

Translating Financial Wellness: Practicing Linguistic Equity for Diverse Language Populations

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Financial Wellness and Communication

- Financial-related information often confusing and difficult to read (between 16th and 20th grade reading levels).
- Most U.S. adults read and comprehend English at the 7th or 8th grade level.
- Most financial aid and wellness information is not translated into non-English languages.
- **Poll:** How many of you translate either your website or financial wellness materials into non-English languages?





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AYUDA FINANCIERA Y BECAS

ESTAMOS CONTIGO EN CADA PASO DE TU CAMINO UNIVERSITARIO

FINANCIAR TU EDUCACIÓN EN

4 SIMPLES PASOS

- 1 **Calcula** la cantidad de ayuda que calificas.
- 2 Aplica para **ayuda estatal y federal**.
- 3 Busca y aplica **para becas**.
- 4 **Aceptar y mantener** tu ayuda financiera.

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Partnership at UVA

2018-2019 year

- Student newspaper series in October providing platform for student manifesto and demands
- Requests to meet with student leadership in the fall got no reply
- No activity or discussion through the spring term
- Chance opportunity to meet incoming student leadership late in the spring term



Partnership at UVA

Summer 2019

- July meeting with LatinX Student Alliance leaders to hear their own stories and those of others they had spoken with
- The students identified key concepts, such as applying for aid, how to pay the bill, what FA jargon means, and what things to be thinking about before coming to UVA, since these were the points where many applicants stopped out of the process due to English-only option
- SFS identified relevant pages and documents and sent them along to students to confirm we had heard them
- Our focus from the start was on professional translation and maintenance of the translated documents



Partnership at UVA

Fall 2019

- SFS sought out funding (~\$5,000 - \$7,000) to translate key pages and documents into Spanish and Chinese.
- Application was pending to Parents Fund when I had a chance encounter with the President of the University during a previously scheduled meeting
- Having secured funding, we sought bids from several translation services vendors, as it was important to us not to miss the current admission cycle
- SFS was solely responsible for the communication and production
- Worked with our IT to ensure compliance with University brand guidelines
- Once pages were deemed “print-ready”, we went back to the students for their final review
- Published the materials in January 2020



Partnership at UVA

What our experience taught us

- We should all be reaching out to student groups to be partners with administrative offices
- Don't stop reaching out to students just because it didn't work at first
- We really can't know what is needed without this student relationship
- Seek out funding from a variety of sources and let each know that you are casting the net broadly
- If you get partial funding, tell other funders about it so they may decide to get on board
- Thank the students you are working with
- Trust without complete understanding
- Share what you did and what you learned and listen to their feedback



Implications for Research

- A critical analysis of institutional linguistics/language landscapes is lacking—how are institutions communicating with students?
- With the lack of research, we don't have documented testimony of successful or failed models to obtaining and presenting these materials—how can students be better supported?
- Research ignores culture and education of financial resources, therefore ignoring inequities that financial language creates even in English.



Implications for Policy

- Language resources should be a natural first step and not a reactive measure of DEI efforts.
- Policy should include plans to provide translated material.
- Translated materials from English are not the only translation that is important – policy should include a uniform standard to financial education and translation in English.
- Human resources policies that address and encourage linguistic diversity in staff and faculty ranks



Implications for Practice

- The more transparent language is, the easier it is for students and parents to be independent and control their own journey.
- Creating multilingual materials opens communication and involvement for parents that are non-fluent English speakers.
- How are practitioners collaborating to ensure that best practices/any practices are shared? Does there need to be seven different Spanish translations of FAFSA instructions? Can we standardize and share materials?



Q&A

What questions do you have to help build your program?



References and Resources

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Description

- Although under-researched and rarely seen in higher education, translation of financial wellness materials into non-English languages can prove critical to attracting, supporting, and retaining non-native English speakers, and students with fluency in non-English languages should be involved in the selection of materials for translation and final review of translated materials. This session shares how one school accomplished this goal and how other schools can translate financial wellness.

