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Supplementary Material

Die Fakten dicke! Der GESIS Podcast #8/#9

“The devil sticks in the detail - Übersetzung in der international vergleichenden Forschung“

August 2022

Lydia Repke & Dorothee Behr



Translation



The Idea of Untranslatability

The **Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis** (also **linguistic relativity hypothesis**) states that the language one speaks influences the way one thinks. That is closely related to the idea that patterns of language use in a particular cultural context can affect thought. Following this logic, the resulting differences can lead to misunderstandings, which are ultimately problematic for translation.



Edward Sapir
(1884-1939)



Benjamin Lee Whorf
(1897-1941)

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/psychology/sapir-whorf-hypothesis>

The Idea of Translatability

Avram Noam Chomsky argues that the **deep linguistic structure** of languages is **coherent**, while only the superficial structure differs. Following this logic, everything is expressible in any language and therefore must be translatable.



Avram Noam Chomsky
(*1928)

Problematic Examples

- Terms without direct translation
e.g., “Schadenfreude”
- Poems
i.e., due to importance of form
- Gender-neutral terms
standard in English, but not in German



Questionnaire Translation

Some Relevant Terms

Source Text/Language

is the text or language that is being translated from.

e.g., the English source questionnaire in the European Social Survey



Target Text/Language

is the resulting text you end up with after the translation or the language into which the translation is to be made (i.e., the translation).

e.g., German questionnaire in the European Social Survey

Questionnaire Translation in Context



The more one addresses **cultural relevance** and **translatability** and ensures clear **translation instructions** before the translation process, the better one will succeed in creating equivalent questionnaires.

Comparative Questionnaire Design I

Goals of Questionnaire Design

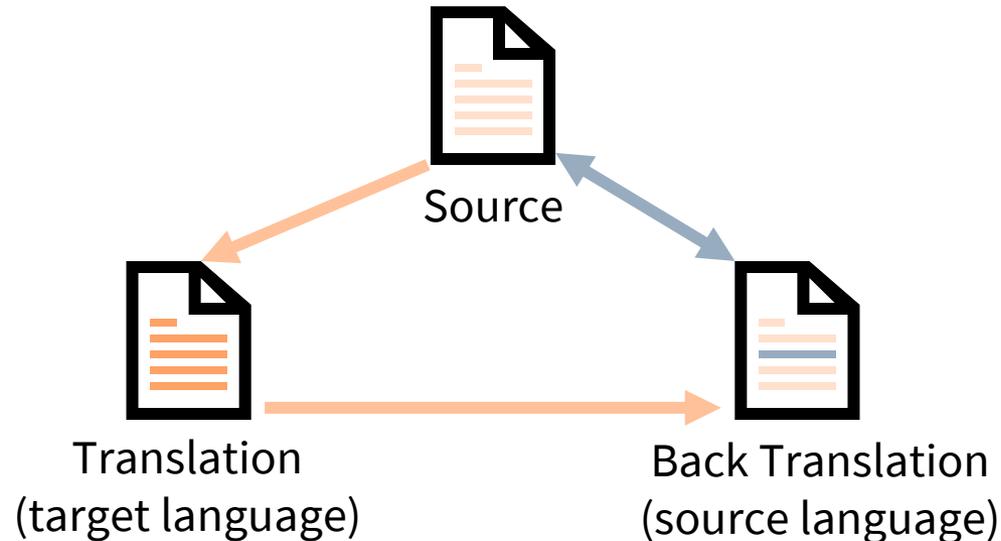
- Definition and selection of **concepts**
- Development of – or selection of existing – items that are relevant to the **countries and cultures** involved and that measure the planned concepts in a **comparable** way
- Choosing **translatable formulations** (trying to avoid any misunderstandings) with respect to the languages of the study

Comparative Questionnaire Design II

Development Approaches

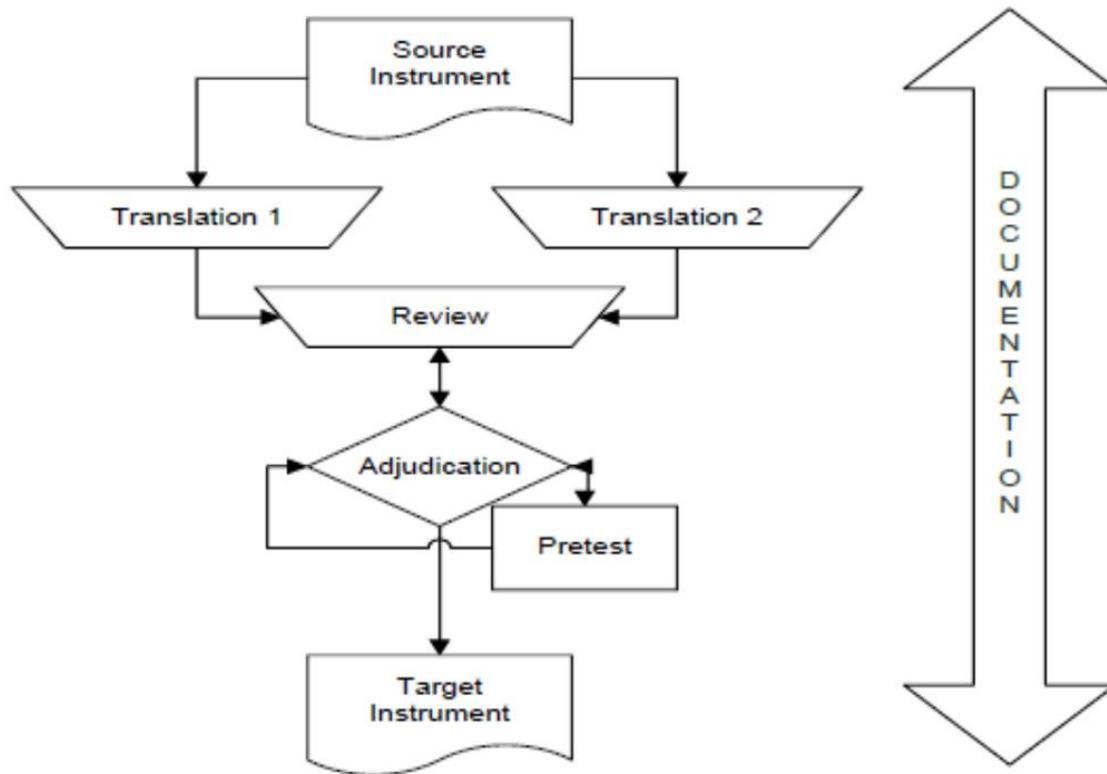
- **Sequential approach:** rather monocultural development of a source questionnaire, then translation
- **Parallel approach:** intercultural input during the development of the questionnaire, then translation
- **Simultaneous approach:** simultaneous development of the questionnaire in multiple languages

Back Translation



First, the source text is translated into the target language. Second, the translation is translated back into the source language. Finally, the **comparison** between the **source** text and the **back translation** allows conclusions about the **quality of the translation** from source to target language, at least in theory.

The TRAPD Model I



Mohler, Dorer, de Jong, & Hu, 2016; Harkness, 2003

The TRAPD Model II

Translation

two or more parallel translations

Review

discussion and combination of translation versions

Adjudication

final decision for a translation

Pretest

qualitative & quantitative testing of the translation

Documentation

across the whole process (*e.g., cultural adaptation*)

Less prone to mistakes than earlier methods (*e.g., back translation*), but requires a bigger team and budget!

Take-Home Messages



- (1) Plan your *resources* carefully (the process of questionnaire translation is often underestimated).
- (2) Pay attention to the *translatability* of the source text and take *cultural differences* into account!
- (3) The one right translation does not exist (translation must fit the *context* and the *translation job*).
- (4) Many decisions play a role in translation that are best made by an *interdisciplinary team*.
- (5) Be careful with *false friends*!

And, of course, translation is fun!



ALLBUS

ALLBUS

The **German General Social Survey** (Allgemeine Bevölkerungsumfrage der Sozialwissenschaften = ALLBUS) is a **biennial survey** of social and political attitudes, behaviors, and social structure of people residing in Germany that has been conducted **since 1980**. A representative cross-section of the population is questioned using **face-to-face interviews**.

The data can be used for **cross-sectional** and **longitudinal** analyses of German society. For **international comparison**, the survey also includes questions from the American General Social Survey (GSS) or the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP).

Data Access



To get an **overview** of all available ALLBUS studies, check out this [publication](#).

ALLBUS documentation materials and data sets can be found [here](#).

The **Research Data Center ALLBUS** provides information on available ALLBUS datasets on its [website](#). To download the ALLBUS data, [registration](#) (for public use files) is required. Additionally, the ALLBUS provides supplementary data (e.g., regional data, small-scale geodata, methodological data) that cannot be included in the regular public use files because of data protection concerns. This sensitive data can be made available for analyses subject to [special contractual regulations](#) with the [GESIS Secure Data Center \(SDC\)](#).

Questions about the ALLBUS data? Ask here: allbus@gesis.org.

Additional Material & Syntax Routines

Currently only available in German, you can find **additional material** and helpful **syntax routines** [here](#).

This includes the following **topics**:

- Formation of additional variables on the **lifestyle** and **family situation** of the respondent
- **Household and family typology** (Porst and Funk)
- **European Socio-economic Groups (ESeG)**
- Construction of standardized **income scores** for time comparisons (Elff)



Related Studies, Links, and Media

Acquadro, Patrick, Eremenco et al. (2018)

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Journal of Patient-Reported Outcomes

About **Articles** Submission Guidelines

Review | [Open Access](#) | [Published: 21 February 2018](#)

Emerging good practices for Translatability Assessment (TA) of Patient-Reported Outcome (PRO) measures

[Catherine Acquadro](#) , [Donald L. Patrick](#), [Sonya Eremenco](#), [Mona L. Martin](#), [Dagmara Kuliš](#), [Helena Correia](#) & [Katrin Conway](#) on behalf of the International Society for Quality of Life Research (ISOQOL) Translation and Cultural Adaptation Special Interest Group (TCA-SIG)

[Journal of Patient-Reported Outcomes](#) **2**, Article number: 8 (2018) | [Cite this article](#)

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Abstract

This paper presents emerging Good Practices for Translatability Assessment (TA) of Patient-Reported Outcome (PRO) Measures. The ISOQOL Translation and Cultural Adaptation Special Interest Group (TCA-SIG) undertook the review of several TA approaches, with the collaboration of organizations who are involved in conducting TA, and members of the TCA-SIG. The effort led to agreement by the writing group on Good Practices for 1) the terminology to be used in referring to translatability process, 2) the best definition of TA, 3) the methodology that is recommended at each step of the process, 4) the persons involved in TA, 5) the timing of assessment, 6) the review criteria for TA, and 7) the recommendations to be made at the end of the TA process. With input from the TCA-SIG membership and in consultation with experts in the field, these emerging good practices can guide the future use of TA in the development of PROs.

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<https://doi.org/10.1186/s41687-018-0035-8>

Behr (2009)

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Translationswissenschaft und international vergleichende
Umfrageforschung: Qualitätssicherung bei
Fragebogenübersetzungen als Gegenstand einer Prozessanalyse

[Dissertation]

Behr, Dorothee

Körperschaftlicher Herausgeber

GESIS - Leibniz-Institut für Sozialwissenschaften

Abstract

"Die Qualität von Fragebogenübersetzungen ist zentral für die Vergleichbarkeit der Daten in internationalen Umfrageprojekten. Um die Qualität der Übersetzung zu gewährleisten, werden besondere Methoden angewandt. Diese Arbeit untersucht anhand einer Fallstudie aus dem International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) die Methode des Team-Ansatzes: Parallel angefertigte Übersetzungen wurden in einem Team aus Übersetzern und Umfrageexperten diskutiert. Die Aufnahme und Transkription der Diskussion ermöglichten eine Prozessanalyse. Im Zentrum standen hierbei Probleme und Problemlösungen, Methodenbewertung und Qualitätsverständnis des Teams. Diese Arbeit richtet sich an Übersetzer, Übersetzungswissenschaftler sowie Umfrageexperten für internationale Umfrageforschung." (Autorenreferat)... weniger

"High-quality questionnaire translations are crucial for data comparability in cross-national survey research. Special quality assurance methods are used to ensure translation quality. Based on a case study from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), this book analyses the team approach: Two independent translations were discussed in a team involving translators and survey experts. Recordings and transcription of the team discussion were available for translation process research. This research focused on problems and problem-solving strategies, on the assessment of the method and on the team's understanding of translation quality. The book is addressed to translators and translation scholars as well as survey methodologists in cross-national survey research." (author's abstract)... weniger

Thesaurusschlagwörter

Qualitätssicherung; Prozessanalyse; Teamarbeit; ISSP; Übersetzung; internationaler Vergleich; vergleichende Forschung; Umfrageforschung; Fragebogen

<https://doi.org/10.21241/ssoar.26125>

Behr, Braun, Kaczmirek, & Bandilla (2014)

[Open Access](#) | [Published: 10 August 2012](#)

Item comparability in cross-national surveys: results from asking probing questions in cross-national web surveys about attitudes towards civil disobedience

[Dorothee Behr](#) , [Michael Braun](#), [Lars Kaczmirek](#) & [Wolfgang Bandilla](#)

[Quality & Quantity](#) **48**, 127–148 (2014) | [Cite this article](#)

1494 Accesses | **32** Citations | **1** Altmetric | [Metrics](#)

Abstract

This article focuses on assessing item comparability in cross-national surveys by asking probing questions in Web surveys. The “civil disobedience” item from the “rights in a democracy” scale of the International Social Survey Program (ISSP) serves as a substantive case study. Identical Web surveys were fielded in Canada (English-speaking), Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Spain, and the U.S. A category-selection and a comprehension probe, respectively, were incorporated into the Web surveys after the closed-ended “civil disobedience” item. Responses to the category selection-probe reveal that notably in Germany, Hungary, and Spain the detachment of politicians from the people and their lack of responsiveness is deplored. Responses to the comprehension probe show that mainly in the U.S. and Canada violence and/or destruction are associated with civil disobedience. These results suggest reasons for the peculiar statistical results found for the “civil disobedience” item in the ISSP study. On the whole, Web probing proves to be a valuable tool for identifying interpretation differences and potential bias in cross-national survey research.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-012-9754-8>

Behr (2017)

Articles

Assessing the use of back translation: the shortcomings of back translation as a quality testing method

Dorothee Behr 

Pages 573-584 | Received 13 Jan 2015, Accepted 19 Oct 2016, Published online: 09 Nov 2016

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2016.1252188>

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Abstract

Back translation – the ‘re-translation’ of a translated questionnaire back into the original language and the subsequent comparison of the original version and the back translation – is a controversial assessment method for questionnaire translations. Recently, cross-cultural survey methodologists have followed the call for more empirical research on this method. This article adds to the small body of research by drawing on the back translation documentation from the 2012 European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS). First, results from the official EQLS back translation step are contrasted with results when additional persons perform the same comparison step between back translation and original. We note inconsistency in the detection of presumed flaws. Second, the back translation outcome is contrasted with additional native speaker checks of the actual translation. While back translation can uncover problems, it causes quite a number of false alarms, and even more importantly, many problems remain hidden.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2016.1252188>

Behr & Zabal (2021)



Abstract

Survey documentation is an integral part of methodically sound survey research. These guidelines aim at providing the persons coordinating survey translations (e.g., researchers responsible for survey translation in a larger study, or those wishing to translate and adapt an existing instrument for their own research) with a framework within which they can plan and document survey translations both for internal as well as for external purposes (publications or technical reports). It summarizes different aspects of translation documentation and reviews elements to be included in such a documentation.

https://doi.org/10.15465/gesis-sg_en_035

Behr & Braun (2022)

How Does Back Translation Fare Against Team Translation? An Experimental Case Study in the Language Combination English–German [Get access >](#)

Dorothee Behr , Michael Braun

Journal of Survey Statistics and Methodology, smac005,
<https://doi.org/10.1093/jssam/smac005>

Published: 16 March 2022

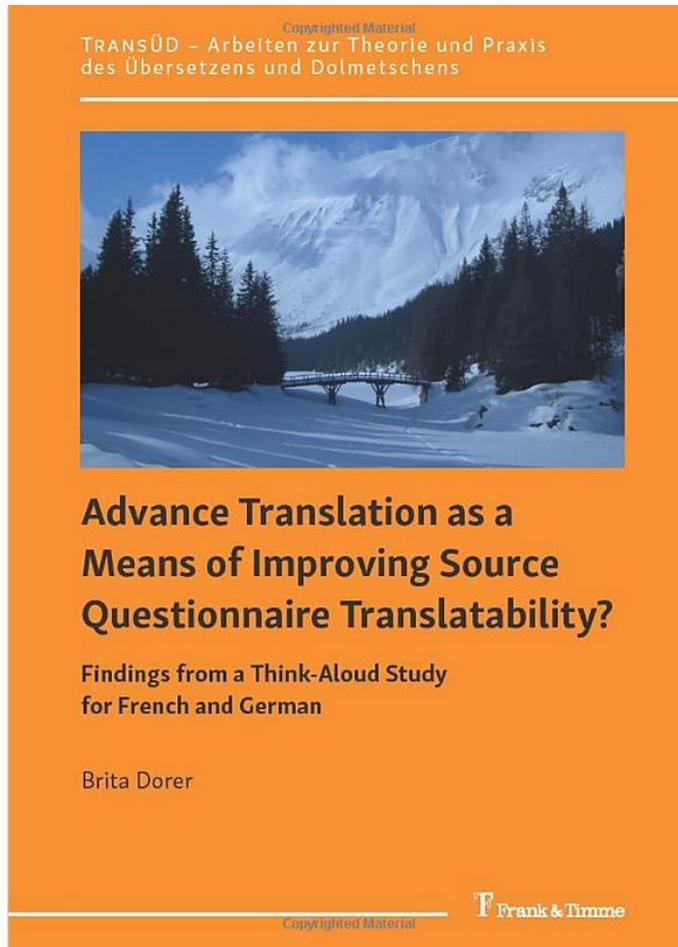
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Abstract

When it comes to quality in questionnaire translation and hence comparability in comparative research, the chosen translation method is crucial for the outcome. Few empirical studies compare different translation methods—a fact which is often deplored in the research community. To fill the gap, in this study, the team translation approach is compared against a simple back-translation approach. The starting point in both cases was the initial English–German translations of ISSP (International Social Survey Program) questions. The final translations from both approaches were assessed, with a focus on how translation issues, such as mistranslations or wording issues identified in the initial translations were addressed. While none of the twenty-nine issues in the initial translation were present in the final team translation version, twenty-two of these issues were still present in the final version after the back-translation approach. For a selected number of items, we also ran a split-ballot experiment in a web survey. Only five out of fifteen items (33 percent) that went into the experiment showed significant differences between the translations, and only one could clearly be attributed to remaining errors in the back-translation version. In sum, the final translation from the team approach clearly outperformed the final translation from the back-translation approach when it comes to text-based criteria (in particular, accuracy and fluency). The quantitative test showed that many translation issues (those remaining in the translation after the back translation step) had no effect on the estimates. Nevertheless, we ask respondents to put effort into survey responding; in the same vein, we as researchers should put effort in the survey experience by providing questions that are clearly worded and free of errors, which puts the team approach ahead of the back-translation approach.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/jssam/smac005>

Dorer (2020)



Dorer (2022)

Advance Translation—The Remedy to Improve Translatability of Source Questionnaires? Results of a Think-Aloud Study

Brita Dorer 

First Published February 24, 2022 | Research Article | 

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X211072343>

[Article information](#) ▾



Abstract

Advance translation is a method of source questionnaire development for multilingual survey projects to enhance translatability and (inter)cultural portability. The aim is to minimize translation issues in the final translation stage. I empirically tested the results of a previously conducted advance translation in a think-aloud study and analyzed the utterances made in a mixed-method approach, calculating chi-square statistics and cross-checking these by observational notes of the think-aloud sessions. My study confirms the usefulness of advance translation in making source items better to translate, thus improving final translation quality. It appears to be particularly useful for comprehensibility issues of the source text, irrespective of the target language. I recommend that advance translations be carried out into all languages and cultures into which the final source questionnaire is to be translated. This will improve source questionnaire translatability and, thus, final translation and overall cross-cultural data quality.

Keywords

[advance translation](#), [translatability](#), [European Social Survey](#), [questionnaire translation](#), [thinking-aloud](#)

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X211072343>

Keck, Behr, & Dorer (2021)

July 19, 2021

Project deliverable

Open Access

D4.9 Guidelines on the use of Translation Memories in survey translation

Veronika Keck; Dorothee Behr; Brita Dorer

Task 4.3 in WP4 Innovations in Data Production of the SSHOC project is dedicated to Applying ComputerAssisted Translation tools in Social Surveys. A key activity of this task is to incorporate newly created Translation Memories (TMs) from a corpus, which has been developed in Task 4.2 (Preparing tools for the use of Computer Assisted Translation), into an open-source computer-assisted translation (CAT) environment. Moreover, this report lays out a test case to demonstrate the feasibility of the usage of TMs within a CAT environment. The overarching goal is to introduce CAT tools and their usage possibilities to survey researchers to increase the awareness and adoption of existing and new digital tools for the survey translation process.

Using the CAT tool MateCat, this report provides a theoretical framework of CAT tools with a focus on TMs, their practical use and a summary of the advantages and disadvantages of TM usage. To support social scientists in their increasingly digitized translation processes, increase awareness, and showcase the usability of TMs, a demo of the integration of TMs into the MateCat translation environment was recorded. The demo shows how the public TM MyMemory and private TMs created based on previously translated international surveys can be used and updated to increase the efficiency and quality of the survey translation process.

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5180976>

Lyberg et al. (2021)

AAPOR/WAPOR Task Force Report on Quality in Comparative Surveys

April, 2021

Chairing Committee:

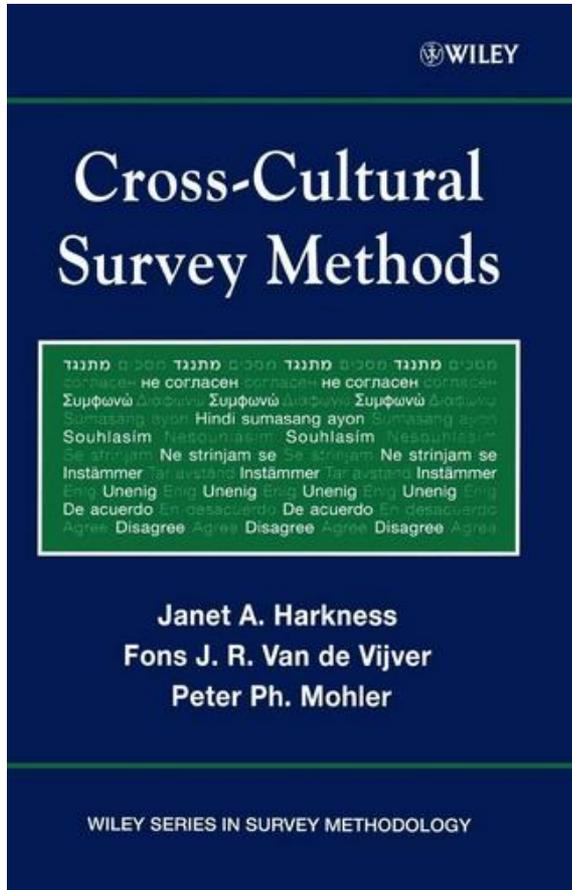
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<https://wapor.org/resources/aapor-wapor-task-force-report-on-quality-in-comparative-surveys/>

Smith (2003)



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Smith (2004)

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Chapter 21

Developing and Evaluating Cross-National Survey Instruments

Tom W. Smith

Book Editor(s): Stanley Presser, Jennifer M. Rothgeb, Mick P. Couper, Judith T. Lessler, Elizabeth Martin
... See all authors ▾

First published: 25 June 2004 | <https://doi.org/10.1002/0471654728.ch21> | Citations: 34

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Summary

Considering the value of cross-national research, the importance of obtaining comparable measurements, and the frequent failure to take measurement seriously, there is an obvious need for improvement. This chapter contributes toward that goal by discussing (1) the development of equivalent questions in surveys, focusing on the question-asking and answer-recording parts; (2) response effects that contribute to measurement error in general and variable error structures across nations (e.g., social desirability, acquiescence bias, extreme response styles, don't knows and non attitudes, neutral/middle options, question order, and mode); and (3) steps to enhance validity and comparability in cross-national surveys, including the form of source questions, translation procedures, and item development and pretesting.

Citing Literature ▾

<https://doi.org/10.1002/0471654728.ch21>

Translation Software I



The CAT tool that works for you

Project name

From ⇌ To

Select subject

TM & Glossary ⁱ 



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Invited Expert

Questionnaire Translation



dorothee.behr@gesis.org

Dr. Dorothee Behr

is an expert in questionnaire translation and comparability of international survey data. She researches, teaches, and consults on **questionnaire translation**.

Click [here](#) for a list of interesting publications or [here](#) for a talk in German on **questionnaire translation** by Dorothee Behr .



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