A Framework for the Effect of Language of Survey Administration on the Response Formation Processes

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Background

- Cultural frame switching
  - Triandis et al. (1965); Ross, Xun, and Wilson (2002)
- Language-dependent recall
  - Schrauf and Rubin (1998); Marian and Neisser (2000)
- Language codability
  - Kay and Kempton (1984); Lucy and Wertsch (1987)
- Spatial frames of reference
  - Pederson et al. (1998); Wassmann and Dasen (1998); Levinson (2003)
Language and Cognition

- Language
  - can cue what cultural frame to adopt
  - may determine what comes to mind
  - can cue memories
  - may determine to what we pay attention
  - may determine what reference frame we use
  - may influence our ability to draw distinctions
Part 1. Mechanisms Related to Language Effects

- Cultural Frame Switching
- Language-dependent Recall
- Codability
- Spatial Frames of Reference
Theoretical Framework

Language

- Cultural Frame switching
- Language-dependent recall
- Codability
- Spatial Frames of Reference

Comprehension
Comprehension Example

Haberstroh et al., (2002)
Comprehension

- Cultural frame switching
  - context sensitivity
  - endorsement of cultural values and norms
- Spatial frames of reference
  - Egocentric vs. allocentric frames of reference
- Codability
  - question target representation
Comprehension - Consequences

- Language can cue the interpretive frame adopted by bilingual respondents
- Speakers of languages that use different frames of reference may interpret survey visual images and response scales differently
- Interpretational differences due to use of general vs. concrete word for question target
Theoretical Framework

Language

- Cultural Frame switching
- Language-dependent recall
- Codability
- Spatial Frames of Reference

Retrieval and Judgment
Retrieval Example

Post-immigration Memories

Bugelski (1977)
Retrieval and Judgment

Behavioral reports

- Language dependent recall
  - language of encoding and recall

- Spatial frame of reference
  - differential perceptual tuning

- Codability
  - easy-to-code vs. difficult-to-code words
Retrieval and Judgment Cont.

Attitudes

- Cultural frame switching
  - question affective characteristics
  - accessible information
  - knowledge organization

- Codability
  - scale labeling
Retrieval and Judgment - Consequences

- The choice of language of survey administration would affect both quality and quantity of recall
- The frames of reference used in a language to describe specific situations are likely to induce the same frame of reference in the nonlinguistic coding of the same situations for memory
- What information is accessible to form an opinion will vary depending on language of survey administration
- Scales may be judged differently depending on whether scale labels are easily codable in both languages
Theoretical Framework

Language

- Cultural Frame switching
- Language-dependent recall
- Codability
- Spatial Frames of Reference

Formatting

Editing
Response Formatting Example

Ji, Schwarz and Nisbett (2000)
Response Formatting and Editing

- Cultural frame switching
  - use of frequency scales
  - scale anchoring
  - question affective characteristics
- Codability
  - scale labeling
Formatting and Editing - Consequences

- Depending on the cultural identity primed by the language of interview, different estimation strategies may be employed.
- The same question may be perceived to have different levels of socially desirable content depending on the respondent’s cultural identity.
Conclusions

• Any observed cross-country differences in respondents’ answers may be due to
  – actual differences in attitudes or behavior
  – differences in response processes related to language
  – differences in response processes related to cognition
  – unknown mix of all

• Need to understand the underlying processes to avoid cross-cultural “surprises”