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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

The screenshot displays a digital book page for 'Legal Translation Explained'. On the left is the book cover, which features the title 'LEGAL TRANSLATION EXPLAINED' in large, bold, blue letters, with the authors' names 'Enrique Alcaraz' and 'Brian Hughes' below it. The cover also includes the Routledge logo at the bottom right. The top of the cover has a dark blue header with the text 'Translation Practices Explained'. To the right of the cover, the book title 'Legal Translation Explained' is prominently displayed in a large, blue font. Below the title, the authors 'By Enrique Alcaraz, Brian Hughes' and the editor 'Edited by Anthony Pym' are listed. Further down, the copyright information '© 2002 – Routledge' and the page count '216 pages' are provided. There are two icons: a 'Google Preview' icon and an 'e-Inspection Copy' icon. At the bottom of this section, there are two links: 'For Librarians' and 'Available on Taylor & Francis eBooks >>'. At the very bottom of the page, there are four navigation tabs: 'Description', 'Contents', 'Series', and 'Subjects', with 'Description' being the active tab.

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 (construct-indicator-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, subject-matter, 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?**