

Translation Considerations

When you have tobacco education materials translated into other languages, both language and cultural issues need to be considered. Translations that are done word-by-word into another language can alter the meaning and structure of the material. It is the translator's job to preserve the intent, tone, feeling, length, and reading level of the material. Work closely with the translator and members of the community to make sure the translated material conveys the intended meaning and is sensitive, culturally appropriate, and informative.

IN THIS GUIDE YOU WILL LEARN TO

- Understand the translation process
- Analyze a translator's experience and knowledge
- Work with translators to create the best translation for your audience

Translation vs. Interpretation

Translation refers to the written word whereas interpretation refers to the spoken word. Translators take a written text in one language and change it into another language while keeping the meaning and tone clear. For example, a translator might take a material written in English and translate the words into another written language such as Chinese. Interpretation refers to hearing what is being said and changing it into another language. During a discussion at the United Nations, there are interpreters who hear one language and interpret it into another. The skills of a translator and interpreter are different, requiring specialized training, skills, and techniques. They are separate professions, and you will want to hire a skilled translator.

The Translation Process

The first step of the translation process is to talk with the translator about the population as well as the purpose, content, and objectives of the material. Take the time to explain the following:

- Cultural background of the population
- Educational levels
- Intended reading level
- Key messages
- Targeted outcomes

Preparation

Discuss with the translator your audience, their educational and literacy levels, and the intent of the material. Tell the translator what reading level you want the translation to be.

Educate your translators about key terms in the document, such as secondhand smoke, tar, chew, spit, and nicotine addiction.

Translators are usually highly educated, but the population you are working with may not be familiar with difficult or academic vocabulary.

Let the translator know about the background of the population, their history, culture, and anything you know about regional characteristics of the language. For instance, while there are many excellent Spanish translators, the translator should know if the population is from Mexico, Latin America, South America, Spain, or another Spanish speaking country. Each country, and often every region within a country, has linguistic differences among the population. The more information and specifics you can give, the more an experienced translator will be able to tailor the translation to the needs of the audience.

Text Analysis

Have the translators read through the text to analyze it and to make sure they understand specific phrases, what you want your audience to learn or know, and what the key messages are. If necessary, discuss any tobacco, or health-related terms that you want to emphasize in the material. Educate your translators about key terms in the document, such as secondhand smoke, tar, chew, spit, and nicotine addiction. Not all English words will have an exact translation; your translator's job is to convey the main concepts and key messages using vocabulary familiar to the audience.

Another challenge may be the length of the translated piece, as translations are often longer than the English version. Show your translators a mock-up of your layout and give them an idea of how much space there is, but realize you may have to make your document longer. Encourage your translators to call you if they have any questions or need clarification while translating the material.

Evaluation and Testing

The last stage of any translation process is evaluation and testing. One of the easiest ways to evaluate a translation is to do a "back translation," which is translating the material from the other language back to the original. This is often done by another translator in the translation service or by hiring an outside translator. The translation should communicate the same meaning as the original, and it should be easy to read and understand. The two translations are compared, and any problems are identified and discussed.

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As part of the evaluation, the best way to insure a good translation is to test it with members of the community. The translation should be reviewed by several members of the target population who are fluent in both the original and the translated language. This is rarely part of a translation service, so you will need to make arrangements for testing yourself. This testing will help you find out if the audience can easily understand the information; if the reading level, grammar, and style are appropriate; if it is culturally acceptable; or if there are any problems with the tone, feeling, or intent. Taking the time to do a thorough evaluation of the translation will save you time and money by correcting any difficulties before you produce the material and help you create a piece that is highly useful for your audience.

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Dual-Language/Bilingual Translations

When considering translating a material, most people think of having two documents for each language, usually one in English and another one in the translated language. Single language documents are popular because they allow similar layouts and formats for each language, and appropriate photos and graphics can be used for each population. However, using a dual-language/bilingual document with the text in both languages in the same material has many advantages.

- Bilingual materials allow the reader to choose which language they will read.
- Readers can go back and forth between the two languages. If something is confusing in one language, it can be clarified by reading the second language.
- Bilingual materials are effective with families who have members with varying language skills. Older members may be more comfortable with their native language while children educated in the U.S. may prefer to read an English version.
- Those helping people to read and understand the document can refer to the language they understand the best.

Formatting and Layout

Whether you choose a single language or bilingual translation, keep in mind that the translated language is often longer and the text takes up more space than the English version. Be sure to leave plenty of room in your design and document layout to accommodate the translated text. Try to avoid reducing font size, squeezing text, or eliminating graphics to make everything fit.

Bilingual translations take extra planning and care to incorporate both languages in the document. One choice is to have half of the document in each language so that you see

the second language when you turn the material over. But make sure to put instructions in each language telling people to flip it over for the second language; otherwise, it can be easy to miss the other text. Another choice is to have a side-by-side translation, with both languages easily seen by the reader, which makes it simpler to go back and forth between the two languages. When doing side-by-side translations, care should be taken to select graphics and illustrations that are multicultural and appropriate for all the readers. Special attention also needs to be taken with translating material into languages that read from right to left or up and down because your layout will be very different.

Fonts

Another challenge is dealing with foreign language fonts. Make sure the translator includes the specific fonts when they send you the digital file. This will help prevent problems when you send the material to the printer and produce the document.

Finding and Choosing Experienced Translators

Before hiring anyone, ask to see examples of their work, check their experience, and find out what type of education or translation certification they have. Ask if they are familiar with your specific audience or subgroup, learn if they have translated health or tobacco education documents, and find out if they are experienced with low-literacy translations. Here are some hints to find an experienced translator:

- Ask for recommendations from agencies and people who work with the population, contact local colleges and universities for recommendations.
- Look for active translators who are certified by the American Translators Association (ATA).
- Look for someone with a college degree in translation.
- Check the phone book for professional translation services.
- Contact the corresponding priority population partnership for referrals.
- Go to the TECC website for a list of translators:
www.tecc.org/develop/ts_pdf/translationservices.pdf

Evaluation Grid for Selecting a Translator

Use this grid to evaluate prospective translators. Score each according to the grid; then add up the points. Choose the one with a high score who is within your price range and who fits your needs the best.

Company or Person's Name:		
Translator Qualifications	Yes/No	Points
Translates into dominant language	Yes ___ (2 points) • No ___ (0 points)	
College educated in the target language	Yes ___ (2 points) • No ___ (1 point)	
College degree or certification in translation	Yes ___ (2 points) • No ___ (1 point)	
Concentration in the area of translation (e.g., tobacco or health)	Yes ___ (2 points) • No ___ (0 points)	
Majority of customers in health field	Yes ___ (2 points) • No ___ (1 point)	
At least five years of experience	Yes ___ (2 points) • No ___ (1 point)	
Keenly aware of linguistic variations among population subgroups	Yes ___ (2 points) • No ___ (0 points)	
Has examples of previously translated materials including low-literacy materials	Yes ___ (2 points) • No ___ (0 points)	
Employs competent reviewers	Yes ___ (2 points) • No ___ (0 points)	
Uses another translator to back translate material into original language	Yes ___ (2 points) • No ___ (0 points)	
Extensive library of dictionaries and translation resources	Yes ___ (2 points) • No ___ (1 point)	
American Translators Association certification	Yes ___ (2 points) • No ___ (0 points)	
	Total Points	

Individual Translator vs. Translation Service

Each has their advantages and disadvantages. Individual translators are usually less expensive, but a translation agency may have better resources. If you are on a tight budget and are using an individual translator, make sure to test the translation with your target audience. Most good translation services automatically use more than one translator and back translate the document before they send the translation to you. However, before you hire a translator or a service, ask them about their procedures and how they check their work.

Type of Service	Advantages	Disadvantages
Individual translator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually less expensive • Gives individual attention and will work with you very closely • Often more flexible and will follow your style better 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not have anyone to do back translations • May have less resources available
Translation services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a team of experienced translators available • May have more experience with specific subgroups • Usually has extensive resources and library • Usually provides back translation • May be able to help coordinate workflow for large projects • Some larger services may offer editing, typesetting, and graphics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually costs more • May not get to talk to the specific translator • May be very busy and not be able to provide individual attention

Determining Time and Costs

Time and cost will vary depending on the language and the size of the material, but good translators can give you an estimate of how long a job will take and how much it will cost. Individual translators charge by the word or block of words, but some charge by the hour. Translation services may charge by the hour or by the project. Make sure to get a written estimate that specifies the translation charges, what the costs will be for changes and corrections, and an estimated delivery date for a finished product. Leave plenty of time to get your material translated plus allow time to do a back translation and testing with the intended population. Working with the translator, a well-designed timeline will help create quality materials.

Cultural Considerations

Have your translators and the community give you feedback about the cultural appropriateness of the graphics and illustrations as well as the text. Some graphics may need to be adapted for the target audience. Your translators and the community can help identify any problems with colors and visual appeal to help make your document the best quality for your intended population.