CULTURAL VALIDATION AND TRANSLATION REVIEW TOOLKIT

Toolkit: Developing Culturally Responsive and Linguistically Accurate Materials

INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE

CORE
Cultural Orientation Resource Exchange

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What is Cultural Validation and Translation Review?

CULTURAL VALIDATION

Cultural Validation is the process of bilingual, bi-cultural community members reviewing and providing feedback on content prior to translation, to make sure materials have the best possible framing and approach for the intended audience. Materials can include print, audio, video, web content, imagery, graphics, and more. Cultural Validators can:

• Flag material that may be culturally misaligned or misunderstood.
• Suggest words/phrases/images that better capture cultural and linguistic nuances and semantics, making materials more culturally resonant.
• Ensure that materials are flexible and address the subject matter in a way that is best understood by the affected community, and/or meets the needs of multiple communities and language groups, depending on the intended audience.

TRANSLATION REVIEW

Translation Review is a process where a trained translator reviews a professionally translated document to ensure that the translation is accurate, understandable, and remains culturally appropriate. At times, the Cultural Validator and Translation Reviewer could be the same person. While there are rules of grammar and syntax to abide by, language can be subjective and thus translators may have differing opinions about the appropriateness and necessity of phrasing and terminology. Therefore, Translation Reviewers should receive training on the scope of their role and how to substantiate suggested changes to the original translation. Translation Reviewers should focus on identifying:

• Translated words or phrases that are incorrect and obscure or change the intended meaning.
• Missing words or phrases.
• Outdated terms and expressions.
• Words or phrases that could be considered offensive or stigmatizing.
• Translations that are misaligned with the stated linguistic and cultural context (the purpose the text is serving and who it is meant for).
• Translations that may be using a different dialect, tone, or literacy level than what is intended.

Why Should You Use Cultural Validation and Translation Review?

Research in Translation Studies shows that translations need to not only have source and target language competency, but there needs to be considerable knowledge of the source and target cultures (Eyckmans 2017: 1). Cultural Validation and Translation Review help ensure:

- **Relevance.** Materials informed by the community are likely to have greater impact.
- **Accuracy.** Translations that are reviewed are more likely to have an accurate end product.
- **Acceptance.** Accurate and relevant materials help increase trust between the recipient and resource provider.

When Should You Use Cultural Validation and Translation Review?

Cultural Validation should be used when you are developing materials that are designed to motivate or influence an audience, or if the material is of a sensitive nature. It should not be used on legal, medical, or other materials where the intended meaning must be precisely as intended. Cultural Validation may also not be needed for materials that are short and simple or that need to be quickly developed and released.

EXAMPLES:

USE Cultural Validation	DO NOT USE Cultural Validation
Flyer to encourage women to have an annual medical exam	Contracts and agreements
Brochure on Covid-19 vaccination facts and myths	Checklist for what is required to adjust one's status
Social media campaign about early childhood development	Notice about a common community product that contains lead
Curriculum or workshop activities on raising your children in a new country	Winter weather warning

Translation Review should be used whenever possible to ensure accuracy of a professional translation. It is especially important to use Translation Review when:

- Documents are of a sensitive, important or complex nature
- Materials are meant to be 'evergreen' or long-lasting
- You are working with a new translator or translation company

Short, simple and time-limited messages may not need Translation Review when the original translation is done by previously vetted and trusted professional translators.

Who Can Provide Cultural Validation and Translation Review?

There are no clear or accepted industry standards or certifications on who can provide Cultural Validation and Translation Review; however, the following is recommended:

CULTURAL VALIDATORS

If the material is sensitive, long-lasting, and has a high chance of being repeatedly interpreted, it is best to utilize several Cultural Validators to ensure that different groups within a community have an opportunity to voice their opinion and, ideally, reach a consensus. Cultural Validators should be bilingual (fluent in English) and share characteristics with the intended audience community (i.e., dialect, live in same/similar communities, gender, etc.). Ideally, the Cultural Validator understands the context between both the client's origin and the resettlement community. All Cultural Validators should be educated about the intended goal of the material and audience so that they can provide appropriate feedback. If one is seeking feedback remotely, it is critical to use Cultural Validators who have basic digital literacy and have access to a computer, understand how to use it, can use Word and PDF files, deploy track changes, add comments and use email (send attachments, etc.)

TRANSLATION REVIEWERS

Translation Reviewers should be trained translators who share key characteristics with the intended audience. For example, using an Arabic translator from Iraq or a country within the Levant region if the intended audience is people from Iraq who speak Arabic. Because context and time change language, it is best to use a translator who currently lives in the same country as the intended audience. If using the example above, an Arabic translator from Iraq who lives in the U.S. is best suited if the intended audience also lives in the U.S. Translation Reviewers should be oriented to the unique role that their review plays and how it is different from translation itself. Translation Reviewers should receive specific instructions related to the goal of the materials, who is the intended audience, and what is the desired tone. Translation Reviewers need to have strong digital literacy skills and be able to provide feedback in both English and the intended language, open and provide comments on Word and PDF documents, use email attachments, and maintain version control through shared platforms like Box or DropBox.

Places of Recruitment for Qualified Cultural Validators and Translation Reviewers
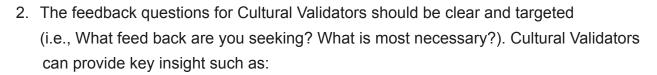
- Your agency may have trained interpreters, translators or people who are suited to be Cultural Validators or Translation Reviewers. If so, be sure that these staff members have adequate time to devote to these tasks and are fairly compensated for their time, effort and expertise. If Cultural Validation is being done through key informant interviews or focus groups, participant incentives should be offered.

- Other possible locations of recruitment for qualified individuals include but are not limited to:
  o University Language Departments
  o Reputable freelancing platforms
  o The American Translators Association's Directory
  o Targeted search online for local communities in the US for respective languages
  o Targeted search for community groups on communication/social platforms (LinkedIn, Slack groups, professional networking groups)
  o Contracts with professional, certified native language translator platforms
  o Contacting your organization's field offices (if applicable) that have resettled refugees speaking those languages

How to Facilitate Cultural Validation

Cultural Validation can be done individually or in focus groups depending on time, level of sensitivity of the material, and how long-lasting the material is expected to be. For example, a flyer for an upcoming community health event may just need one person for Cultural Validation; developing a curriculum may need several people who provide ongoing support; and a campaign to encourage vaccination may require one or more community focus groups. Things to keep in mind:

1. Cultural Validators should be oriented to the:
   o Purpose of the materials
   o Intended audience
   o Tone (friendly, formal, informative, etc.)
   o Inclusivity of various literacy levels, gender, etc., as applicable
   o Potential messaging urgency
   o Additional context to keep in mind. For example, Cultural Validators may be directed to consider certain subject matter as sensitive and to provide feedback on how this topic maybe best understood and accepted by the intended audience. This is called "language massaging" (Chu, Joyce, Leino, Amy 2017: 50).

2. The feedback questions for Cultural Validators should be clear and targeted (i.e., What feed back are you seeking? What is most necessary?). Cultural Validators can provide key insight such as:

    o   What is important to highlight?
    o   What are the most pressing concerns?
    o   What type of multimedia formats resonate most with clients i.e. text/print, video, audio, etc.?
    o   Are certain formats more accessible for communities?

3. Cultural Validators and Translation Reviewers should be instructed how to incorporate agreed-upon changes into the document. Document management and reconciliation are important to version control and for producing a final copy.

Sample Cultural Validation and Translation Review forms can be found [here](#).

> **Because Cultural Validation requires time and draws upon the expertise of an individual or community, the work should be compensated. Additional salary or participant incentives should be included in budgets.**

How to Facilitate Translation Review

SETTING UP FOR SUCCESS –THE ORIGINAL TRANSLATION

1. It is critical to set the initial translation up for success so that ideally the Translation Review has very little feedback or suggested changes. This can be achieved by using a Translation Instruction Form such as this [form](#) that contains clear and specific directions for the translator. Ideally, your agency has a roster of contracted, vetted and trusted professional translators that also indicates any special area of expertise (i.e., immigration, medical, etc.).

2. It is important to note that many translation companies are willing to format the translated document so that it matches the original document. To do this, they will need the original source document whether that be in InDesign, Word, Publisher, etc.

3. For languages that do not use the Latin alphabet, such as **Arabic, Burmese, Russian,** etc., it is critical to make sure all parties involved in the translation process are using the same font, as different fonts may not render properly on all platforms. For example, the Burmese alphabet can be represented through the *Myanmar Text* font, the *Zawgyi-One* font, and the *Pyidaungsu* font. Reviewers have indicated that many people use the *"Zawgyi"* font while several translation companies use the *"Pyiadaungsu"* font. Therefore, it is essential to confirm that the translated text is being displayed properly before graphic design and online platform implementation.

4. Provide all necessary information and documents early on to get a quote, with enough money budgeted for both professional translation and Translation Review. Be mindful that some languages are more expensive than others, with factors to keep in mind such as:

   o High Demand, Low Availability
   o Technical = more expensive
   o Additional services like voiceover recordings or formatting will incur additional cost

TRANSLATION REVIEW

1. Once the translation is returned, use something like the sample Cultural Validation and Translation Review Form here to align your reviewer and the original translator. Remember: It is critical that your Translation Reviewer understands their specific scope and role and how it is different than the actual translation.

2. Translation Reviewers should also be oriented to the purpose of the materials, including:

   o Intended audience
   o Tone (friendly, formal, etc.)
   o Inclusivity of various literacy levels, gender, etc., as applicable
   o Potential messaging urgency
   o Additional context to keep in mind. For example, Translation Reviewers may be directed that certain subject matter is sensitive and to provide feedback on how this topic may be best understood and accepted by the intended audience. This is called "language massaging" (Chu, Joyce, Leino, Amy 2017: 50).

3. Because Translation Review requires time and draws upon the expertise of an individual or community, it should always be fairly compensated.

4. Cultural Validators and Translation Reviewers should be instructed how to incorporate agreed-upon changes into the document. Document management and reconciliation are essential to version control and for producing a final copy.

Overall Tips to Successful Cultural Validation and Translation Review

1. Ideally, you have several people in each language who can provide Cultural Validation and/or Translation Review. This person(s) may be needed if you also require a third reviewer (for example a disagreement between the translator and Translation Reviewer where you need a third person's perspective).

2. Always be clear with reviewers on turnaround time from initial conversations.

3. Establish with the reviewer the best way to communicate and how quickly they respond.

4. Always be clear on the amount and type of feedback needed. Include examples as needed. For example, don't say "this word added would better serve the community," instead say "this word added would better serve the community *because it references the equivalent type of event in Somalia.*"

5. Timelines should include turnaround time for translation quotes, review, and possible correction of materials.

6. Let the translation agency know you use a Translation Review process that may require additional corrections on their end.

7. Ask the translation agency what formats they most commonly use (Word vs PDF), and if they do desktop publishing to match original formatting.

8. Have a spreadsheet that documents the process and/or a project management tool to keep track of document versions. Make sure things are clearly labeled and organized on a system like Box, DropBox or Google Drive. This helps ensure that if there is ever a disagreement about a translation,you can track all changes and file versions.

APPENDIX

FORMS:

1. [Cultural Validation and Translation Review Form](#)

2. [Translation Request Form](#)

BEST STRATEGY DOCUMENTS:

1. [Dos and Don'ts of Cultural Validation and Translation Review](#)

CV AND TR EXAMPLES:

1. [Examples of Cultural Validation and Translation Review Feedback](#)

GLOSSARIES:

1. [CORE Cultural Orientation Glossaries for Interpreters](#)