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US Spanish Translation Guidelines: A Five Year Update

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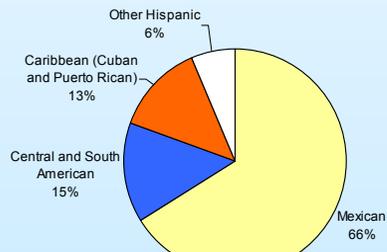
Background and Objective

The US Spanish speaking population has a widely varied demographic profile. As a growing sub-population, this group demands increasing attention in population studies and clinical research. Its unique, multi-ethnic composition has required the development of distinct translation methodology to account for differences in language comprehension. A 5-year evaluation of initial translation protocols demonstrates the need for revision of methodological steps and language groups to be included. The purpose of this poster is to suggest an updated methodology in order to produce language versions of research measures with a common language that is comprehensible to the diverse Spanish speaking population in the United States.

The Spanish Speaking Population in the U.S.

According to the US Census Bureau, there were 32.8 million Latinos (12% of total US population) residing in the United States in 2000. The term "Latino" includes all Spanish speakers from Latin America. The Latino population is subdivided into four major language groups. The major Spanish language groups represented in the US are Mexican (including Chicanos and Tejanos), Caribbean, Central American, and South American (see graph below). In order for a translation to be considered appropriate for use by all Spanish speakers in the US, it is necessary to include representatives from each of these groups in the translation process. Because Spanish speakers of Mexican origin constitute the largest group, our protocol requires two representatives from this group to be involved in the translation process. The extremely small size of the Iberian population continues to support our earlier decision to exclude that group from the US Spanish protocol.

The chart below illustrates the breakdown of the Latino population according to their countries of origin.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 2000.

Proposed US Spanish Translation Methodology

After five years of concentrated experience with US Spanish cross-cultural adaptations, HRA has established a process that ensures appropriateness of new translations for all US Spanish speakers. The following is an outline of currently suggested methods:

Step 1 (Development of initial language version)

- Two independent forward translations (using experienced bilingual translators, one being a native speaker of Mexican origin and the other from any of the other US Spanish language groups).
- One reconciled forward version (resulting from a reconciliation panel meeting attended by representatives of each of the major US Spanish speaking language groups: 2 Mexicans, 1 Caribbean, 1 Central American, 1 South American).
- One back translation (using a native English speaker who is bi-lingual in Spanish). Evaluation of back translation for content equivalence by project coordinator (changes will be tested during cognitive debriefing to ensure comprehension by each language group).
- Development of forward and backward translation reports.
- Development of preliminary language version (pasting of revised text into desired format).
- Developer and/or sponsor review and discussion with subsequent changes to language version.

Step 2 (Cognitive debriefing interviews)

- Recruitment of five debriefing respondents with target condition, one from each US Spanish language group (2 Mexicans, 1 Caribbean, 1 Central American, 1 South American). Although recruiting the same five-person multi-ethnic mix for patient interviews becomes a challenge in addition to specific health conditions, it has proven quite valuable in assuring proper understanding of the translated items across all language groups.
- Implementation of cognitive debriefing interviews, evaluation of documentation and development of report.

Step 3 (Finalization of language versions)

- Negotiation of final changes resulting from cognitive debriefing interviews by project coordinator (in consultation with representatives from each language group).
- Proofreading and formatting of final measure.
- Development of final report and delivery of measure.

Conclusion

Language differences linked to ethnic origin can cause patients to misinterpret items from health related quality of life questionnaires, thereby placing research data at risk. These language differences need to be reconciled into a common language that will be correctly understood by all Spanish speaking patients in the United States, regardless of their country of origin. Using the methodology proposed in this poster will best ensure that all US Spanish speakers will understand the research measures according to the intended content.

Sample of US Spanish Reconciliation Report (2 example items):

Original English (sample items)	First Forward Translation (by Mexican)	Second Forward Translation (by South American)	Reconciled Version	Reasons for Decision
How satisfied have you been with your treatment during the past four weeks?	¿Qué tan satisfecho ha estado con su tratamiento durante las últimas 4 semanas?	Durante las últimas cuatro semanas, ¿cuán satisfecho ha estado con su tratamiento?	Durante las últimas cuatro semanas, ¿qué tan satisfecho ha estado con su tratamiento? (During the last four weeks, how satisfied have you been with your treatment?)	1. "qué tan" (how) chosen over "cuán" (how) because "cuán" is not understood by all language groups. Although some groups do not use "qué tan", it is understood by all and is the most common option for most. 2. Syntax of South American version preferred by panel. 3. "satisfecho" (healthy) chosen for gender neutrality.
Choose healthy snacks.	Elija bocadillos saludables.	Seleccione picadas, colaciones y meriendas que son buenas para la salud.	Elija bocadillos (meriendas) saludables. (Choose healthy snacks)	1. "Elija" (choose) more common than "seleccione" (select). 2. Because each country has a different way to say "snack" (additional terms used by various groups are "bocadillo", "tentempié", "pasabocas", "bolanos"), no one term was deemed appropriate for all US Spanish groups. The two most common were "bocadillo" (by Mexicans) and "meriendas" (by South Americans). Both need to be used since not everyone will understand one term. 3. "saludable" (healthy) simpler than "que son buenas para la salud" (that are good for the health).

Sample of US Spanish Cognitive Debriefing Report (same items as above, at the debriefing step):

Item	Did you have any difficulty understanding this item?	What does this item mean to you? (literally translated from respondent's own words)	Would you reword this item? (If so, how would you reword it?)	Is this item relevant to your situation?	Are the response options clear and consistent with this item?	DECISION:
Durante las últimas cuatro semanas, ¿qué tan satisfecho ha estado con su tratamiento?	1 (Mex): No 2 (Mex): No 3 (Car.): No 4 (C.Am.): No 5 (S.Am.): No	1 (Mex): How satisfied have I been with my treatment in the last 4 weeks? 2 (Mex): If I have been satisfied with my treatment, how much? 3 (Car.): If I feel better because of my treatment during the past 4 weeks and how much. 4 (C.Am.): How content have I been with my treatment during the last 4 weeks? 5 (S.Am.): How happy have I been with my treatment in the past 4 weeks?	1 (Mex): No 2 (Mex): No 3 (Car.): I would say "cuán" instead of "qué tan". 4 (C.Am.): I would say "ha estado satisfecho con su tratamiento" (have you been satisfied with your treatment). 5 (S.Am.): I would say "cuán" instead of "qué tan".	1 (Mex): Yes 2 (Mex): Yes 3 (Car.): Yes 4 (C.Am.): Yes 5 (S.Am.): Yes	1 (Mex): Yes 2 (Mex): Yes 3 (Car.): Yes 4 (C.Am.): Yes 5 (S.Am.): Yes	Retain item: no change. Although suggestions were made based on each person's preference, no change was made because the item was understandable to all respondents.
Elija bocadillos (meriendas) saludables.	1 (Mex): To me, "bocadillos" and "meriendas" are two different things. "bocadillo" is a "snack", but "merienda" is what you eat around 4pm between lunch and dinner 2 (Mex): No 3 (Car.): Yes, I think of a "bocadillo" as a little sandwich, and a "merienda" is an afternoon snack 4 (C.Am.): No 5 (S.Am.): Yes, "merienda" is afternoon meal or tea that is at a certain time, but I don't know "bocadillo"	1 (Mex): Choose snacks that are healthy, not junk 2 (Mex): Choose healthy snacks, lower in fat 3 (Car.): Choose healthy little sandwiches 4 (C.Am.): Choose healthy snacks, such as fruit 5 (S.Am.): Choose healthy	After interviewer explained meaning of item and told respondents that I could be eaten any time (and not just in the afternoon), all respondents suggested to simply use the original English word "snack". Because US Spanish is highly influenced by English, many words are borrowed. All respondents believed that "snack" would be understandable for their language group. However, two respondents suggested adding an asterisk after the word "snack" with an explanation of what exactly a snack is (in case anyone is unfamiliar with the English "snack").	1 (Mex): Yes 2 (Mex): Yes 3 (Car.): Yes 4 (C.Am.): Yes 5 (S.Am.): Yes	N/A	Change item to: "Elija snacks" saludables" (Choose healthy snacks) with asterisk below that reads: "Un snack es cualquier cosa que se come, generalmente liviana o rápida, entre las comidas principales (el desayuno, el almuerzo y la cena) ya sea en la calle, en un bar, en la casa o en cualquier situación. También se conoce por las siguientes palabras: bocadillo, bocadillo, merienda, colación, picada, botana, pasaboca, tentempié." (* A snack is anything that is eaten, generally light or quick, between main meals (breakfast, lunch, and dinner) whether in the street, at a bar, at home, or in any situation. It is also known by the following words: bocadillo, bocadillo, merienda, colación, picada, botana, pasaboca, tentempié.)