

# LANGUAGE TO INTERVIEW - COMPARABILITY IN A MULTILINGUAL CONTEXT

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# Language in a Survey

Mean of expressing stimuli, encoding responses and providing the context in a survey situation

Target population = one language  
(homogeneously monolingual)



**NO ISSUE OF SURVEY LANGUAGE**

Target population > than one language



**CHOICE OF LANGUAGE REPERTOIRE FOR A SURVEY, CHOICE OF LANGUAGE FOR PARTICULAR UNIT**

# Impact on Optimal Language Allocation on Survey Quality

- an increase in sample error due to the under-coverage – the exclusion of some population subgroups because of a language barrier;
- a decrease in the respondents' cooperation;
- an increase in measurement error. If the language skills or language proficiency of either a respondent or an interviewer is insufficient, it may increase item-nonresponse and also the total interview length; and
- systematic biases in measurement if the topic is language-dependent or if the choice of the language was defined by socially- rather than linguistically-driven criteria

Language can play

- - the role of context and influence the type of information that is received from a respondent
- can influence the type of information that is retrieved from memory
- can serve as guidance to evaluate the significance of survey topics, events, behavior and other information.

# Multilingual societies and Multilingual Individuals

## Multilinguality on community level

More than one ethnic or national group constitutes the target population (multi-ethnic society)

Current co-existence of different nations and ethnic groups

Historical interrelations among countries or nations (post-colonial societies)

Co-existence of large language groups

Large Language Group (s) + Minorities

## Individual Multilinguality

Particular respondent=more than one language (multilingual person)

Inter-ethnic upbringing or belonging

Migration

Education

Sectoral  
(concentrated in particular areas or population groups)

Randomly distributed

# The choice of interview language in survey process

## PREPARATORY STAGE

Researcher

Field manager

Task to solve

Information and Rational

## FIELD STAGE

Interviewer

Respondent

Task to solve

Information and Rational

# Process of Language Choice in a Survey

## Survey Process

- Defining Language repertoire  
- in which languages the survey can be conducted
- Preparation of Survey materials in selected languages
- Recruiting and training interviewers with relevant language proficiency and skills
- Distributing research materials/ interviewers among sampling units
- Allocation of Language for a particular respondent

## Information Required

- Usage and status of languages in a country (the official/ language (s) of a country/ region/ province, native languages/ mother tongues of target population or the most widely/often used language(s) of a country
- Availability and administration constraints of translation
- Availability and administration constraints of interviewers
- Information about allocation of multilingual population or multilinguale group between sampling units
- Linguistic proficiency, language skills and language behaviour of particular respondent

# Data source

## ***The Survey Module Language Usage in Post-Soviet countries***

Part of comparative study “Post-Soviet Trends”, 2010-2014

12 post-Soviet countries: Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Latvia, Lithuania, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan

Sample: probability area samples of population 18 years old and over, 1000-2500 interviews in each country

Data collection: face-to-face interviews in respondent’s homes collected by CESSI (Institute for comparative social research).

Module included questions on identification with a language (native language or mother-tongue, most often used language), the measurement of shares of multilingual groups, the usage of languages in different life situations (home usage, broader social usage, cultural-information exchange – media, literature, language of education) and the self-evaluation of receptive and expressive language skills

# Countries in the survey





## Native Languages (example – countries of the former Soviet Union)

<b>COUNTRIES</b>	<b>% of people who named more than one language as “native” in total sample</b>	<b>% of people who have all types of linguistic skills (oral, reading and writing) in official language of a country if named as native language</b>	<b>% population who are multilingual in language usage</b> <small>(use more than 1 language in different life situations)</small>
RUSSIA	7%	98%	7%
BELARUS	80%	39%	51%
UKRAINE	34%	71%	73%
MOLDOVA	33%	-	-
LATVIA	5%	-	-
LITHUANIA	6%	93%	38%
ARMENIA	7%	-	-
AZERBAIJAN	2%	94%	30%
GEORGIA	3%	-	-
KAZAKHSTAN	5%	66%	53%
KYRGYZSTAN	4%	84%	65%
TAJIKISTAN	3%	84%	51%

# Cessi Linguistic Skills

the official language of the country if named as a native language (% of the people who named the language as native)

LINGUISTIC SKILLS	KAZAK SHTAN	KYRGY ZSTAN	TAJIKI STAN	BELAR US	LITHUA NIA	UKRAI NE	AZEB AIJAN
Very fluent – can speak, read and write well in this language	66%	84%	84%	39%	93%	71%	94%
Can speak and read but has difficulties in writing	4%	5%	8%	4%	2%	3%	2%
Can speak fluently but cannot read and write at all	3%	3%	3%	2%	2%	2%	4%
Can read fluently but cannot speak well or write	4%	1%	1%	12%	-	3%	-
Has only basic knowledge of this language, not fluent	10%	5%	2%	42%	2%	20%	0%
Does not know this language at all	8%	3%	1%	1%	0%	2%	0%
Refused to answer this question	5%		1%			1%	

# Types of multilinguality

- **Universal or complete multilinguality** – 2 or more languages are used with equal frequency, intensity and in the same situations (play the same functions), languages are equal and interchangeable
- **Partial multilinguality** – One language is primary and used mostly or exclusively for daily communication at home and with close people, a second plays the role of supplementary language and it is used for only few functions (for example, for education, communication with government, mass media consumption, etc.).
- **Parallel multilinguality** or multilinguality with a division of functions between languages – the use of languages with equal intensity (frequency) but divided by functions (i.e., one language is for home use, another is for social or public use)
- **Multilinguality** by knowledge or identification but monolingual by usage (passive multilinguality).

# Composition of Individual Multilinguality

	UKRAINE	BELARUS	LITHUANIA	AZERBAIJAN
<b>Monolingual by usage</b> (uses only one language for all main tasks)	28%	49%	62%	70%
<b>Partially multi-lingual</b> (one language for everyday use and more than one language for other tasks)	51%	26%	32%	21%
<b>Multilingual with the division of language functions</b> (different languages for different tasks)	4%	3%	1%	0%
<b>Fully multilingual</b> (more than 1 language for all tasks)	17%	22%	5%	9%

# Language Skills

LINGUISTIC SKILLS	KAZAK SHTAN	KYRGY ZSTAN	TAJIKI STAN	BELAR US	LITHUA NIA	UKRAIN E	AZERB AIJAN
Full set of language skills in both languages (fluently speaks, reads and writes in both languages)	59%	50%	25%	35%	51%	57%	35%
Full set of language skills in one language and less than this in another language	40%	44%	63%	59%	47%	40%	63%
Only some language skills in both languages	1%	6%	11%	6%	2%	3%	2%

# Survey Mode/ Survey Tasks and Required Language Skills

**PERSONAL  
INTERVIEW**

Oral comprehension and  
expressive skills

**TELEPHONE  
INTERVIEW**

Advanced oral comprehension  
and basic oral expressive skills

**SELF-ADMINISTERED  
QUESTIONNAIRES**

Reading comprehension skill

**SHOWCARDS**

Reading comprehension skill

**OPEN-ENDED  
QUESTIONS**

Writing expressive skills

# Function of languages in everyday life, impact on Language Skills required for survey interview

## HOME LANGUAGE

Knowledge of basic language structure and basic vocabulary (people can “think” in this language), the speed of decoding, retrieval of information and forming the answer is high, good knowledge of main nouns (objects), verbs (actions) and adverbs (descriptions)

## SOCIAL LANGUAGE

Knowledge of abstract terms and concepts, political terms, judicial terms, institutions

## LANGUAGE OF EDUCATION

Knowledge of abstract terms and concepts, political terms, judicial terms, institutions

## PROFESSIONAL LANGUAGE

Knowledge of professional vocabulary, will be appropriate to use in interview on professional topics

## Info on Linguistic Behavior which are required to define the language for an interview

- Language composition - the incidence of multilinguality among the target population and the type of multilinguality – which languages and in which combinations and frequency are used on both group and individual level
- Language knowledge - the level of linguistic proficiency and language skills of multilingual individuals in different languages.
- Linguistic behavior - functional role of different languages in everyday life of a target group (language functions)
- The social and political reasons and communicative social norms, i.e., the “social meaning” of the language among the target population.



# Final choice of Language for an Interview

Externally

Internally

Pre-allocation

Based on external data or indirect indicators (base on ethnic group of respondent, name, other information)

Most convenient for interviewer

Free choice

“Prefer” to speak

Guided Choice

Instructions – choice the language which you consider “native”, speak at home, use more often

Info on the multilinguality of the target population; administrative, organizational, and financial considerations

- Selection of interviewers with relevant linguistic skills and proficiency;
- allocation of materials between PSUs and regions;
- guidance on the allocation of the language for particular respondents (or no guidance);
- training interviewers who work with different languages

# Discussion

## FUNCTION OF LANGUAGE IN INTERVIEW

ESTABLISHING RELATIONS

(cooperation, respect, pol. Neutrality)

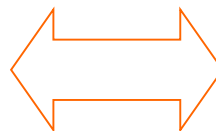


COMMUNICATION

(skills)

## INTRODUCTION

You would like to speak  
in this interview



AND language which you mostly –  
use for getting news;  
speak at home;  
can read (or write) more fluently

## Discussions

- Choice of language for an interview should not be ignored or presupposed without arguments
- What should be know to assign the languages for particular survey/ country, sampling unit
- Final choice of a language in the field – respondent or interviewer/ researcher
- If respondent – which information should be given to respondent to make optimal choice of a language for an interview
- Similar strategy/ rules for language choice should be used for all countries if the project is comparative.