

Guidelines for Translating and Adapting DEC Materials

DEC International Committee

The Division for Early Childhood (DEC) is an international membership organization for those who work with or on behalf of young children (0-8) with disabilities and other special needs and their families. DEC promotes policies and advances evidence-based practices that support families and enhance the optimal development of young children who have or are at risk for developmental delays and disabilities. DEC has developed numerous practical and useful resources that aims to support a wide variety of audience groups (e.g., families, practitioners, administrators, and researchers) and welcomes interest in translating and adapting DEC materials (e.g., position statements, Recommended Practices) in other languages so that the resources can be used across cultures. Nonetheless, translation and adaptation of DEC materials requires careful planning and review. The following guidelines entail both cultural and linguistic considerations, outline the translating and adapting process and explain each step in detail.

The Translation Process

The aim of this process is to affirm that different language versions of the DEC's materials are conceptually equivalent in each of the target countries/cultures. That is, the document should be equally natural and acceptable in that language and should practically perform in the similar intent for the target culture. The focus is on ensuring the core concepts (e.g., cultural and conceptual connotation) are addressed, with considerations of the unique cultures, rather than on linguistic/literal equivalence. A well-established method to achieve this goal is to use forward-translations and back-translations. Implementation of this method

includes the following steps: 1. Forward translation; 2. Expert panel; 3. Back-translation; 4. Pre-testing and cognitive interviewing; 5. Final version; 6. Documentation; and 7. Rights.

When a group is interested in translating and adapting DEC materials, the group should have a designated editor-in-chief to serve as the point of contact for any communications between the group and DEC Executive Office (EO) during the process.

1. Forward translation

A translation team, preferably a person or a group of people who is familiar with terminology of the area covered by the original text/document (e.g., an early childhood intervention (ECI) practitioner, a researcher, or a faculty member) and is fluent with the original and translated languages, should be given this initial task. The translator should be fluent/highly proficient in English and knowledgeable of the English-speaking culture (indicate American or British English), and their primary language should be the language of the target culture. Steps and instructions should be given in the approach to translating, emphasizing conceptual rather than literal translations, as well as the need to use natural, acceptable, jargon-free, and family-friendly language for the broadest audience.

The following general guidelines should be considered in this process:

- a. Translators should always aim at the conceptual equivalent of a word or phrase, not a word-for-word translation, i.e. not a literal translation. They should consider the definition of the original term and attempt to translate it in the most relevant way.
 - a. If there is no certain term of concept in a culture, the translator should consult and discuss this issue with original authors and local experts to identify a conceptually equivalent alternative.

- b. Translators should strive to be simple, clear and concise in formulating a question or statement. Fewer words are better. Long sentences with many clauses should be avoided.
- c. The target language should aim for the most common audience. Translators should consider the typical reader/recipient for the text/document being translated and what the respondent will understand when they read/review the text/document.
- d. Translators should avoid the use of any jargon. For example, they should not use: technical terms that cannot be understood clearly; and colloquialism, idioms or vernacular terms that cannot be understood by common people in everyday life. If it is unavoidable, translators may provide a glossary in addition to the document. This can be available at the end of the document.
- e. Translators should consider issues of gender and age applicability and avoid any terms that might be considered offensive to the target population.

2. Expert panel

A bilingual (in English and the target language for translation) content expert panel should be convened by the designated editor-in-chief. The number of individuals as well as their basic characteristics should be described, as appropriate when summarizing the translation process. The goal in this step is to identify and resolve the inadequate expressions/concepts of the translation, as well as any discrepancies between the forward translation and the existing or comparable previous versions of the questions, if any. The expert panel may question some words or expressions and suggest alternatives. Experts should be given any materials (e.g., most recently available publications in the field in the targeted language) that can help them to be consistent with previous translations. The number of experts in the panel may vary. In general, the panel should include the original translator,

experts in ECI, as well as experts with experience in ECI literature in both countries. Depending on the audience, experts may include preservice ECI candidates, caregivers, parents, other stakeholders as well. In case of the absence of ECI practitioners in a given culture/country, professionals who are working with children who have disabilities and their families should be invited in that culture.

3. Back-translation

Using the same approach as that outlined in the first step, the text/document will then be translated back to English by an independent translator who is bilingual in the original and the target language (a native speaker of English, who is also fluent in the target language). The independent translator should either have familiarity with ECI terminology, or should be given with any relevant materials to support the back translation. As in the initial translation, emphasis in the back-translation should be on conceptual and cultural equivalence and not linguistic equivalence. The original and back-translated versions can then be compared to identify differences, which are then resolved. Discrepancies should be addressed through as many iterations as needed until a satisfactory version is reached. Particularly problematic words or phrases that do not completely capture the concept addressed by the original item/word/phrase should be brought to the attention of expert panel.

4. Pre-testing/Pilot

The prepared document should pre-test/piloted with the target population. This information is best accomplished by in-depth personal interviews, focus groups, and/or questionnaire. The number of individuals as well as their basic characteristics should be described, as appropriate when reporting the translation process.

- a. Pre-test respondents should include individuals who are representative of those who will be using the translated material.

- b. They should represent a diverse population in terms of age, gender, experience in the field, workplace, public vs private ECI agencies, families, socio-economic status, geographic location, education, etc.
 - a. For instance, besides pilot testing the translated document with pre-service ECI providers from the same higher education institute, pilot it with those in other high education institutes. Similarly, in addition to pilot testing with practitioners from the same agency, identify practitioners from other agencies for testing.
 - b. Pre-test respondents should review the text/document. Then, they should be debriefed on what they thought the text/document was asking, whether they could repeat the sections/phrases in their own words, and what came to their mind when they read a particular section/phase on a questionnaire attached to the text/document or during interviews or focus group.
 - i. Respondents should also be asked about any word they did not understand as well as any word or expression that they found unacceptable or offensive.
 - c. Finally, when alternative words or expressions exist for one item or expression, the pre-test respondent should be asked to choose which of the alternatives conforms better to their primary language.

5. Final version

The final version of the text/document in the target language should be the result of all the iterations described above. It is important that an ID with dates be given to each version, such as, Translation02_MM/DD/YY.

6. Documentation

All the translation/adaptation procedures should be traceable through the appropriate documents. A summary of the procedure should be submitted to DEC EO. These include, at the least:

- a. initial forward version;
- b. a summary of recommendations by the expert panel;
- c. the back-translation;
- d. a summary of strengths as well as problems found during the pre-testing of the text/document and the modifications proposed; and
- e. the final version.

7. Rights

DEC retains all rights to translated works and requires an original version of the translated product. We will grant your organization, at no cost, the right to use the translated product for all non-profit purposes in perpetuity, but not to authorize its redistribution or sell access to it. Translated version will include a disclosure in English and the targeted language at the bottom of the document.