

Translating questionnaires for cross-national surveys – a text genre and its particularities

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Outline

- Translation expertise & genre competence
- Genre competence
 - The larger context of survey methodology
 - A tailored competence model
- The translation competence model of ISO 17100
 - its application to the genre of questionnaires
- Summary and discussion on needed knowledge





Translation expertise & genre competence

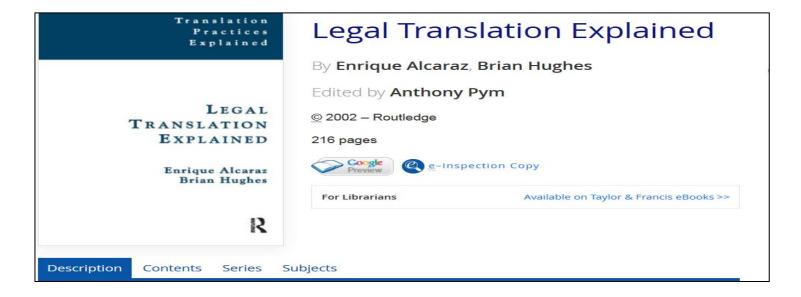
- Harkness' model (2003): the translator as a "skilled practitioner" who is experienced in questionnaire translation and/or specifically briefed and trained for this genre
- ITC Guidelines (2017): a translation and adaptation "expert" is
 - "a person or a team with sufficient combined knowledge of (1) the languages involved, (2) the cultures, (3) the content of the test, and (4) general principles of testing, to produce a professional quality translation/adaptation of a test." (p. 12)





Genre competence I

 Typical for other translation fields to embed translation into a larger context







Genre competence II

 Typical for other translation fields to produce a tailored competence model – that is, a model that includes the particularities coming with particular domains or textual genres

2. Towards a legal translation competence model

Prieto Ramos (2011)





Questionnaire translation: There is a need to ...

- ... systematically embed questionnaire translation into a larger context
- ... develop a competence model tailored to this genre
- Why?
 - ▶ Helps to *systematically* introduce new translators to the field
 - ▶ Helps to prevent many "simple" mistakes from arising (e.g. consistency issues, omission of important measurement properties, issues in scales)
 - Supports translators in the decision-making process by allowing them to identify the crucial elements that need to be maintained – the "larger picture" is needed for that





The basics of general survey methodology

- Total survey errors approach, documentation, process quality
- Design and development of questionnaires, e.g.
 - standardization, operationalization (constructindicator-item), validity, reliability, response model, guidelines for writing survey questions, design of scales
- Construction of questionnaires as a whole, e.g.
 - Overall structure, routing, dynamic fills, consistency needs
- Modes, and mode-dependency of survey wording, e.g.
 - Gender, layout or response selection instructions





The basics of cross-national survey methodology

- Relationship between source and target questionnaire, e.g.
 - ▶ Standardization of the survey instruments across languages; translation vs. adaptation (ASQ vs. ADQ); dependency of statistical analyses on these relationships; equivalence
- Translation and assessment methods, incl. documentation and pretesting





Linking the larger context & practice

- Translation competence model, based on the ISO 17100 - Translation services -- Requirements for translation services:
 - Translation competence
 - Linguistic and textual competence in both target and source language
 - Domain competence
 - Competence in research, information acquisition, and processing
 - Cultural competence
 - Technical competence



A tailored competence model





Translation competence

 ability to produce a translation in compliance with the purpose of a translation and any given project requirements





Different types of questionnaire translation

	Instrumental translations		Documentary translation
	Comparability with source questionnaire planned	Comparability with source questionnaire <u>not</u> planned	Comparability with source questionnaire planned
Source questionnaire designed with a view to cross-national application	I: Adaptations possibly necessary; permissible adaptations are often identified in advance; further adaptations are usually subject to approval	III: Adaptations possibly necessary, no constraints	n/a
Source questionnaire designed for a specific country	II: Adaptations probably necessary; however, they are constrained by the comparability requirement	IV: Adaptations probably necessary, no constraints	V: No adaptations; questionnaire remains embedded in source culture





Linguistic and textual competence in both target and source language

- Ability to appropriately understand the source language, to fluently render text in the target language, and to apply general and genre-specific conventions
 - Importance of comparability needs
 - Importance of clarity, simplicity and comprehensibility

 this may run counter to usual translation and writing
 activities
 - Importance of language use adapted to survey mode





Domain competence

- Ability to understand the content of the source language and to reproduce it in accordance with appropriate style and terminology
 - Domain: survey methodology understanding the basics of general and cross-national survey methodology – the larger framework as presented before
 - E.g., 'in general', consistent repetition of key words





Competence in research, information acquisition and processing

- Ability to efficiently search for any information needed for understanding the source text and rendering it in the target language (linguistic, subjectmatter, etc.)
 - Awareness needed of:
 - Data archives with extensive metadata, for instance, questionnaires
 - "Parallel" texts (i.e. questionnaires) in the target language
 - Target-language corpora to assess and test language use
 - Pretest archives





Cultural competence

- Ability to apply knowledge of both source and target culture to the translation process (e.g., knowledge of behavioral standards or value systems)
 - ▶ For deliberately designed cross-national surveys, the design process should benefit from this competence
 - For questionnaires adopted from other countries, this competence is crucial to adapt the instrument to the target culture's needs





Technical competence

- Knowledge of and skills to use technical resources (tools, IT systems) in the production of the translation
 - Large-scale surveys or companies may use their own tools and platforms, with or without interfaces to known translation software





Summary

- We lack a translation competence model tailored to questionnaires.
- In such a model, particularities related to questionnaire translation should be linked to basic knowledge of survey methodology.
- The ISO 17100 competence model may serve as a structuring device.
- What is according to your experiences the knowledge that translators need?
- Should a corresponding "commissioner/reviewer" model be created for survey researchers – on what they need to know on translation, e.g. to effectively steer it?