deadlines for deliveries, including partial translations, and for materials for the review session.
  - Require each translator to deliver the first 10 % of his/her work by a deadline or as soon as this is completed to the coordinator (senior

reviewer or other supervisor) for checking. Reviewing performance quickly enables the supervisor to modify instructions to translators in a timely fashion and enables hiring decisions to be revised if necessary.
    - Following the established protocol for procedures and documentation, each translator produces his /her translation and delivers it to the relevant supervisor.

- Either have translators produce a full draft of the questionnaire and other materials to be translated or require each to produce some portion of the material (full translations or split translations).
    - If translators are new to team translation, a full translation is recommended whenever possible.

- After receiving the translated materials, have the coordinator/senior reviewer prepare for the review session.

Lessons learned

- Even after translators have been appointed, decisions sometimes need to be reversed. It is unlikely that serious deficiencies in translation quality can be remedied by more training or different instructions. If the translation quality is not already reasonable in the first 10 percent delivered for inspection, it is probably better to start over with a new translator.

- An individual translation is only the first step in a team approach. Many or most of the translations proposed in drafts will be changed during review. The team should expect and welcome revision and improvement. Anyone reacting over-sensitively to changes to his/her version is unsuited for a team effort. Poor group dynamics can weaken the outcome of the review session(s).

- Making note-taking an official part of the process and providing templates to facilitate such documentation will encourage team members to take notes. Electronic notes in a shared template can be displayed more readily for all to see at meetings.

3. If possible, have new teams work with two or more full translations.

Rationale

This is the most thorough way to avoid the disadvantages of a single translation and also provides a richer input for review sessions than the split translation procedure.

Procedural steps

- Have several translators make independent full translations of the same questionnaire, following the steps described in Guideline 2.

- At the review meeting, have translators and a translation reviewer go through the entire questionnaire. In organizing materials for the review, depending on how material is shared for discussion, it may be useful to merge documents and notes (see Translation Tools).

Lessons learned

- Full translations are the safer procedure if a translation team is inexperienced in team work. Having two versions of each question ensures that the review has more options and fosters discussion.

4. To save time and funds, have experienced teams produce split translations.

Rationale

Split translations can save time, effort and expense especially if a questionnaire is long. There is often no direct overlap between the material one translator translates and the material another translates; however, the topics translators work on do overlap.

Procedural steps

- Divide the translation among translators in the alternating fashion used to deal cards in card games.
  - This ensures that translators get a spread of the topics and possibly different levels of difficulty present in the instrument.
  - This is especially useful for the review session— giving each translator material from each section avoids possible translator bias and maximizes translator input evenly across the material.

- Have each translator translate and deliver the parts he/she has been given for the review meeting.

- At the review meeting, have translators and the review team go through the entire questionnaire. In organizing materials for the review, depending on how material is shared for discussion, it may be useful to merge documents and notes (see Translation Tools).

Lessons learned

- Splitting the questionnaire, even in the recommended card-dealing fashion described above, may mean translators are less familiar with some sections of the questionnaire than with others. This may reduce the detail of input at the review.

- A compromise solution between split and full translations is to ensure that some overlap exists between materials divided among translators. This allows the review team members to have an increased sense of whether there are large differences in translating approaches between translators or in their understanding of source text components at the draft production level. In particular, when translators have worked on "split" materials, steps should be taken to ensure that material or terms which recur across the questionnaires are translated consistently. For example, it is conceivable that two translators translate the same expression and come up with suitable but different translations. Consistency checks can ensure that one translator's translation can be harmonized with another translator's equally good but different rendering. Checks for general tone consistency are also needed. It is important to remember, however, that English may use one and the same term in different contexts with different meanings while other languages may need to choose different terms for different contexts. Automatic harmonization is thus not a viable procedure. (One example for English is the term "government.")

5. Review and refine draft translations in a team meeting

Rationale

The team meeting brings together all those with the necessary expertise to discuss alternatives and collaborate in refining the draft translations.

Procedural steps

- Make all the translated draft materials available to team members in advance of the review meeting(s) to allow preparation

- Arrange for a format for translations and documentation that allows easy comparison of versions.

- Have the senior reviewer prepare in advance, making notes on points of difficulty across translations or in the source questionnaire and reviewing translators' comments on their translations and the source documents.

- Have the senior reviewer lead the discussion.
  - The lead person establishes the rules of the review process.
  - He/she emphasizes that team cooperation is essential, that most likely the team will change existing translations, and that the common aim is to collaborate towards finding the best solutions.

- Have the senior reviewer appoint two revision meeting note-takers (any careful and clear note-taker, and often the senior reviewer).

- Have the team go through each question, answer scale, instruction, and any other components, comparing versions. Members aim to identify weaknesses and strengths of proposed translations and any issues that arise such as comparability with source, compromises needed, difficulties in source, etc.

- Ensure that changes made in one section are also made, where necessary, in other places. Some part of this may be more easily made after the review meeting on the basis of notes taken.

- Whenever possible, finalize a version for adjudication.
  - If a version for adjudication cannot be produced, the review meeting documentation should note problems preventing resolution.

- After review, before adjudication, copyedit the reviewed version in terms of its own accuracy (consistency, spelling, grammar, etc.).

- After review, before adjudication, copyedit the reviewed version against the source questionnaire, checking for any omissions, incorrect filtering or instructions, reversed order items or answer scale labels, etc.

Lessons learned

- The lead person/senior reviewer should avoid unnecessary favoring of one person's translations. If two versions are equally good, for example, favors should be shared by accepting one person's suggestion one time and another person's at another.

- Given the rules accepted for the meeting, however, translation quality takes priority over "sharing the favors."

- Time keeping is important. The senior reviewer should confirm the duration of the meeting at the start and pace progress throughout. Otherwise much time may be spent on early questions leaving too little for later parts of the questionnaire.

6. **Have the adjudicator sign-off on final pretesting version**

Rationale

Official approval may simply be part of the required procedure, but it also raises the quality bar and identifies the importance assigned to the translation procedures in the project.

Procedural steps

- If the adjudicator has all the skills needed (strong language ability in source and target languages, knowledge of the study and survey measurement issues), have him/her take part in the review session. Even in this case, it is advisable to delay official signing-off to another day if possible, leaving time for final checking of decisions taken.

- If the adjudicator does not have special relevant expertise, have him/her work with consultants to check that all the procedures have been followed, that appropriate people were involved, that documentation was kept, etc., according to procedural requirements. In order to assess the quality of review outputs, for example, the adjudicator can ask to have a list of all the perceived challenges and request to have explicit examples explained.

- If the expertise of the adjudicator lies somewhere between these extremes, have him/her review the translation with the senior reviewer on the basis of review meeting documentation.

- Ensure that changes made in one section are also made if necessary in other places.

Lessons learned

- When mistakes are discovered later, no one is eager to be responsible for having overlooked them.

- If a translation mistake means a question is excluded from analysis in a national study, the costs are high; in a comparative survey, the costs are even higher [1].

7. **Pretest the version resulting from adjudication (see Pretesting).**

8. **Review, revise, and adjudicate the translation on the basis of pretesting results.**

Rationale

Pretesting is conducted to test the viability of the translation and to inform its refinement, as necessary, in preparation for final fielding.

Procedural steps

- Decide on the team required to develop revisions. This will differ depending on the nature and number of problems emerging from the pretest and on whether or not solutions are presented along with the problems.

- If a one- or two-person team is chosen that does not include one of the team translators, for example, share any changes (highlighted) with a translator and a "typical target population person" for final commentary, explaining the purpose of the revision.

- Review the documentation from the pretest, considering comments for each question or element concerned

- Ensure that changes made in one section are also made, where necessary, in other places.

- Copyedit the revised version in terms of its own accuracy (consistency, spelling, grammar, etc.).

- Copyedit the revised version in its final form against the source questionnaire, checking for any omissions, incorrect filtering or instructions, reversed order items or answer scale labels, etc.

- Check in programmed applications that hidden instructions have also undergone this double copyediting.

- Present the revised version for final adjudication. The adjudication procedures for this are as before.

Lessons learned

- Nobody is perfect. Mistakes are more easily found if the copyeditors are not the same persons as those who have consistently worked on the texts and are thus very familiar with them.

- If different people cannot be used, allow time to elapse between working on the text for other reasons and carrying out copyediting.

- Problems with wrong instructions, numbering, filters, and omitted questions are quite common and are often more the result of failed copyediting than of wrong translation.

- Use a system of checking off (ticking) material that has been reviewed/checked and of recording checking dates. In iterative procedures this reduces the likelihood of confusing a preliminary review with a final one.

Glossary [under construction]

Adaptation(s)	Changing existing materials (e.g., management plans, contracts, training manuals, questionnaires, etc.) by deliberately altering some content or design component to make the resulting materials more suitable for another sociocultural context or a particular population.
Adjudication	
Full translation	Each translator translates all the material to be translated.
Indicator(s)	
Item(s)	
Split translation	Each translator translates only a part of the total material to be translated, and usually each translates different parts (no overlap between translators of materials translated).

References [under construction]