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Advance Translation as a Means of Improving Source Questionnaire Translatability?

Findings from a Think-Aloud Study
for French and German
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1. Advance translation (“AT”)

- Part of source questionnaire development
- In ESS rounds 5-9, other projects, e.g. EWCS
- Translation as a means to detect and minimise translation problems and mistakes
- **Enhance translatability + intercultural portability**
- Linguistic (semantic, pragmatic, grammatical/syntactical) & cross-cultural / factual issues
- Usually 2-3 languages / language groups (depends also costs)
- Full team approach (TRA in TRAPD):
2 parallel translations + review session
(translators + survey methodologists)
→ **Review session** (recommendation as in TRAPD:
PERSONAL f2f discussion of ALL items)

2. Think-Aloud (TA) Study

Main hypothesis:

“AT enhances translatability of source questionnaire.”

TA study:

- 22 items that had been modified by AT, each in version PRE-AT (‘a’) and POST-AT (‘b’)
- Languages of AT:
French (Switzerland), Polish (items from ESS round 5)
German, Czech, Turkish (items from ESS round 6)
- TA: 12 translators: 6 FR, 6 DE native speakers
- Method: thinking-aloud with retrospective probes, where required (long TA sessions were partly tiring)

Think-Aloud (TA) Study – cont'd

- Video- and audio recorded + transcribed
- 22 x 12 = 264 Think-aloud protocols (TAPs)
- Coded in MaxQDA
- Developed own coding scheme
- *Analysed:* Problematic versus Non-Problematic codes, not codes as such (e.g. “footnote too vague”, “RC problem”)
- Intercoder reliability check:
Cohen's Kappa 0.709 = sufficiently reliable

3. Analysis

Mixed method:

Quantitative: Chi-squared test

Qualitative: observations by myself by Think-aloud Protocol

4. Results

Quantitative: chi-squared test

→ Statistical error probability: $p < .05$ (below 5%)

Result **across all 22 items**: $p < 0.1 \Leftrightarrow$ significant!

N= 1289 (all codings made)

=>Research hypotheses overall accepted

Chi-squared test **at item level**: small N (9 - 115)

=>at item level, quantitative result only to be used in combination with qualitative results

Quantitative and qualitative results

Results at level of individual items:

- Group 1: for 8 items clear improvement of translatability by AT, both in quali and quanti analysis
- Group 2: for 4 items clearly no improvement of translatability by AT, neither in quali nor in quanti analysis
- Group 3: for 10 items result open as quali and quanti results contradict each other
quantitative analysis not significant, but qualitative result suggests improved translatability

5. Interpretation

Group 2: (4 items clearly no improvement of translatability by AT, neither in quali nor in quanti analysis)

Possible explanation:

- Linguistic and/or cultural background AT \neq TA study
(Polish / Turkish / Czech vs. French / German)
AND AT comments refer rather to **cultural, administrative or political** than to linguistic issues

Interpretation cont'd

Group 3 (for 10 items result open as quali and quanti results contradict each other: quantitative analysis not significant, but qualitative result suggests improved translatability)

Possible explanation:

- Linguistic and/or cultural background AT \neq TA study
(see Group 2)
- Long decision-making process:
quantitative: many P codings as long decision-making
↔ qualitative: overall less problematic if translation found in the end

Interpretation cont'd

*Sub-Hypothesis 1: Success of Advance Translation depends on **type and number of changes** made because of AT*

→ Hypothesis **not** supported by qualitative analysis

*Sub-Hypothesis 2: **Choice of languages and cultures** of Advance Translation and TA study has effect on success of AT*

→ Hypothesis **supported** by qualitative analysis

Interpretation cont'd

Sub-Hypothesis 2: Choice of languages and cultures of Advance Translation and TA study has effect on success of AT

Hypothesis supported by qualitative analysis :

- **Similar or identical languages:** similar or identical problems detected also in TA study
- For languages or cultures **distant** from each other TA study did usually not detect similar problems

6. Conclusions /

Recommendations / New research ideas

Usefulness of AT overall confirmed

Recommendations for carrying out ATs:

- **Similar or identical languages** AT–TA
→ test replicability
- **Different and distant** languages AT–TA
→ test relevance of AT-induced changes **also for other languages**
- AT should cover as many languages / cultures as possible

Further research:

- More language combinations AT-TA
- Field translated questions pre- + post-AT

Questions or comments?

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