Translating CAHPS® Surveys

Contents

Purpose of this Document

This document offers a set of proven guidelines for translating CAHPS surveys from English into a variety of languages in a cost-effective yet culturally competent manner. It combines two sets of guidelines developed for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality's (AHRQ) CAHPS program by the CAHPS Cultural Comparability Team, a group of researchers associated with current and previous grantee organizations (RAND, Yale, Harvard, and the American Institutes for Research). The guidelines are intended to support AHRQ and the many users of CAHPS surveys in standardizing the translation approach and ensuring the quality of translated instruments.

The recommended guidelines are based on the team's review and analysis of the translation approach used when translating CAHPS surveys into Spanish. This approach involves using two translators to each produce a forward translation and then having the two forward translations reviewed (by a separate bilingual reviewer) against each other and compared to the original English survey. The advantages of this approach—compared to a simple translation/back-translation approach, for example—include the following:

- Increased ability to identify and resolve translation errors (i.e., errors in syntax, grammar, or meaning)

- Increased ability to identify issues related to variations in terms or expressions used by subgroups of people in the target language

- Increased ability to produce a translation that uses language that is more easily understood by a wide variety of speakers of the target language

- Increased ability to identify and resolve problems with the readability level of the translation

The Team has successfully used the approach recommended in these guidelines to produce the Spanish translations available for nearly all CAHPS instruments and supplemental items.

If you need a CAHPS survey instrument in a language other than English or Spanish, please follow the process described below to:

- Select translation team members

- Obtain forward translations

- Conduct a review of translations

- Reconcile translations

Translations Available from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), which implements several CAHPS surveys nationwide, often translates those surveys into languages other than Spanish. For example, the CAHPS Survey for Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs), which is a version of the CAHPS Clinician & Group Survey, is available in Cantonese, Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, and Russian.

Source: CAHPS Survey for Accountable Care Organizations: Survey Instruments. Available at http://acocahps.cms.gov/en/survey-instruments/. Accessed 1/17/17.

Select Translation Team Members

Before beginning the translation process, you first need to select translation team members. Two types of team members are critical to the successful completion of a translation project: translators and translation reviewers. This translation model does not include a specialized technical reviewer as part of the translation and cultural adaptation team. Since CAHPS instruments are geared to the public, health care-related terms should be familiar to laymen and do not require a special technical review.

The primary role of the *translator* is to translate documents from the source language into the target language. The translator should aim to produce a translation that is—

- Accurate (i.e., the translation preserves the intended meaning of the text in the original language)

- Correct in terms of grammar, syntax, style, and other formal aspects of written language

- Sensitive to regional variations in language use and different dialects of the target language, when present

- Written in plain language

The *translation reviewer* (or *reviewer*, for short) checks the translator's work by comparing the translated version of the document with the original version in the source language. The reviewer's work focuses on both the accuracy of the translation and the correctness and optimal use of language in the translation.

The reviewer also needs to ensure that the translation is appropriate for the target population in terms of the reading level and the language use of groups or subgroups in the target population. The reviewer ensures that the terms and expressions that refer to health care or other special topics are both technically correct and consistently understood by a majority of the people who would be responding to the survey in the target language.

Ideally, several reviewers should work as a team in a review committee. This committee may include the translators, the reviewers, and a member of the research team, who facilitates the discussion and makes final translation decisions. This committee makes decisions by consensus with respect to the quality of the translation and the modifications that should be made in the document. The goal is to produce a reconciled version of the translation that is technically and conceptually equivalent and culturally appropriate.

For more information about selecting translators and recommended qualifications for translators, please refer to Appendix A.

Obtain Forward Translations

The first stage of the translation process is to obtain forward translations, as outlined in the steps below:

- Obtain the most recent English-language version of the CAHPS survey.

- Provide two translators and the translation reviewer with background information on the translation task:

    o Mode of survey administration

    o Socio-demographic characteristics of the target population (e.g., whether the sample includes elderly respondents, non-elderly adults, or minors; average educational level or socioeconomic status of the target respondents; country or region of origin)

    o Targeted reading level (Note: A low reading level is preferable.)

    o Region(s) of the country where the survey will be fielded

    o The type of language they should use ("broadcast" or standard language vs. sub-group or region-specific language). Note: Region-specific language may be necessary in particular regions or countries and therefore can be used provided that you maintain equivalence with the English version of the survey.

- Provide the translators and reviewer with a copy of another CAHPS survey translated into the target language, if available. This enables the translators to check for and continue to use standardized translations for response scales and other text elements that are common across surveys. An example would be translating "medicines" into Spanish as "medicinas" rather than "medicamentos."

- Obtain two independent forward translations in the target language.

What is "Broadcast" Language?

In order to meet the needs of a broad range of speakers, the CAHPS Consortium generally strives to use "broadcast" or standard language (typically used in broadcast journalism) in both its English versions of surveys as well as in its translations. "Broadcast" or standard language refers to the use of a basic vocabulary, grammar, and syntax that cannot be attributed to a single region/country and is understood by the majority of speakers in the target language.

Conduct a Review of Translations

After successfully obtaining two forward translations, the next step is to conduct a review of the translations, as outlined in the following steps:

- Produce a master table (see Appendix B for sample) that includes:

    o The original English version of the survey, including all instructions and all items

    o Translation 1

    o Translation 2

- - o A column for the bilingual reviewer to insert a third version of the translation of each survey item

    - o A column for the bilingual reviewer to comment on any issues that should be addressed or considered in revising the translation

  - Use each row in the table for a single set of instructions or a single survey item with the corresponding response options.

  - Provide the bilingual reviewer with the instructions and background information the translators received.

The bilingual reviewer should review the master table, indicating which version of the translation to use for each survey item or producing a reconciled version. The proposed reconciled translation should be entered into the master table.

Reconcile Translations by Committee Consensus

The next stage is to reconcile the reviewed translations through a committee composed of the two translators and the reviewer. Please follow the steps below:

- The two translators and the reviewer should meet as a committee (referred to as the "translation committee") either in person or by telephone. The committee should review the findings of the bilingual review, discuss any issues or problems identified by the reviewer, and finalize the wording for each instruction, survey item, response option, and survey heading. The choice of final wording should be determined by a consensus of the committee.

- The bilingual reviewer should take the lead in chairing the committee review meetings and keeping track of the agreed-upon changes in the table. The reconciled version from the original review should be modified as needed based on the committee's decision and the final language should be entered into the master table.

- The committee should document any concerns that it cannot resolve. If needed, contact the CAHPS User Network to request additional guidance and to keep AHRQ informed of issues such as the following:

    - o Cultural or conceptual differences between the English source document and the translated version that cannot be resolved by modifying the translation (or at least not in a way that doesn't substantially change the meaning of the original item).

    - o Questions about the specific intent of a survey item, word, or phrase.

    - o Issues related to the translation of the response options.

After the translation committee has completed its review of the translations and has come to a consensus on final wording for all instructions, survey items, response options, and survey headings, produce a final formatted version of the survey.

If you have any questions or comments about these guidelines, please contact AHRQ's CAHPS User Network via e-mail at CAHPS1@westat.com or by phone at 1-800-492-9261.

Appendix A: Guidelines for Selecting a Translation Team

Selection Process

The process of selecting translators and reviewers consists of four stages.

- Stage 1. Applicants are asked to submit:
    - A curriculum vitae detailing his/her qualifications, including education, general work experience in the target language, work experience as a translator, and other experience or skills that would enhance his/her translation skills.
    - Contact information for at least two individuals, preferably former clients who the project manager can contact to get a candid evaluation of the individual's work.
    - Work samples and, when appropriate, documents that substantiate stated qualifications.
- Stage 2. Project staff evaluate the applicant's qualifications.
- Stage 3. Project staff interview qualified candidates to evaluate their range of skills, work, and cultural experiences. The purpose of the interview is to identify each candidate's strengths and weaknesses with respect to the translation project.
- Stage 4. Project staff may ask translators or translation reviewers to complete a short translation or translation review task to determine whether they have the skills needed for the project.

Required and Desirable Qualifications

Each person brings a unique set of strengths and skills that makes him or her more or less qualified than others for the position of translator or reviewer. In addition, each language into which a CAHPS instrument may be translated poses its own set of challenges. For example, the supply of competent translators living in the U.S. may vary by language. In addition, some languages display greater variations than others in the way the language is spoken in different regions.

Given this diversity, it is unrealistic to expect that the same set of selection criteria can be applied to every target language under every circumstance. In order to make informed hiring decisions, it is useful to separate the translators' and reviewers' qualifications into two categories: required and desirable.

Table 1 lists the required qualifications for translators and reviewers of CAHPS surveys. Ideally, to qualify as a translator or as a translation reviewer, a candidate *should* have each and every one of the qualifications listed. Notice that the set of required qualifications for translators is different from the one for reviewers.

Table 1.   Required Qualifications

Required Qualifications for Translators	Required Qualifications for Reviewers
• Native speaker of the target language • Proficient in reading in the source language • Demonstrated strong writing skills in the target language • Work experience in the target language • Prior professional experience translating and/or developing survey instruments for health services or social sciences	• Native speaker of the target language • Proficient in reading in the source language • Proficient in writing in the source language • Demonstrated strong writing skills in the target language • College degree or higher • Prior work experience in the health services area or participation in health services or social science research projects • Prior work experience in translation projects

Some qualifications for translators and translation reviewers are not critical to selecting a candidate but can contribute to ensuring a better translation. Desirable qualifications such as the following can be helpful in making informed decisions in cases in which there are several candidates for the same position:

- Highest educational degree obtained in the target language

- At least five years living in the U.S. as an adult

- Familiarity with the U.S. health system

- Professional/technical degree in a health-related discipline or experience in the health field

- Professional work experience in the country of the target language

- Prior professional experience as a translator in any substantive area, preferably health-related

- Familiarity with regional variations in usage of the target language in the U.S.

- Certified as a professional translator

Project staff should use their discretion to decide the relevancy of the particular qualifications to be met by a given candidate.

Appendix B: Sample Master Table

#	English	Spanish Translation 1	Spanish Translation 2	Reconciled Version	Comments	Final Survey Translation
1.	In the last 3 months, did you try to get information or help from your prescription drug plan's customer service?	En los últimos 3 meses, ¿trató de obtener información o ayuda de atención al cliente de su plan de medicinas recetadas?	En los últimos 3 meses,¿trató de obtener información o ayuda de parte del servicio de atención al cliente de su plan de medicamentos recetados?	En los últimos 3 meses,¿trató de obtener información o ayuda del servicio de atención al cliente de su plan de medicinas recetadas?	Use "medicinas" instead of "medicamentos". Easier to understand.	En los últimos 3 meses,¿trató de obtener información o ayuda del servicio de atención al cliente de su plan de medicinas recetadas?
2.	Since you joined your drug plan, how often did your drug plan's customer service give you the information or help you needed?	Desde que se afilió a su plan de medicinas, ¿con qué frecuencia atención al cliente de su plan de medicinas le dio la información o ayuda que necesitaba?	Desde que se afilió a su plan de medicamentos, ¿con qué frecuencia el servicio de atención al cliente del plan le dio la información o la ayuda que usted necesitaba?	Desde que se inscribió en su plan de medicinas, ¿con qué frecuencia el servicio de atención al cliente del plan le dio la información o ayuda que necesitaba?	Check with English team re: use of word "your".	Desde que se inscribió en su plan de medicinas, ¿con qué frecuencia el servicio de atención al cliente del plan le dio la información o ayuda que necesitaba?
3.	Since you joined your drug plan, how often did your drug plan's customer service treat you with courtesy and respect?	Desde de se afilió a su plan de medicinas, ¿con qué frecuencia atención al cliente de su plan de medicinas le trató con cortesía y respeto?	Desde que se afilió al plan de medicamentos, ¿con qué frecuencia el servicio de atención al cliente del plan lo trató con cortesía y respeto?	Desde que se inscribió a su plan de medicinas, ¿con qué frecuencia el servicio de atención al cliente de su plan le trató con cortesía y respeto?	Use "inscribió" instead of "afilió". More commonly used term, easier to understand.	Desde que se inscribió a su plan de medicinas, ¿con qué frecuencia el servicio de atención al cliente de su plan le trató con cortesía y respeto?

#	English	Spanish Translation 1	Spanish Translation 2	Reconciled Version	Comments	Final Survey Translation
4.	In the last 3 months, did you look for information from your drug plan about which prescription medicines were covered?	En los últimos 3 meses, ¿pidió a su plan de medicinas información sobre cuáles medicinas recetadas estaban cubiertas?	En los últimos 3 meses, ¿buscó en su plan de medicamentos información sobre los medicamentos de venta con receta que estaban incluidos?	En los últimos 3 meses, ¿buscó en su plan de medicinas información sobre las medicinas recetadas que estaban cubiertas?	Use "cubiertas" instead of incluidas. In cog testing, probe for meaning of "cubiertas" & if easier to understand than incluidas.	En los últimos 3 meses, ¿buscó en su plan de medicinas información sobre las medicinas recetadas que estaban cubiertas?