Advance Translation as a Means of Improving Source Questionnaire Translatability?

Findings from a Think-Aloud Study for French and German

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CSDI Workshop
18 March 2019
Warsaw, Poland
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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)
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
- $22 \times 12 = 264$ 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 ⇔ 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
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 ≠ 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 ≠ TA study (see Group 2)
- Long decision-making process:
  quantitative: many P codings as long decision-making
  \(\leftrightarrow\) 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**
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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