

Translating the GAIN Instruments for Use in Spanish-Speaking Populations

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Introduction

Illicit drug use in the Latino population is comparable to that in the total U.S. population, while among Latino students, it is more problematic than that reported by African-, Asian-, and European-American students. Treatment barriers include a lack of bilingual/bicultural providers, treatments that do not accommodate cultural differences, and a lack of Spanish language assessments. Only a handful of Spanish substance abuse assessments are available and very few have been tested or normed on a general Latino population. Although some provide diagnostic information, they do not yield information useful for treatment planning or placement. The purpose of this project is to create and field test Spanish translations of the GAIN (Global Appraisal of Individual Needs; Dennis et al., 2005) instruments. This presentation focuses on the GAIN-I, the intake version. The translation is led by a Translation Advisory Group composed of members across the U.S. from the substance abuse and mental health fields who belong to the major Spanish-speaking sub-groups in the U.S.: Mexican-American, Puerto Rican, and Cuban-American. While the goal is to produce transdialectical instruments, the inclusion of language reflecting reliable sub-group differences is incorporated when necessary.

Primary Goals

- Create and field test a transdialectical Spanish version of the GAIN-I instrument
- Maintain the original content and intent of each item in each culture

Secondary Goals

- Translate the remaining GAIN instruments
- Develop computer administration software
- Create a supplement to assess constructs specific to Spanish-speaking communities (e.g., acculturation)
- Develop supportive materials (e.g., narrative reports, profiles, treatment-specific reports)
- Develop training and workforce development materials.

GAIN-I Instrument



The GAIN-I is the most comprehensive of the GAIN instruments and subsumes all others. Translating the GAIN-I leads to simultaneous translation of all other GAIN instruments.

- Created for both treatment and research
- Instrument for treatment intake; other GAIN instruments have been developed for follow-up, collateral, screening, and targeted treatment
- Yields DSM/ICD diagnoses, ASAM placement
- Incorporates reporting requirements (e.g., GPRA)
- Yields information for treatment planning
- Measures change in functioning, service utilization, and other outcomes
- Provides info on economic cost and benefits
- Evidence of scales' psychometric integrity

GAIN Translation Models

There is a variety of translation models, some better than others. The least reliable are translating “on the fly” (interviewer translates text from English to Spanish during the administration) and one-way translation (instrument is translated from English to Spanish only once by a single translator or a group). In this project, we combined several methods based on best practices (Acquadro, Conway, GirouDET, & Mear, 2004; Marín & Marín, 1991; World Health Organization, 2005).

Two-way translation

- Translator A translates the original language instrument into the target language:
English Spanish  (“forward”)
- Translator B attempts to recreate the original language instrument by translating the target language instrument back into the original language:
English Spanish  (“back”)
- Translators reconcile differences between the English versions and make adaptations to Spanish version.

Translation by committee

The forward and back translations are completed by core translator-led committees and reviewed by a wider group of Spanish-speaking professionals in the field.

Decentering

The English instrument is modified as the translation process reveals grammatical structures that result in awkward translations or when concepts in the English version are inappropriate, unknown, or lack a verbal equivalent in the Spanish version.

Translation Teams

Professional bilingual translators should be a part of all translation teams. They should also be familiar with the field and have learned Spanish and English at different times in different cultures. Their native language should be the language that the instrument is being translated *to*. In the GAIN translation project, we had 2 teams: a forward translation team and a back translation team. The forward translation team was composed of a core group of 6 members, with a wider group who periodically reviewed the instrument and provided feedback.

Forward translation team (core)

- Professional translator in field
- Members who represent at least 1 of 3 major Spanish-speaking groups in U.S. -- Mexican-American, Puerto Rican, Cuban-American
- Knowledge of the field
- Familiar with GAIN

Back translation team

- Professional translator in field (native language English; learned languages in each culture)
- Members who represent several Spanish-speaking groups in the U.S
- Knowledge of the field
- NOT familiar with GAIN

Testing The Translation

There are several ways to test the translation of an instrument. For this project, we chose to complete alpha testing, a translation probe, and beta testing.

Alpha test

While waiting for the back translation results, one site administered the forward translation version to several adolescents. Feedback provided additional insights, for instance, the need for the “tú ” (informal “you”) rather than the “Ud.” (formal “you”).

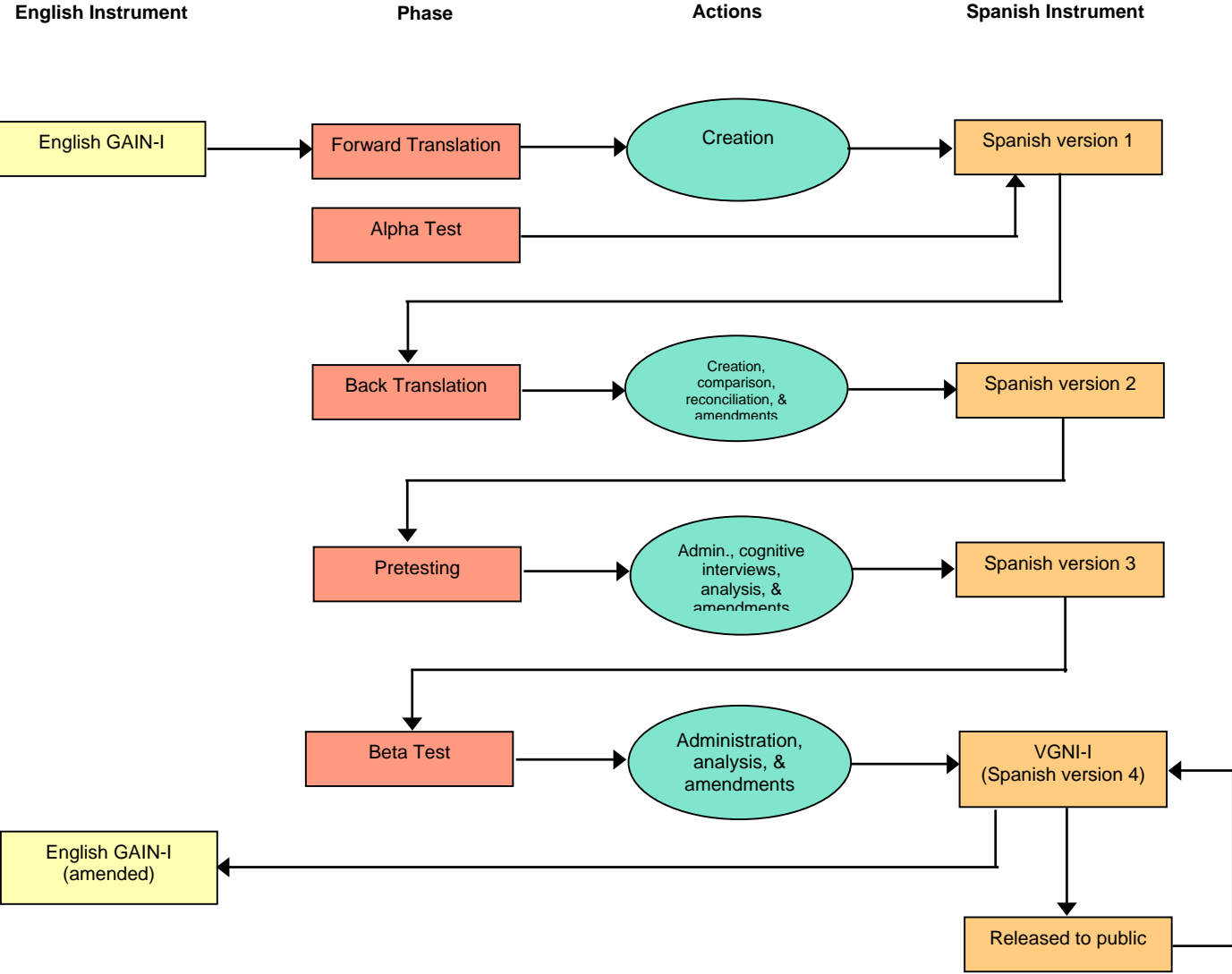
Translation probe

- Translation probes (also called “pretesting”) test the accuracy of the translation by comparing how closely the Spanish items capture the connotative meaning of the original English items. There are many possible probes, most requiring the participation of bilinguals from the target population. We chose the methods below.
- Bilingual, GAIN-certified staff administer the Spanish version of the GAIN-I to 3-4 adolescents whose first/only language is Spanish; adolescents identify items/words they have difficulty with.
- Interviewers re-administer 2 randomly selected sections of the instrument and ask the adolescent to paraphrase his/her understanding of the items (e.g., the interviewer asks “What do you think this item asks?”).
- Audiotaped administration is translated for those items/words where difficulty occurred.
- Information learned from the translation probe is incorporated and reviewed by the core forward translation team.

Beta test

- GAIN-certified staff from volunteer sites will administer the Spanish GAIN and document problems and recommendations.
- Feedback will be considered and incorporated into the instrument.
- The final form will be reviewed by the full TAG and, upon approval, released to the public.

Project Methods



Translation Challenges

Subgroup differences

Some words vary by Spanish-speaking subgroups (e.g., “mumps” is “paperas” in general but sometimes “farfallota” for Puerto Ricans).

No/unclear Spanish translation

For instance, for “halfway house”, we identified numerous ways it has been translated, even some we felt were not clear. We went with “casa de reinserción” with additional terms in parentheses (i.e., “media casa, casa de transición, “halfway house”).

English idioms

Idiomatic language required special attention to maintain meaning. For example, “written bad checks” – the literal translation (“escribir cheques malos”) is nonsensical. To retain the meaning we chose “escribir cheques sin fondos” (“written a check with no funds”).

Technical language

Language related to drug use/treatment, mental health, legal status, physical health, etc. Most of this was found on the Web.

Retaining English

For some terms we included the English form as an option since it would most likely be recognized. For instance, we translated “foster parents” as “padres sustitutos” but included “foster parents” in parentheses.

Response choices

- Does “Always”, “Frequently”, “Half the time”, “Sometimes”, and “Never” translate conceptually as “Siempre”, “Frecuentemente”, “La mitad de las veces”, “Algunas veces”, “Nunca”?
- Translated response choices are not necessarily invariant in meaning; cultural factors can influence meanings.

Current Status

- Forward translation, back translation with reconciliation, and translation probes are completed.
- Recruitment of sites for beta testing is underway.

Next Steps

- Complete beta test, and distribute first version
- Program Spanish versions of a computer-administered assessment as well as clinical narrative reports that can be used in Spanish and/or translated into English
- Finish the development of other project materials: acculturation supplement, training materials, supportive materials
- Psychometric/comparative studies

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