

Language Policy

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Why this matters

Throughout its work, Jigsaw interacts with different stakeholders including funders, implementation partners, in-country enumerators, and participating communities and individuals in various countries, particularly low- and middle-income contexts (LMICs). This diversity of interactions often leads to exposure to and use of multiple languages other than our main working language (English), the complexities of which need to be carefully considered and managed throughout a research project. Two key questions must always be addressed: firstly, how can language use be managed to ensure that research is equitable for all stakeholders, especially taking into account the historical (and colonial) basis of choosing to work in some languages over others? Secondly, how can we continue to ensure a high level of rigour when multiple languages may be needed across the research process?

This language policy aims to lay out ways in which Jigsaw responds to these questions at each stage of the research process, from the proposal stage at the very beginning through to the point of presenting findings. It articulates Jigsaw's commitments and key strategies to ensure that multilingual work is always both equitable and rigorous.

Proposal stage

Jigsaw commits to gaining, as far as possible, a thorough understanding of how different languages are used by all stakeholders within the research process at the proposal stage of any new project. This includes identifying which languages (and language varieties) are used in stakeholders' homes, which are used by different communities, and which are used for official communications or in business. Jigsaw also attempts to establish which additional language(s) research stakeholders are able and willing to use when participating in the research process, and their proficiency levels in these additional languages (including details of how these levels differ between spoken and written forms). Similarly, the client should be asked to clarify in which languages all relevant project data is available at the proposal stage.

Once in possession of this information, Jigsaw commits to ensuring that there is sufficient linguistic expertise within the team to interact with the project and its stakeholders in the appropriate languages, and that the team members with these language skills have sufficient

capacity to be involved. Alternatively, this may include budgeting sufficient funds for the recruitment of external translators, interpreters, and consultants where required.

For projects where data is required to be collected in languages other than English, sufficient time and budget must be allocated to allow for additional language-related tasks. These might include translating survey instruments, transcribing and translating interview responses, and general multilingual communication throughout the project.

It is worth noting that, while it is important to gain as much information as possible at the proposal stage, it may not be possible to gain a deeper understanding of the project's linguistic landscape until the inception phase, during which time many of the finer methodological points can be worked out and further scoping activities conducted. Jigsaw is therefore always transparent about the fact that the budget allocated to language-related activities within a proposal is subject to obtaining detailed information of the project's linguistic needs.

Data collection stage

Reviewing project data and documentation

Jigsaw team members (or external consultants where necessary) with the relevant linguistic knowledge should be assigned to reviewing all project documentation written in languages other than English. Those team members should then summarise key information in English to enable the rest of the team to access it.

Generally, effort should be made to access the documents and papers with the highest degree of usefulness and relevance to the issue in question, regardless of the language in which they are written.

Surveys/written instruments

Decisions regarding the design and distribution of surveys for multilingual respondents must be based on key linguistic information gathered at the scoping stage of the project (see 'Proposal Stage'). This information can then be used to determine whether there is a common language that all respondents will be comfortable reading and writing in, to the extent that the survey requires. If there is a clear, commonly used first language, then distribution may be done using that single common language. In this scenario, data collection may be greatly facilitated by enumerators with knowledge of both the survey language and other local languages, who can resolve any comprehension issues in real time. If there is no single common language that can be used, all survey instruments should be translated into the preferred language(s) of respondents, even if this means translation into multiple languages. This should ideally be done by individuals with first-language proficiency and experience of translating in those languages, or at the very least quality assured by an individual with first-language proficiency.

When using survey software with multilingual capabilities, automatic translations done using the software should be proofread, ideally by an individual with first-language proficiency in that language.

All surveys should include a question to determine participants' language(s) and proficiency levels in those languages. This constitutes valuable data [that can be used for language mapping activities](#). It could also help to explain any incomplete or ambiguously answered questions within the survey data, especially in cases where respondents' reading and writing proficiency in that language may have been overestimated.

Interviews/spoken instruments

All interview templates should be translated into the language that will be used to conduct the interview, ideally by an individual with proven translation skills and also with first-language proficiency in that language. Where this is not possible, translated transcripts should be quality assured by someone with first-language proficiency in the target language.

Subject to interviewees' consent, interviews should be recorded. The interviewer(s) should make detailed notes in the interview language, which should be translated into English later, ideally by a first language English speaker within the team. The recording may be used during the translation process to check accuracy and resolve any ambiguities. This process ensures that all interviewees' views are represented accurately, regardless of the language in which the interview is conducted. It also ensures that data gathered from interviews conducted in different languages is of an equally high quality.

The above procedures should form a core component of training given to all external consultants who will be working in languages other than English. External consultants' transcription and translation work should also be spot-checked for quality assurance by members of the Jigsaw team.

Data analysis stage

All transcripts and survey responses should be translated into English prior to analysis to allow for all team members to complete analysis tasks regardless of their knowledge of the data collection language. This may be done by either internal team members with the required linguistic skills and translation experience, or by external consultants. All translations should be quality-assured by first-language English speakers and in consultation with those who collected the data, who are the best place to help resolve ambiguities created through the translation process.

Presentation of findings

Jigsaw commits to producing a version of all community reports resulting from the research in the language(s) used by the communities involved in the research. This is crucial to achieving

equitable dissemination of findings and to ensuring that the communities at the heart of the research can easily access and use the knowledge generated by the research. In areas where low literacy levels are common, this may involve communicating key findings in spoken form via video or radio (subject to what infrastructure is available in the region in question. It may be necessary to contract external linguists/consultants to assist with the creation of these outputs.

General communication

It should be established on first communication with project stakeholders which language(s) they are able and willing to use for communication with the Jigsaw team. Where a language other than English is required, a Jigsaw team member with working proficiency¹ in that language should be responsible for communication with that individual as far as possible. For translating individual words and short phrases into European languages, tools such as wordreference.com and linguee.eu are recommended. Google Translate may also be used, though it should be borne in mind that its accuracy levels are variable, especially in non-latin languages.

Finally, the Jigsaw internal knowledge bank includes a [mini-dictionary](#) of key phrases in languages used during previous projects, which can be used for basic email communications. This should be used to ensure that communication with project stakeholders is as smooth as possible in cases where Jigsaw team members who do not speak stakeholder languages need to communicate short, simple messages. For any more complicated interactions, communication should be conducted by a team member with proficiency in the stakeholder language.

¹ Jigsaw deems 'working proficiency' to be equivalent to level C1 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Speakers with this level are "proficient users of the language, i.e. those able to perform complex tasks related to work and study". Further details are available at <https://www.britishcouncil.es/en/english/levels/c1>