



Questionnaire Design in Multipopulation Surveys

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Why do we need this talk?

Many of the people here know a lot about
questionnaire design

Is there anything different about writing questions for comparative research than doing that for general survey research?

Question designers must always consider multiple factors and facets

- Measurement goals
- Target population
- Intended mode(s)
- Burden.....

In multipopulation research they must also think about

Comparability

- across multiple versions of an instrument in different languages

OR

- across different instruments in multiple languages

Outline

- Top-level considerations for comparative design
- Constructs, indicators, questions
- Neglected aspects of design
- Outlook for question design

Consideration 1

Basis of comparability

- Decide to ask different questions in each location
- Decide to ask common (the same) questions in each location
- Do some of both

Consideration 1

Basis of comparability

- Decide to ask different questions in each location if necessary
- Decide to ask common (the same) questions in each location if possible
- Do some of both if necessary

Ask different questions (ADQ)

- Low /no interest in face value similarity of content across different country/population questionnaires
- Aim for “functionally equivalent” indicators and corresponding questions

OR

- Aim for common indicators but ask different questions

Advantages of asking different questions (ADQ)

- No cultural or language dominance
- No translation
- Questions salient and culturally appropriate
- A group can join project later at no design disadvantage

Drawbacks with ADQ

- Difficulty ensuring comparable construct coverage
- Difficulty demonstrating comparability of questions
- Reduced potential for analysis
- Reduced suitability for some disciplines
 - social science instruments, scarcity of items

Ask-the-same-question (ASQ) approaches

1. Create source questionnaire

Replicate semantic content of source questionnaire in translations

OR

2. Decentring through simultaneous development

Decentring

- Decentring does not seem viable for multiple language versions
- (See paper and Harkness 2007)

ASQ “produce source then translate”

- Production protocol for source can vary
- Most commonly used approach in social sciences
- With some differences, this holds for other disciplines too
 - Adaptation, mixed approaches

Potential advantages of source then translate

- Potential for analysis
- Multilingual versions possible
- Organisation *fairly* simple
- Replication opportunities
- Disadvantages of other approaches
- Conforms with common practices of standardisation

Constraints

- The content of the source question needs to do what you want in different contexts and in different languages
- Deciding on the right questions *and* deciding on how to produce other language versions become crucial

Drawbacks of source then translate

- Difficulties of identifying the right questions
- The who, what and how of
 - Establishing constructs
 - Identifying and validating indicators
 - Drafting and refining questions that “work” in all contexts
 - As these appear in translation
- Possible low cultural saliency

Some cross-national ASQ questions

- Do you have difficulty reading a newspaper even when wearing glasses?
- Do you have difficulty playing golf?
- Do you prefer OTC medicines or prescription medicines?

Mixed design approaches (nb: not mode)

- Set of core questions
ASQ same indicators same questions
- Enriched by country- or culture-specific indicators and questions
- Often discussed in terms of **etic** and **emic** items

Emic and etic

- Etic – universal (cf. phonetics)
- Emic – population specific (cf. phonemics)

Using Etic –Emic approaches

- A common core of questions (etic)
- Supplemented by country-specific questions (emic)
- Motivation: shared indicators do not represent the concepts adequately for some locations
- Country-specific improve coverage of concept in one or more locations

Constraints

- Complexity of comparison beyond common set
- Alternative “ask all” burdensome
- Procedures more complicated than ASQ
Source and Translate

Consideration 2

Basis of comparability

- Origin of questions
- Comparability

Origin of questions: decide whether to

- Adopt existing questions
 - Adapt existing questions
 - Write new questions
 - Do all three
-
- Each option has advantages and constraints
- (Harkness, van de Vijver, Johnsonl 2003; see paper

Adopt, adapt, write new

- In each case we must ascertain by testing that the questions can do the job we require in each location
- Commonly in multipopulation research this degree of testing is lacking for draft questionnaires

Consideration 3

- How to target cultural fit
- Origin of questions
- Comparability

Consideration 3

- How to target cultural fit
 - How, what, when, where, and why
- Tension between improving cultural fit and keeping questions the same
 - Apples and oranges/pears: specificity
 - Fruit: generalizability

Disciplines & studies differ in effort & approach

- High, Middle, Low degrees of input
- Low input might
 - attend to “culture” at time of translation
- Middle might
 - involve cultural input during question drafting
- High might
 - involve cultural input at every stage

Lessons learned on cultural input

- **Deliberated active strategies are important**
- Nationality mix in design team not enough
- Sharing drafts for commentary not enough
- Language of discussion has multiple effects
- Expert input: who are the experts and what are their perspectives
- Iterations needed may be time- and cost-intensive
- Blunderbuss “do everything”: unscientific and costly
- **Evidence-based cost-benefit research needed**

Constructs, indicators, questions

- We formulate questions to tap indicators judged to serve as manifestations of a latent construct

NOTE

- Questions are not the same as indicators
- Indicators are not always measured with questions
 - Health measurements

Construct challenges

- Definition of construct may well differ in multiple ways across locations
 - Ascertaining this
- Construct meaning, saliency, configurations
 - Environmentally friendly behaviour
 - Well-being
 - Ethnic identity

Indicator challenges

- Relevant indicators (manifestations) may differ across locations
 - Conceptual differences
 - Social reality, opportunity structures , etc.
 - Meaning of behaviours and positions

Indicator challenges

Is your appetite good?

Do you have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep?

Is your pay just?

Question challenges

- Even with comparable or the same indicators, questions may need to differ
 - Ascertaining this, especially if they seem to “translate”
- Respondent perception of meaning (delivered and received intended/percieved)
- Response process issues
- Acceptability of questions

- Leads some researchers to suggest we should only try to compare units that structurally/conceptually seem to admit comparison
- Others argue the case for investigating difference

Neglected aspects of design

1 Adaptation

- The deliberate modification of an existing question in content and/or format to make it more suitable for (new) requirements

Why adapt?

- Social context changes
 - Vocabulary
 - Procedures or reality
 - People
- Increase comparability with other surveys
- Research methods or perspectives change
- Other aspects change (mode)
- Retain comparability despite other differences

Some types of adaptation

(cf Harkness 2007)

- Language-driven (relevant for translation)
- Social system-driven; technical
- Cultural discourse conventions; semi-conventionalised/ technical
- Related to burden or difficulty; technical & tricky
- Related to intended design; technical & tricky
- Cultural localization; the biggest challenge?

Some types of adaptation

(cf Harkness 2007)

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Technical system-driven changes

Some easy to predict but measurement needs can complicate resolution

- measurement systems (meters/yards, etc)
- institutions (grade school/primary school)
- country-specific “fills” (age of franchise/vote, but also socio-demographic questions such as education qualifications)

Blends: language and other components

*Who did you vote for in the last **presidential** election on [DATE FILL]?*

Technical adaptation

*Who did you vote for in the last **parliamentary** election on [DATE FILL]?*

Language considerations (GB)

*Who did you vote for in the last **general** election on [DATE FILL]?*

How to “do” adaptation?
What are the constraints?

Not so easy to find out



How to “do” adaptation?

- Use, terminology and acceptance differ across disciplines
- Limited research
- Documentation of adaptations /motivations sparse
 - Rationale not always clear

How to “do” adaptation?

Needed

- Knowledge-base
- Extensive typology of adaptation types
- Materials to inform development and assessment

Pretesting and Testing

- Session demonstrate increased research on methodological issues in pretesting for comparative research
- Statistical assessments of design essential too
- Documentation essential (Lyberg talk)

Neglected aspects of design:

2 Design implementation

- Level concerned with planning and specifying actual field instruments in given languages
- Needs to be addressed in the source instrument, accompanying materials **and** version realizations

A1	TVTOT	TV WATCHING, TOTAL TIME ON AVERAGE WEEKDAY	F2.0	00 No time at all	A1: Ask all Go to A3
				01 Less than 0,5 hour	
				02 0,5 hour to 1 hour	
				03 More than 1 hour, up to 1,5 hours	
				04 More than 1,5 hours, up to 2 hours	
				05 More than 2 hours, up to 2,5 hours	Ask A2
				06 More than 2,5 hours, up to 3 hours	
				07 More than 3 hours	
				77 Refusal	
				88 Don't know	
				99 No answer	

Data dictionary information: (variable **A1**; variable name **TVTOT**; variable label **TV WATCHING, TOTAL TIME ON AVERAGE WEEKDAY**; position in data register (**F2.0**), two-digit integer format with zero decimal places(**00**); universe (**A1: Ask all**) response options and codes; navigation instructions)

Implementation needs may be extensive

- Different languages and numerous related conventions
 - Language directions *and* diagram directions
 - Orthographic conventions (use of ?)
 - Space needed for language (words and characters)
 - Presentation of names, dates, numbers
 - Programming markup for fills
 - your former [wife} vs [your former wife]

OUTLOOK

Still needed

Overarching theory or theories for questionnaire design incorporating insights already gained

Will require evidence-based research on ...

- question meaning and design
- discourse norms and design
- “cultural responding” and design
- ...

OUTLOOK

Growth in

- Knowledge
 - Documentation as tool
- Insight
- Dissemination and access
- Research Initiatives
- Guidelines

OUTLOOK (2)

Empowerment towards solutions underway

Better understanding of pitfalls and thus of practice of ASQ

Potential and nature of adaptation

Potential of emic etic approaches

Place and potential for ADQ

Thank You