Audio recordings vs. transcribed verbatim responses in translation on the GSS 2010
• Verbatim responses typically used to capture detailed information on items such as industry/occupation, and others
• Verbatim = word-for-word capture (in theory)
• What happens when an interview is conducted in a non-primary language?
General Social Survey (GSS)

- Funded by National Science Foundation
- Conducted by NORC in English since 1972
- Nationally representative survey with panel and area probability components
- Available in Spanish since 2006
- CARI recordings since 2008
• 4901 total completed interviews
• 3.4% completed in Spanish (n=167)
• Four standard industry/occupation questions
  • Verbatim replies
  • CARI recordings
• Spanish interview verbatim responses recorded in English

• Opportunity to look at on-the-fly translation
Industry/Occupation questions

- OCCSLF. What kind of work (do you/did you) normally do? That is, what (is/was) your job called?
- MAINSLF. What (do/did) you actually do in that job? Tell me what (are/were) some of your main duties?
- INDSLF. What kind of place (do/did) you work for?
- WHATSLF. What (do/did) they (make/do)?
The method

• 15% of Spanish cases randomly selected
• Replaced when audio was unsuitable
• Transcribed the response to 4 Industry/Occupation questions (asked of R)
• Verbatim data rated:
  • 1-5 on accuracy
  • 1-5 on completeness
  • Whether the difference would have changed the I/O code
## Results

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean score: accuracy</td>
<td>4.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean score: completeness</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of cases where the differences could have changed the I/O code</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A closer look: Geographical variants in terminology

“Bodega” =

- Grocery store
- Convenience store
- Winery
- Wine cellar
- Bar
- Storage room

- Supply room
- Trunk
- Airplane hold
- Warehouse
- …etc

3 cases of “bodega”, 3 different meanings
….3 instances of accurate translations
Conclusion & caveats

• Conclusion: (small-scale exploration but) it is an acceptable practice to translate verbatim replies on the fly

• Caveats:
  • Not compared to English verbatims
  • Jobs held while in the US
  • Some job titles given in English (or Spanglish)
  • Native vs non-native proficiency
Discussion!

• Cognitive burden on interviewers
• Common practices in other organizations?
Gratuitous graphic
Thank you!

doerr-lauren@norc.uchicago.edu