

VI. Translation: Translation Scheduling

***** Under Construction *****

Introduction

This section discusses factors which should be considered when scheduling the translation effort. Scheduling is impacted by the availability of source texts and when fieldwork needs to begin.

The section will not give exact times, since they depend upon the length, the repetitive nature, and the difficulty of the material to be translated, as well as on the experience of those involved. As a rule of thumb, the less experienced the team is, the more time it takes to coordinate everyone's efforts.

Finding, selecting, and briefing translators can be done before the source text is finalized, as long as the language(s) and the nature of the texts to be translated are known. This is the recommended procedure when there is a short time span between finalization and the start of fieldwork; it may also be the most suitable procedure in general, since it allows more time for other processes. Test material for interviews with translators can usually be taken from similar or previous projects.

At times, time constraints may make it necessary to start translation on a pre-finalized source text. In such cases, mechanisms should be in place to efficiently and consistently update the source text and to inform all team members of the changes (see [Translation Tools](#)). At other times, the source text may be partly finalized and ready for translation. Here, a first round of translation can start with a second round coming later.

The following guidelines focus on surveys where translation starts after the source text has been finalized and where translator selection is done beforehand. Language harmonization (see [Language Harmonization and Shared Languages](#)) is not taken into account. In central efforts, the overall project manager is responsible for coordinating these harmonization efforts. In decentralized (local) efforts, national project managers need to agree on joint schedules (e.g. in the case of review-harmonization meetings). The focus in the following is on translation efforts that are managed at the national level, although many issues also apply to centralized management.

Guidelines

- 1. Include time to find, select, and brief translators.**

Rationale

Translation quality depends, to a large extent, on the competency of the staff. It is important, then, to allow sufficient time to recruit and select the best possible people for the job.

Procedural steps

- Consider the guidelines in [Finding, Selecting and Briefing Translators](#) and set the time frame appropriately.

Lessons learned

- The time spent on these processes will be shortened if it is possible to use translators who are well known and have previously been employed by the organization.
- It may be necessary to brief even long-established translators if the current project has different needs than previous projects.

2. Include time to prepare the translation documents.***Procedural steps***

- Prepare translation and documentation tools for translators as soon as the source text is finalized (see [Translation Tools](#)). Easy-to-use translation and documentation tools speed up the translation process and make subsequent steps more efficient.

Lessons learned

- Allow sufficient time if the tools have to be produced manually. If mistakes are made, not everyone involved may make subsequent corrections consistently.
- If tools are provided by a central coordinating center, the delivery time of these tools often determines when the translation project can start at the national level.

3. Include time to prepare the translation instructions and assemble reference materials.

Rationale

Clear project instructions and comprehensive reference materials help to produce translations that meet the needs of the project.

Procedural steps

- Prepare instructions that inform translators about the [target population](#) (educational background, age, etc.), the purpose of the translation, special comparability requirements, and any other project-specific needs.
- Prepare instructions on how to understand and use the documentation tools.
- If applicable, assemble style guides, quality check lists, and/or glossaries.
- If applicable, assemble reference materials, such a previous source text and translations of the same study or background information.

Lessons learned

- If translators are poorly informed about the needs of the project, quality suffers and review and adjudication become longer and more strenuous than need be.
 - Release all materials at one time rather than sending bits and pieces to the translators. In the latter case, important materials may be overlooked.
 - A number of these steps, such as writing instructions, can be done before the source instrument is finalized.
 - If some or all instructions are provided by a central coordinating center, national coordinators only need to write or assemble those materials needed at the national level.
- 4. Include time to produce the draft translations. (See [Translation, Guideline 2](#))**

Rationale

Quality concerns require that a reasonable time frame be determined.

Procedural steps

- Agree on deadlines for delivery with the translators; examples include the deadline for quality control (see [Translation, Guideline 2](#)) and the review deadline.
- Instruct translators to signal well in advance if the time frame cannot be met so that project management can respond accordingly.

Lessons learned

- The time frame for production of draft translations may be very short. The sooner translators are informed about the time schedule, the easier it is for them to organize their other work in advance.

5. Include time to prepare for and hold review meetings. (See [Translation, Guideline 5](#))***Rationale***

Quality concerns require a reasonable time frame for review.

Procedural steps

- Allow enough time to
 - Prepare documents for review (e.g. merge documents).
 - Send translations to all team member involved in the review.
 - Prepare for the review meeting.
 - Hold the review meeting.

Lessons learned

- The earlier team members are informed about the time frame (i.e., the time available between receiving review documents and the review itself), the better they can organize for adequate preparation. This is true even if there is little time between these processes.
- The time needed for the review meeting depends on both the length and difficulty of the texts to be discussed and on successfully managing time during the review (see [Translation, Guideline 5](#)).

6. Include time for copyediting. (See [Translation, Guideline 5](#))

Lessons learned

- Cutting this important step may lead to less than optimal translations. Equipping copyeditors with a list of the most important features to check can streamline the process (see [Translation Tools](#)).

7. Include time for adjudication. (See [Translation, Guideline 6](#))***Lessons learned***

- The resolution of some problems from the review may take more time than expected, especially when external informants or the source text designers themselves need to be contacted.

8. Include time for pretesting and further review. (See [Pretesting](#))**9. Include time for final copyediting.*****Lessons learned***

- Again, equipping copyeditors with a list of the most important features to check can streamline the process (see [Translation Tools](#)). Final copyediting should particularly focus on things that were changed following the pretest.

10. Include time for final questionnaire production.***Procedural steps***

- This step includes formatting a self-administered questionnaire and programming a computer assisted-questionnaire. Specialists in these fields will be able to provide an estimation of the time needed for these steps.

11. Include time for consistency checks between individual documents.***Rationale***

If some documents are related to other documents, it may be necessary to check for consistency between them. For example, if the interviewer manual cites questions from the questionnaire, check for consistency between the interviewer manual and finalized questionnaire translations.

12. Include time to translate materials other than the questionnaire.

Procedural steps

- Determine the nature of the other materials.
 - If there is a high degree of interdependency between the questionnaire translation and the other materials, wait until the questionnaire translation is finalized; if simultaneous production is dictated by time constraints, have mechanisms in place for later harmonization.
 - If the other material has no relation to the questionnaire, translators may start work immediately.

Glossary

Target population The finite population for which the survey sponsor wants to make inferences using the sample statistics.