

# Developing the Translation Brief: Why & How

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## Purpose:

Producing translated materials that are useful to (limited English proficiency) LEP patients requires a detailed understanding of both the environment in which texts are used and the industry culture embedded in the way health information is conveyed. This guide provides step-by-step instructions for developing a translation brief, which is designed to orient translators to a source text and provide them with project specifications and established quality criteria to assess the resulting translation product.



Translations in health care settings often fall short in conveying the full intended meaning of the original English (source) text.

**NEED:** Health care materials available in the languages spoken by patients are not only legally required by Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and many state laws, but they are also considered essential for safe and high-quality health care. Aside from translator skill, translation quality is dependent on the requester, who must be willing to partner with translators and understand that translation is more than replacing English words with equivalent target language words. Requesters can improve translation quality by learning to prepare translation briefs.

This tool, as part of the *Hablamos Juntos More Than Words Toolkit Series*, builds upon the available literature and our research on translation quality to help requesters prepare instructions to guide the work of translators. This framework suggests that the aim of translations should be the creation of texts that target language readers can understand and act upon in the same way the source audience responds to the source text (Nida, 1964; Carroll, 1966; Taber, 1969). This means treating source texts as linguistic units that are more than the mere words on a page; how they are used and the context in which they are used help convey intended meaning. Source texts also convey meaning through culturally-bound references and writing conventions aligned with source-reader knowledge and expectations; a fundamental reason creating

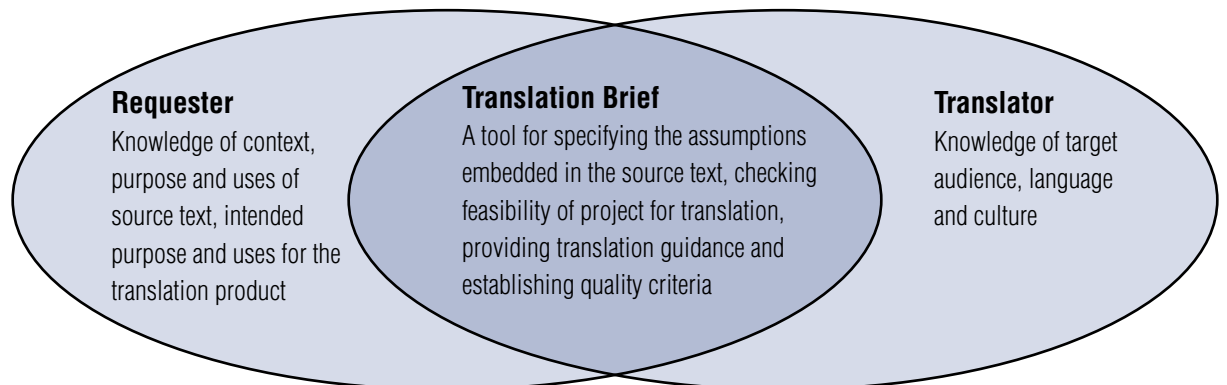
word-for-word equivalent text in two languages is difficult to achieve. The translation brief enables requesters to permit translators to create target language content that approximates the intended meaning of an original text in a way that target language readers can understand and use.



### Translation: A Shared Responsibility

#### *Introducing the Translation Brief: A Practical Tool for Improving Translations*

The translation brief, also referred to as *translation instructions* (Nord, 1991b), is a set of instructions prepared by a requester that accompanies a translation assignment, thus enabling the requester to convey information about the source text, the specific communicative purpose and context in which the text is used, the intended uses of the translation and what it aims to accomplish. In short, it enables the requester and translator to be, quite literally, on the same page from start to finish.



## How to Use This Tool:

### Section 1: Why Develop a Translation Brief

Start by reading Section 1, which summarizes the core reasons for creating a translation brief and how it is used.

### Section 2: How to Develop a Translation Brief

Next, examine the step-by-step instructions and examples in Section 2 to understand how one should develop a translation brief. This covers every step in the process: a) gathering information about how a source text is used and its overall purpose; b) identifying poor-quality source texts, which make poor starting points for translations; c) comparing and contrasting the source content with the proposed target text to understand the implications for recreating it for a target audience and d) producing a set of instructions to guide the translator. This process includes learning about various *text types*, each of which may require special consideration, identifying source culture bias that will need to be replaced with target culture conventions, and identifying translation challenges that will need to be overcome (including production challenges).

### Section 3: Translation Brief Worksheets

Finally, print the translation brief worksheets included in this tool to review a project with the translator or use these form to get some practice writing clear instructions.

## Section 1: *Why Develop a Translation Brief*

### The Translation Brief: A Tool to Guide Translator Decisions, Thereby Improving Translation Products and Communication Quality

The demand for health information is rising, in part because consumers are taking a more active role in their health care. Written information available in English can be a valuable communication tool for teaching and reinforcing verbal messages given as part of hospital stays or health care visits, for explaining health coverage options and benefits, or more generally, for promoting health care education. Then again, they are useful only if the patient is able to read and understand them. Otherwise, they are a waste of resources (Mumford, 1997).

Unlike the business sector, which frequently turns to translations as a way to enter new markets, health care organizations are motivated by federal, state and industry mandates to translate all vital health care materials. As such, most health translation projects begin with the basic goal of creating an equivalent target language form of existing materials. Generally lacking foreign language proficiency and translation expertise, health care requesters tend to conceptualize translation projects as simply a word-by-word replacement operation and look to bilinguals and interpreters for help. When compliance rather than communication is the driving force, the possibility that a source text (which is designed for an English speaking audience) may not meet the information needs of a target language audience is rarely considered. The typical outcome is texts that are literal translations, where the intended meaning is lost.

“Translators need to take into account the rules of grammar, writing conventions and idioms or forms of expression typical to each language while recreating intended meaning in a source text.”

Herein lies the challenge: every language is a unique set of visual, auditory and tactile symbols of communication, expressing underlying cultural practices, values and beliefs. The conventions and text elements (e.g., title, tone, voice) for each language are dictated by cultural norms associated with the underlying communicative purpose. Translators need to take into account grammar, writing conventions, and idioms or forms of expression that are particular to each language while retaining the intended meaning of the source text. The translation process involves creating a new text in a target language by deciphering the meaning of information found in a source text. The objective is to communicate the same information or “the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, firstly with respect to meaning and secondly with respect to style” (Nida, 1959, p.19).

In reality, creating word-for-word equivalents that a target language reader can understand may not be possible. How ideas are expressed and the writing conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, paragraphing, headings, titles) and linguistic markers used to give readers context or perspective about the text and its intended purpose are governed by the rules of each language. English (U.S.) source-text markers are determined by U.S. culture, traditions and conventions, while target-text markers must be taken from the target culture in order to be meaningful to the readers.

In addition, many health care texts embody nationally-adopted policies, practices and financing models or reflect health care delivery systems unique to a particular locale. Likewise, texts designed to support processes of acquiring health care in the U.S. (e.g., advanced directives, conditions of admissions, health coverage brochures, referral or treatment authorizations) may not have a natural equivalent in many target languages.

Translators can produce native-quality translations, texts that read as if they were originally produced in the target language. But this may require some rewriting of the source content, adapting or restructuring how it is presented or changing cultural references to meet target reader expectations. Translators, in effect, must disaggregate and recompose a source text and create corresponding phrases and content to more effectively convey the information and meaning found in the text. Each step in this process involves decomposing sentences, manipulating the flow of ideas and choosing words and forms of expression that fit a target language.

No longer bound by the source text, an inherent risk with this level of restructuring and rewriting is the potential to create text that departs from the intended meaning of the source text. At the other extreme are translation products that emphasize creating a lexical equivalent of the source text, thus undermining the clarity of the intended message. Within these extremes is a fertile ground for reworking texts to convey intended meaning while only approximating the source text's actual words.

To approximate a source text, translators must make tradeoffs in terms of emphasis, decisions that should not be made in isolation. Such decisions should be subject to requester input and “are not the discretion of the translator” (Nord, 1991b, p. 9). Ideally, translators should have subject matter expertise, highly developed knowledge of both languages involved and writing skills similar to or better than those of the original author. This involves resolving differences at the word level (health care jargon, colloquialisms and other expressions that do not translate literally) and choosing target language words that replicate the intended meaning in the target culture. It also requires setting priorities to guide word/phrase selection and making critical judgments about how best to convey concepts and ideas. In other words, translators need to understand health care content as well as common words that can hold particular meaning or intent within the health care field (e.g., premium, co-payment, outpatient, treatment authorization, limited exam).

A translation brief can help translators produce better-quality translations by clarifying misconceptions that can result from analyzing a text at the word level, as well as describe how sections of the source text are used, its communicative purpose and the desired results (Colina, 2003; Nord, 1997). Even a well-trained translator may fail to re-create intended meaning if he/she does not understand the context in which the source text is used (Nord, C. 1991b). Preparing the translation brief helps the requester (and, by association, the authors or subject experts and their organizations) become aware of key vocabulary, content or language convention issues and graphics that may need to be

replaced. Most importantly, the translation brief provides instructions about priorities for restructuring and recomposing content as well as resolving cultural and language differences. In essence, the translation brief enables requesters to participate in, and make decisions about, how these differences are to be resolved as well as take a greater role in directing and managing translation projects.

The primary purpose in preparing a translation brief before commissioning a translation is to encourage analytic thought about the source text and to prompt an assessment of the suitability of the English original for its intended target reader. Analyzing a source text (including how, when, where and from whom it is received) can help identify assumptions embedded in the source text that may not apply to the target audience. For example, a telephone number referenced in a source text may not be answered by someone who is prepared to answer calls in the target language. Considering the purpose and use of a source text in the world of the target reader can help identify limitations or challenges before a translation is commissioned and resources are expended.

The value of preparing translation briefs increases over time as requesters begin to appreciate how language and culture is embedded in text and develop competencies in analyzing source texts. Commissioning translations, working with translators and learning about linguistic tradeoffs with specific target languages create opportunities to improve communication with these populations. The process of comparing source and target audiences to prepare a translation brief is also an opportunity to consider how well the content meets the informational needs of the target audience.

“Commissioning translations, working with translators and learning about linguistic tradeoffs with specific target languages create opportunities to improve communication with these populations.”



“These steps provide an organized path for thinking your way through each translation project, which should lead to clear specifications for the translator, or in some cases, a rethinking of the project.”

## Section 2: *How to Develop a Translation Brief*

The four steps of creating translation briefs for health care texts are described below. These steps provide an organized means of thinking through each translation project, which should lead to clear specifications for the translator, or in some cases, a complete rethinking of the project. Over time, questions that are relevant to different text types will become clear and some early decisions can become adopted practices that will not need to be examined with each new project. A photocopy-ready form that describes the steps leading to a translation brief is provided at the end.

**STEP 1:** Gather information about the **function, overall purpose and end use** of the source text. Learn about the source text and how it is used by the source audience.

**STEP 2:** Evaluate the quality of the source text to make a **GO / NO-GO decision**. Again, poor quality source texts prevent the production of useful translations.

**STEP 3:** Compare and contrast the relevant aspects of the source and target audiences to identify implications for the target text. Analyze the content of the source text to identify any instances of **source culture bias** that will need to be replaced by target culture conventions, as well as translation challenges that will need to be overcome, including production challenges.

**STEP 4:** Summarize for the translator **specific needs and special requirements**. Work with the translator to classify and prioritize any tradeoffs that need to be made and arrive at an agreement about substituting target language conventions where needed to produce a translation that reads like a native writer produced it.

Using the template provided at least once is highly recommended. Considering the language and cultural issues embedded in a text upfront may save time and money during the production and review phase and will likely improve the overall translation's quality. Developing a compendium, over time, of typical source culture bias common to your source texts will make preparing translation briefs easier. It should also be noted that adapting the translation brief to fit different needs is possible and in fact encouraged. (NOTE: A modifiable form is available at [www.hablamosjuntos.org](http://www.hablamosjuntos.org).)

Note that other tools in this series have been created to illustrate how these general steps in creating a translation brief can be applied to specific text types, like consent forms (*Tool #4*).

## Step 1: Gather Information About the Source Text Function and Overall Purpose

Requesters should begin with the assumption that a translator knows the two relevant languages well but that they may not know the role a particular text plays in the health care experience of the target audience. The translation brief helps translators avoid faulty assumptions from the start by clarifying the purpose and use of the source text as well as the target audience. For the requester, it is a tool that frames the degree to which a translation can depart from the source text to create a translation that target language readers can use and understand. It also gives requesters an opportunity to clarify what content is negotiable and to assess the quality of the source text, an important step that should be taken before making the decision to proceed with any translation project.

When a translation request is first received, the source text should be evaluated on a global level to determine its purpose, how it will be used and the context in which the source audience will encounter the text. In Step 1, the aim is to ask basic questions to clarify the reason a source text was written. The most concrete illustration of this process is below, in a three-column table that can be used to capture the essential elements of a source text.

	Source Text	Target Text
	English	(Insert Language)
<b>Function</b>	What is the intended purpose/use of the text?	
<b>Audience</b>	Who is the recipient of the source text?	
<b>Time of Reception</b>	When and by what means is the source text given to a patient and by whom? Is key information explained?	
<b>Place of Reception</b>	Where does the reader encounter the text? Is the text given to the reader, picked up in the doctor's office etc.?	
<b>Purpose</b>	Why was the source text written? Is there a desired reader response?	



“When a request for translation is first received, the source text should be evaluated on a global level to understand exactly the purpose it serves, how it will be used and the context in which the source audience encounters the text.”

The communicative purpose and function of a text is determined by how a text is used, the context in which it is used and the desired outcome or reader response (Nord, 2001). The way a text is organized may also offer insights to its purpose and use. Using the table above jumpstarts the specifications development process for a translation and orients the translators to the assignment.

Asking basic questions about a source text helps develop a clearer picture about the way a text achieves its communicative purpose. Examine the source text to identify assumptions made about the reader (e.g., reading skill, assumed knowledge). Where and when a text is used and how the recipient encounters the text provides information about how a reader may understand it (Nord, 2001). Consider the context in which the text is used— how the text is introduced to the reader (where, when and by whom) – for insight about intended meaning that a reader may gather from the context.

Later, in Step 3, these basic questions are considered with the target audience in mind. The side-by-side table enables requesters to compare and contrast the source text with the idealized target text to understand the implications of translating the source text for target language audiences. The idea of this table is to draw attention to important details that requesters and translators can use to improve their understanding of an existing text and what a desired text needs to accomplish.

## Step 2: Evaluate the Quality of the Source Text

Before you decide to move ahead with commissioning a translation project, consider the quality of the source text very closely. Determine how well it serves its purpose and how likely its English readers are to find it understandable before translating it into other languages.

### Quality of the Source Text

The quality of a translation is affected by the quality of the source text: poorly-written texts make poor starting points for translations. While this “garbage in, garbage out” reminder may seem obvious, recognizing the flaws of a source text may require close analysis. The upfront evaluation described in Step 1 provides the basis for a decision about the quality of a source text in Step 2. With purpose, audience and context in mind, take a critical look at the source text. In particular, ask the following questions:

- › Is the source text easy to read and understand?
- › Is it accurate and current?

The results of this initial “assessment” will help determine the steps one should take next.

## Make GO / NO-GO Decision



**GO!** If, in your judgment, the answers to the above questions are “yes,” the source text appears suitable for translation. Proceed to Step 3.



**NO-GO. STOP!** If, on the other hand, the answer to either of these questions is “no,” consider alternatives to translating the content, including finding a new source text or developing non-literacy-based alternatives such as pictograms, or audio or video materials. The information gathered in Step 1 may well serve as a basis for a new communication medium. Continuing with a translation that is poorly crafted or when the context is not likely to be easily understood by target readers will likely result in a waste of resources.

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### Quality of the Source Text

**Is the source text easy to read and understand?**

**Is it accurate and current?**

### Step 3: Compare the Source and Target Text Content

The next step seeks to clarify the reason a source text is being translated and to identify key messages and assumptions embedded in the source text that may not translate well into the target language. Comparing the function and context in which existing source text is used with an idealized target text helps raise awareness of similarities and differences between the ways in which each will be used. It also helps identify assumptions about the source text audience to determine whether these same assumptions can be made about the target audience. In short, requesters can compare and contrast requirements for each text to identify similarities and differences that may need to be taken into account during the translation process.

Using the side-by-side table, continue asking basic questions to visualize the planned target text. The idea in preparing this table is to convey important details translators can use to improve their understanding of the existing text and what the desired text needs to accomplish.

	Source Text	Target Text
	English	(Insert Language)
<b>Function</b>	What is the intended purpose/use of the text?	Will the target text be used in the same way?
<b>Audience</b>	Who is the recipient of the source text?	Are the characteristics of the target audience similar or dissimilar to the source audience?
<b>Time of Reception</b>	When and by what means is the source text given to a patient and by whom? Is key information explained?	Will the target text be given in the same way and by whom? Will key information be explained?
<b>Place of Reception</b>	Where does the reader encounter the text? Is the text given to the reader or picked up in the doctor's office etc.?	Will the target audience encounter the text in the same way?
<b>Purpose</b>	Why was the source text written? Is there a desired reader response?	Why is it being translated? Is the desired target reader response the same as for the source audience?

By initially comparing and contrasting the source and target audiences and the assumptions that can be made about each, requesters can begin to identify differences that may arise in terms of how the text is used by the target audience or how a target text can achieve the desired communicative purpose. The wider the differences, the more challenging it will be to create a target text that accomplishes the same communicative purpose.

Throughout this exercise, consider carefully how the communicative purpose of a target text may need to change to be effective with the target audience. Make note of observations or questions to discuss with the translator or translation vendor, as well as potential instructions for defining expectations for the translation project. Working in this manner, requesters can gain expertise over time about common assumptions embedded in source text and develop approaches to better meet the informational needs of their target language patients.

Understanding the most likely venue surrounding the target text's delivery/receipt will help identify process differences and provide the translator with an understanding of the context in which the text will be used. In some cases, the translated text may not be used in the same setting or in the same way as the source text. Take, for example, an English brochure on gastric bypass surgery written for use with a companion video. The translated version of such a brochure would need to consider whether a companion video is also available in the target language. If not, the translation may need to make explicit in the text video content that is implicit in the source text. Another important assumption involves how the text is introduced to the reader. If the source text is accompanied by support staff to answer questions, affirm understanding or demonstrate or reinforce content, the translation will need to factor in whether this kind of support will be available for the target reader.

Understanding the most likely venue surrounding the target text's delivery/receipt will help identify process differences and provide the translator with an understanding of the context in which the text will be used.

**The implications for how differences are resolved from a linguistic sense in the target text are the domain of the translator, but the analysis provided by a Translation Brief enables the requester to determine which of these differences are important with regard to intent and meaning of text and how they should be prioritized.**

Preparing a translation brief can also help requesters understand the contextual factors of both texts, as well as gain a sense of the potential challenges that lay ahead in producing an equivalent or approximate text. The context in which the source text is used, where and when it is used and how the recipient encounters the text also provides information about how a reader may understand it (Nord, 2001). A text received directly from a health care professional may be seen as more directly relevant than one picked up from a display box. The way in which a text is organized may also contribute to how it achieves its purpose and use. English readers may perceive text format or design a certain way that may not be shared by target language audiences. Consider a form with a line or box in front of each item in a list. In English, this commonly implies a checklist, but target language readers may not be familiar with this convention. English titles may also produce varying impressions in other languages. For example, English readers may readily associate “How to Become an Alien” in a title with a variety of “How-to” books or perhaps sci-fi storylines (e.g., *Mork and Mindy*). It is easy to image how this title may have a totally different meaning for non-native readers of English.

Without this background and understanding, all that a translator has to work with are the words on the page, a very narrow window from which to draw an understanding of the significance of the form and the structure of the source text. The implications for how differences are resolved from a linguistic sense in the target text are the domain of the translator, but the analysis and information provided by a translation brief enables the requester to determine which of these differences are important with regard to intent and meaning.

Once purpose and use have been considered, a source text can be examined for language and cultural bias that will need to be replaced. Even non-verbal elements like pictures or blank spaces can convey meaning to readers and affect literacy requirements (Nord, C. 1991a). Step 3 aims to analyze the source text to compare and contrast the implications for the target text, including whether:

- › the general message, the subject matter or topic of the text and the characteristics assumed of source language readers are consistent with target language readers
- › suppositions, notions or assumptions implied in the source text or the real-world factors of the communicative situation are presumed to be known to the reader
- › the text’s organization and associated conventions are equivalent in the target language
- › there are any potential translation challenges at the word level, including vocabulary and expressions
- › non-verbal elements like illustrations, tone or language markings (e.g., bold-faced type, blank spaces, italics) intended to convey specific meaning in the source text will also be relevant in the target text

### Localization:

**The goal of localization is to produce a translation that reads as if it had been authored in the target language by a native speaker immersed in the target locale. The requester and translator should decide together whether culturally-specific items should be retained in the translation or replaced with target culture equivalents; for example, whether the German name Johann can be replaced with the English equivalent John or whether Euros can be converted to dollars for a U.S. audience. Standard definitions of *localization* and associated terms are offered by the Education Initiative Taskforce of the Localization Industry Standards Association (Localization Industry Standards Association (LISA) p. 3, 1998).**

### Adaptation:

**The intent of adaptation is to replace culture-specific aspects of the source text with target-culture equivalents. Adaptations can be superficial, making changes or substituting things such as color, icons, photos or other cultural artifacts from the source culture with equivalents that are more appropriate to the target culture. The caution here is the problem of scope creep, meaning that the altering one aspect of a text can unintentionally lead to others. Adaptation strategies can result in more substantive changes requiring cultural research and development strategies well beyond translation (e.g., offering target culture dietary choices) (ASTM International 2006).**

On a broader level, it often helps to determine the amount of literal translation expected, or conversely, the degree of non-literal, meaning-for-meaning translation that is desired or acceptable. In other words, how far can translators stray from the original wording in the service of conveying intended meaning? Are localization strategies the delimiting threshold, or is some degree of adaptation permissible?

### Identifying Cultural Implications of Core Assumptions

Use of a translation brief can help stakeholders identify cross-cultural implications and may even raise fundamental questions about whether a translation is the best strategy for meeting the particular information needs of a targeted LEP population.

While the purpose of a particular written health care text may be clear to most English-speaking patients, many LEP patients may not be familiar with some concepts (e.g., caregiver) or practices common to the U.S. health care system. These underlying concepts and practices may need an explanation or need to be negated entirely, if underlying assumptions run counter to an LEP patient's deeply-held beliefs. In some cases, cultural practices may essentially rule out the procedure/treatment completely or otherwise complicate treatment options. At other times, identifying conflicting core beliefs or assumptions may require that new materials or explanations be added to the proposed translation before proceeding.

### Comparing Source and Target Audience Differences

Comparing and contrasting the source and target audiences involves examining demographic differences, including age, gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, education level, and geographic factors. Defining the audience for both the source and target groups is a good way of uncovering differences that may impact translation decisions.

The target audience's primary language also needs to be considered, including dialects, secondary languages, literacy in the native language, exposure to English, and family/generational attitudes toward learning/speaking English. Consider how these nuances will impact the translation. More narrowly-defined patient subgroups may allow for more highly-targeted or tailored texts and therefore more effective communications.

### Why Text Type Matters in Health Care

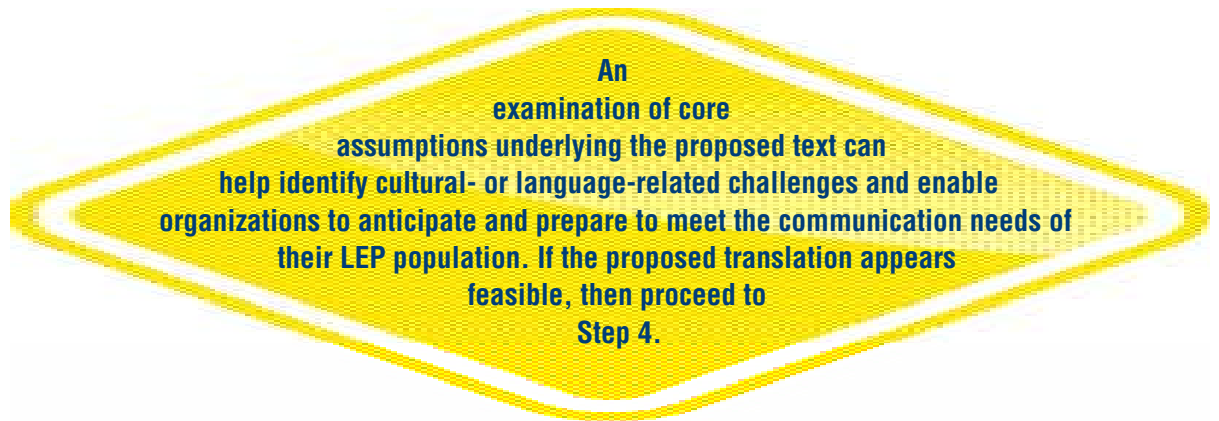
There is no doubt that text type and context affect the meaning and quality of communication. In fact, the *Hablamos Juntos More Than Words Toolkit Series* is intended to highlight the impact of cultural context and assumptions on translation quality. However, the tools are practical, not academic, and the fundamental message is that text type and associated conventions are important considerations in the preparation of a translation because intended meaning may or may not be in the actual written words. In even simpler terms, sometimes it *is* okay to judge a health care brochure by its cover.

Consider the diversity of the following health care texts and the variety of functions they fulfill:

- › Brochures (marketing or provider-specific)
- › Educational materials (disease-specific or general educational brochures)
- › Forms (registration, administrative, insurance)
- › Consent forms
- › Recruitment letters for clinical trials
- › Patient satisfaction or product surveys
- › Patient care instructions (general or individualized)
- › Medication use instructions

**Text type and associated conventions are important considerations in the preparation of a translation because intended meaning may or may not be in the actual written words.**

While some of these texts are intended merely to convey information (e.g., visiting hours, privacy policies), others are designed to inform patients and their families of actions to be taken (e.g., pre-op instructions, newborn care guidelines, in-home equipment use). Still others attempt to influence a reader's choice or to motivate actions. For each of these text types, there may be unique cross-cultural considerations. Thus, a translation brief should be used to identify the text type and discuss with the translator any associated conventions in the basic purpose (e.g., inform, motivate, persuade, solicit data) and desired response (e.g., decision, signature, phone call, appointment, clinic visit).



### Step 4: Summarize Specific Needs and Special Requirements

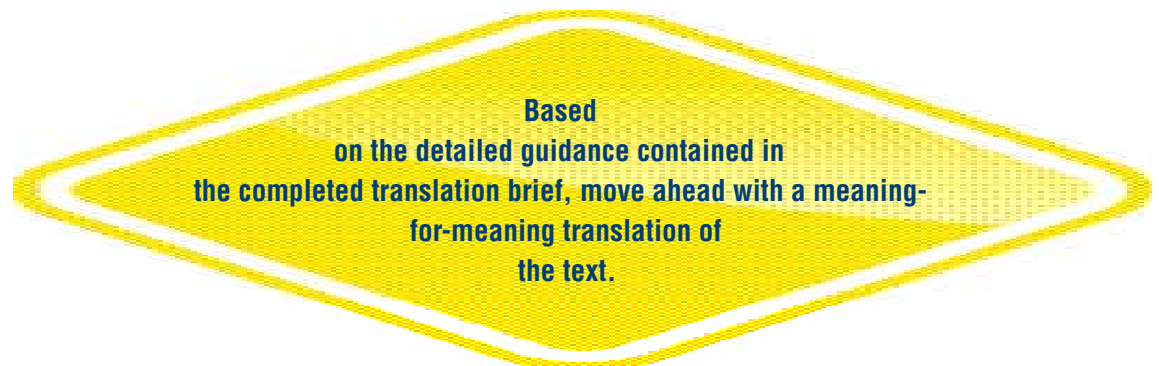
*Preparing translation briefs also provides an opportunity to standardize translations of various text types and content. The briefs can also serve as the basis for style guides and glossaries to promote consistency throughout a family of English and target language materials. In short, translation briefs should be mutually agreed-upon plans of action for the entire translation team.*

### **An Action Plan—and an Agreement—for Moving Ahead**

The objective of Step 4 is to finalize the instructions for the production of a translation that best represents the original goal(s) and intended purpose(s) of the source text. It is important that requesters be very clear about specific wording or content that must be retained, but also to note where the translator may use more target-relevant analogies or references. It is especially critical that the final version of the brief provide the translator with very clear directions about what is expected and what is allowable in the finished product. Specific topics to be covered might include, for example, use of first vs. third person and formal vs. informal register.

### **Meeting with the Translator is Ideal**

A meeting or discussion between the requester and translator is highly recommended before finalizing the translation brief. This provides an opportunity for a review of the key findings as well as for questions, answers, further analysis and brainstorming by both parties. This interaction will be more productive if both parties have had a chance to review the source text and a draft of the translation brief ahead of time. After agreement is reached, the brief will become the main source of guidance for the translation and include the main criteria for evaluation. Even if meeting with the translator is not possible, having written instructions helps ensure every participant in the translation process receives the same information about the desired translation product, which is particularly important when working with translation vendors that involve multiple reviewers.



A key objective in this meeting is to identify any potential translation challenges and to reach agreement on how these challenges should be addressed. Minimally, by the end of this discussion, the intended function of the translation should be clear, the functional elements that need to be adapted to the target audience should be identified, the emphasis among trade-offs that need to be managed should be decided and problems that can be addressed at the word level should be identified.

Note that Tool #4 of the *More Than Words Toolkit Series – Creating a Translation Brief for Consent Forms* – shows how the general principles described here can be applied to a specific text type.

**Section 3. Translation Brief Worksheets**

*Use the templates below while creating your own translation briefs.*

**TRANSLATION BRIEF**

Compare and Contrast Source and Target Text Function and Communicative Purpose

**Translation Brief for:** *(Insert title of English source text)*

<b>Requester</b>		<b>Phone</b>	
<b>Title/Department</b>		<b>Organization</b>	
	<b>Source Text</b>		<b>Target Text</b>
	English		<i>(Insert Language)</i>
<b>Function</b>			
<b>Audience</b>			
<b>Time of Reception</b>			
<b>Place of Reception</b>			
<b>Purpose</b>			

**Evaluate the Quality of the Source Text**

Poorly-written English language materials make a poor starting point for translations.

- Is the source text easy to read and understand?
- Is it accurate and current?

Does it make sense to translate?



**GO!** If, in your judgment, the answers to the above questions are “yes,” the source text appears suitable for translation. Proceed.



**NO-GO. STOP!** If, in your judgment, the document is poorly crafted or does not make sense to translate for your LEP patients, stop.



**ASSESS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL BIAS IN CONTENT OR TEXT FORM**

	Source Text	Target Text
	English	(Insert Language)
<b>Audience</b>		
<b>Subject Matter</b>		
<b>Ideas/Content</b>		
<b>Core Assumptions/ Pre-suppositions</b>		
<b>Convention-Markings</b>		
<b>Illustrations, Italics</b>		
<b>Vocabulary</b>		
<b>Degree of Literalness</b>		

**Source Text Type**

- Brochure (marketing or provider-specific)
- Educational material (disease-specific or general)
- Form (registration, administrative, insurance)
- Medication instructions
- Consent form
- Patient satisfaction/ product survey
- Patient care instructions (general or individualized)
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Implications for Target Audience:**

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**SUMMARIZE OTHER SPECIFIC NEEDS AND REQUIREMENTS**

Audience/Patient Considerations:

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Setting/Context Considerations:

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Special Instructions/Other Notes:

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**This guide was produced by *Hablamos Juntos*.**

Since 2001, *Hablamos Juntos*, (“We Speak Together”) a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation-funded national initiative, has been studying language barriers in health care for patients who speak or understand little or no English. In our years of work, the fundamental lesson we have learned is that communicating across languages and cultures involves much more than words. It requires recognition that the meanings of ideas and words are conveyed through the cultural lenses of the interlocutors. Attention to these differences is essential to effective communication whether in writing via translation or in speaking via interpretation.

The *Hablamos Juntos More Than Words Toolkit Series* brings together lessons learned from eight years of working with nationally-recognized health leaders and language experts and original research on translation quality. It has been made possible through the contributions of many around the country, including language faculty, researchers, practicing interpreters and translators, and health care professionals dedicated to providing safe and quality health care to our diverse nation. Among those requiring special mention for the production of Tool 3 are Sonia Colina, David Ellis, *Hablamos Juntos* demonstration and national program office staff involved in Phase 1 who contributed to early versions of this tool and several translators and language professionals who reviewed and commented on earlier drafts.

For more information about *Hablamos Juntos* or to download the entire *More Than Words Toolkit Series*, visit [www.HablamosJuntos.org](http://www.HablamosJuntos.org).

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