Selecting and Recruiting Translators for Survey Translation Teams

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History of this talk

- We use team or committee approach
- We have organized teams for translation into:
  - Spanish
  - Russian
  - Polish
  - Korean
  - Vietnamese
  - Chinese
  - Tagalog
  - Haitian Kreyol
  - Portuguese
History of this talk (cont.)

- Same Spanish team for the last 8 years
- In late 2014 we lost a member of team and needed to replace
- This let do reflecting again on the process and think about presenting it here
Overview

- What is team translation
- The translator’s task
- How to put together a team
- Skills/Qualifications desired in team members
- Differences in local resources
- Screening/Testing translators
- Briefing team/Managing team
Team or Committee Translation

- Implementation of TRAPD Model
- Translation method used by ESS – parallel committee
- We use a variation – the split committee or modified committee approach
- Team consists of three translators plus adjudicator (survey methodologist)
- Translators are native speakers of major regional variations of Spanish represented in the US
Translators’ Job

Translators make decisions about:

- Semantics (meaning)
- Syntax (structure)
- Pragmatics (language use)

They need to understand:

- Intended “meaning” in order to translate
- Covert (measurement) intention and requirements
The Translation Process

- We can start with Tourangeau et al (2000) model for cognitive processing of questions:
  1. Interpretation of the question,
  2. Retrieval from memory,
  3. Formation of a judgment (by integration of the information retrieved), and
  4. Mapping the judgment onto pre-coded response options

- Or even reduce it to two as Holleman (2000):
  1. Comprehension and retrieval (or attitude formation),
  2. Answering stage of translating the judgment into the response options.
The Translation Process (cont.)

- Translators go through similar steps
  1. They must **interpret** the intended meaning of the question
  2. They must **retrieve** a first approximation to the concept in the target language
  3. They must **consider**/review their first approximation before committing to it
  4. They must **review for fit** in the target language/culture
Questions to Answer to Put a Team Together

- How to recruit translators?
- Where to look?/Who to ask?
- Who will be the audience for the translations?
- Qualifications sought
  - What kind of bilingual skills are needed?
  - How much do credentials matter?
  - What kind of experience is needed?
Screening Candidates

- Call for applicants including job description
- Differences in US vs. Europe
- Candidate selection process
  - Looking at cv’s
  - IDEAL PROFILE
  - Interviewing candidates
Interview and Testing

- Personal interview
  - Translation experience and cultural competence

- Testing candidates
  - Identification of difficulties in text
  - Problem solving style
  - Resourcefulness: what tools they would use
  - Ability to articulate problems and choices
  - Sensitivity to scale issues

- "Thick skin" test
  - How do they take feedback
Briefing New Translators

- What is expected
- How to work alone/How to work together
- Proper use of dictionaries
- Use of online tools
- Thinking about target population
- Purpose and etiquette of team meeting
Elements of a Successful Team Session

- Getting everyone to voice opinions
- Constructive vs. destructive feedback
- Staying focused on common goal
- (Representing one’s dialect/regional variation)
Translators in Developing World

- Written vs non written languages
- In the absence of trained or experienced translators...
- Who make best possible team candidates

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THANK YOU!

Questions?? Comments??