

Obstacles to the Development of Universal Spanish Translations of PRO Instruments

Gil Campos I¹, Salmassi L¹, Acquadro C²

¹Mapi, Lyon, France; ²Mapi Research Trust, Lyon, France

Aims

■ Exactly what is "Universal/Neutral Spanish"?

Neutral Spanish, commonly referred to as Standard Spanish, Global Spanish or Universal Spanish, is a variation of the Spanish language used to allow the greatest number of Spanish speakers around the world to understand the message without the use of local terminology and local language specificities (e.g., certain verb tenses, idioms, etc). It is a term created in the USA with the intention to accommodate every speaker of Spanish. Like with the word "popcorn", the Spanish translator has to decide among all of the choices which is the most commonly used word for those living in the USA. According to Guillermo Cabanellas de las Cuevas, in his article, *Neutral Spanish: Is it Necessary? Does it Exist?* [1], finding words without local flavor is not always possible.

■ However, in spite of the reluctance of some Spanish speakers, there is a trend in the patient-reported outcome (PRO) field towards the development of universal (or neutral) Spanish translations of instruments [2] that would:

1. Be acceptable inside and outside the USA;
2. Enable cross-cultural comparisons, and
3. Reduce the costs involved in the development of multiple versions.

■ The objective of this study is to identify what the obstacles towards the approach of universal Spanish translation in the field of PRO instruments would be.

* "crispetas" (Columbia), "palomitas" (Central America/Spain), "pochocio" (Argentina/Uruguay), and "cabritas de maiz" (Chile).

References

1. Cabanellas de las Cuevas G. Neutral Spanish: Is it Necessary? Does it Exist? Proteus Newsletter 2003, Volume XII, No. 4. and the characteristics of the target countries.
2. Debb SM, Arnold B, Perez B, Cella D. Validation of the FACT-Gastric cancer quality of life questionnaire for use in Spanish-speaking countries. *Psychooncology*. 2011;20(1):19-27.

Methods

■ We reviewed projects, performed by Mapi in the last five years, involving the development of Spanish versions of questionnaires for use in the USA, Spain, and Latin America.

Table 1. List of questionnaires retrieved and reviewed

Name of Instrument	Countries
ADHD Rating Scale-IV: Home Version	Argentina, Spain, USA
Alzheimer's Disease Cooperative Study-Activities of Daily Living Inventory - Severe Impairment (ADCS-ADLsev),	Argentina, Chile, Spain, USA
Changes in Sexual Function Questionnaire (CSFQ)	Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Spain, USA
Child Depression Inventory (CDI) Short Version	Argentina, Spain, USA
Children's Yale-Brown Obsessive Compulsive Scale (CY-BOCS)	Argentina, Spain, USA
Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS)	Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Spain, USA
HIV Patient symptoms Profile	Argentina, Mexico, Spain, USA
Modified Cataplexy Questionnaire	Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, Spain, USA
Multidimensional Anxiety Scale for Children (MASC)	Argentina, Spain, USA
Neuropsychiatric Inventory (NPI-12):	Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Spain, USA
Patient Assessment of Pain at Night (PAPN) past night	Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, Spain, USA
PedsQOL Teen form (13-18)	Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Peru, Spain, USA
Problem Areas in Diabetes (PAID) Questionnaire (child version)	Argentina, Spain, USA
Resource Utilization in Dementia – Lite (RUD-Lite)	Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Spain, USA
Severe Impairment Battery (SIB)	Argentina, Chile, Spain, USA
The Alzheimer's Disease Assessment Scale - Cognitive Subscale (List 1)	Chile, Colombia, Spain, USA
Tyrer Withdrawal Questionnaire	Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, Spain, USA
Work Productivity and Activity Impairment Questionnaire: Rheumatoid arthritis (WPAI-RA)	Argentina, Mexico, Spain, USA
Yale Global Tic Severity Scale (YGTSS)	Argentina, Spain, USA

Results

■ The search was not limited to PRO measures, but extended to clinician-reported outcomes (ClinRO) and observer-reported outcome (ObsRO) measures. Therefore, nineteen questionnaires were retrieved and reviewed (see Table 1).

■ The review retrieved two major barriers towards the establishment of a universal Spanish version, which are linked to:

- (1) The structure of the original instrument (e.g., grammar, use of idiomaticisms);
 - (2) The target countries (e.g., cultural context, use of idiomaticisms, or geographical/climate issues).
- In many cases, these two reasons may overlap.

■ Examples of Issue 1:

- It was impossible to create a generic Spanish version for use in Argentina and Spain for pediatric questionnaires using the second-person singular (you), mainly because of one feature of the Argentine speaking style, i.e., the *voseo*. The *voseo* is the usage of the pronoun *vos* for the second-person singular, instead of *tú* used in the rest of the Spanish speaking countries.

For instance, in the Problem Areas in Diabetes (PAID), two sentences from the instructions and five items (items 3, 6, 10, 11, and 13) use the *voseo* in the Argentinean Spanish version of the PAID child version, while the classic *tú* is used in the Spanish version for Spain. The same issue arose for the instructions of the Multidimensional Anxiety Scale for Children (MASC) intended to be used with children aged 6-17 years (e.g., *Si una oración no es verdad sobre vos, marcá el 0*).

- In the Spanish versions of the PedsQL™ 4.0 Generic Core Scale, the idiomatic expression "*It is hard for me,*" translated by "*Se me hace difícil*" in the US Spanish version, was translated in all corresponding items by "*Me cuesta*" (literally "*It costs me*") in Spain, Argentina, and Chile. Patients did not feel at all comfortable with the Spanish US idiomatic expression.

■ Examples of issue 2:

- The word "*box*" used in the instructions of questionnaires such as the ADHD or the CDI is never translated as "*casilla*" in Argentinean Spanish but as "*casillero*."

- . US Original ADHD: Place the number **in the box** that best describes your child's behavior over the past 6 months.
- . Argentinean version ADHD: Escriba **en el casillero** el número que mejor describa el comportamiento del niño/a durante los últimos 6 meses.
- . Spanish version ADHD: Escriba **en la casilla** el número que mejor describa el comportamiento del/de la niño/a durante los últimos 6 meses.

- The expression "*on sick days*" in the WPAI-RA was not translated in Spanish for Spain by "*por días de enfermedad*" as it was in Spanish for Argentina, Mexico and the USA, but by "*por días de baja*," since patients considered that the expression used in other countries was not idiomatic for Spain.

- The expression "*I want you to answer some questions for me*" used at the beginning of the SIB is translated differently in Argentina, Chile, Spain and the USA mainly because of the use of idiomatic expressions in the target countries. Argentinean Spanish uses a very polite way for translating "*I want*" (i.e., "*Quisiera*"). Here the use of the imperfect subjunctive of the verb "*querer*" makes the request to seem a little less brash. While, in US Spanish, a literal translation was used (i.e., "*Quiero*"), in Spain and in Chile, the expression "*Me gustaría*" (literally "*I would like to*") was preferred.

- On a more anecdotal way, the F*** word used in the response scale entitled "Marked" in the Complexity* domain of the YTRSS was translated differently in Spanish for Spain and in Spanish for Argentina, mainly for idiomatic reasons (use of different cuss or swear words).

*Some tics are very "complex" in character and tend to occur in sustained orchestrated bouts that would be difficult to camouflage and could not be easily rationalized as normal behavior or speech because of their duration and/or their unusual, inappropriate, bizarre or obscene character (a lengthy facial contortion, touching genitals, echolalia, speech atypicalities, longer bouts of saying "what do you mean" repeatedly, or saying "fu" or "sh").

Conclusion

■ A review of the Spanish versions of questionnaires for use in the USA, Spain, and Latin America has shown that the development of a universal Spanish translation is not always possible and depends on the structure of the original questionnaire and the characteristics of the target countries and the target populations.

For more information, please contact:
Irene Gil-Campos, igilcampos@mapigroup.com,
www.mapigroup.com

Mapi

ISOQOL 20th Annual Conference – October 2013