Communication and Cross-Cultural Surveys

SIXTH INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON COMPARATIVE SURVEY DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN 6 MARCH 2009

Presenter: Theresa de McKinney

Contributors: Janet Harkness and Theresa de McKinney





Outline

- 1. Research goals
- 2. Pieces of the puzzle
- 3. Next steps



Research Goals

Assemble and synthesize conceptual frameworks that may contribute to understanding how communicative needs relevant to survey research can differ across populations.



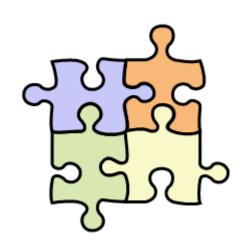
Research Goals (2)

Focus:

- Differences across speech communities
- Possible consequences for questionnaire design and adaptation.
- Perspective differs from "intercultural" research discussing "effective business communication" etc.



Pieces of the Puzzle





Pieces of the Puzzle

I. COMMUNICATIVE PROCESS & PRODUCTS



Communicative Process and Products (1)



- 1. Narrative structures
- 2. Coherence and cohesion strategies
- 3. Burden of comprehension (producer/receiver)
- 4. Indirect/direct presentation of information
 - Refusals, negotiations
- 5. What is said/not said
 - Taboo topics; "it goes without saying"



Communicative Process and Products (2)



- 6. High context/low context communication
 - High Context little explicit information
 - Low Context detailed explicit information (habitual preferences posited)

(E.T. Hall 1976)



Communicative Process and Products (3)



- 7. Discourse norms and strategies
 - "Truth" and "Deception"
 - Politeness
 - Silence
 - Turn-taking
 - Modesty/Deference
 -



Communicative Process and Products (3)



- 7. Discourse norms and strategies
 - "Truth" and "Deception"
 - Politeness
 - Silence
 - Turn-taking
 - Modesty/Deference
 -



Modesty/deference/self-concept



- Who is entitled to speak?
- Who is seen as the relevant source of information?
- What contribution will be made?
 - Response style connections
 - Direct/indirect replies; hedging responses, etc.



Pieces of the Puzzle

II. LANGUAGE: GRAMMAR AND LEXIS



Language

- Lexicon (word stock, vocabulary)
 - Words are signs
 - Used to refer to objects and ideas
 - Referential meaning associated with signs through use
 - Semantic meanings come and go

Syntax

- Active and passive voice
- Spatial and temporal reference systems
- Grammatical gender



Pieces of the Puzzle

III. PRAGMATICS



Pragmatics (1)



- **Semantics**: referential meaning
- **Pragmatics:** language in use
 - Intended and perceived meaning
 - Common ground
 - Gricean maxims
 - Manner, Relation, Quantity, Quality
 - Principles that govern conversational behavior and expectations
 - Additional component to communication alongside semantics



Pragmatics (2)



Speech act theory (Austin 1962)

- How we use words to do things
 - Would you like to go there?



Pragmatics (3)



Language games

- The survey language game
 - Expected participants
 - Expected roles
 - Expected outcome

(Wittgenstein 1953)



Pragmatics (4)



Relevance theory

 Emphasizes the inferential component of understanding/meaning

June: Did you hear how Karin is doing?

Nick: Barry said he'd call her this evening.

June: Good. I need to plan for next week.

(Sperber & Wilson 1995)



Pieces of the Puzzle

IV. OTHER CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS



Other Conceptual Frameworks



- Individualism/Collectivism
- Hofstede's dimensions of cultural variability
- Response style theories
- Face management theories
- Cultural frames of reference
 - Time, space, etc.



Other Conceptual Frameworks (2)

Response style theories

- Habitual preference for points on a response scale independent of question content
 - Extreme response style
 - Acquiescence
 - Modest/middling
- Social context effects on question perception and response (Braun 2008)
- Influence of cultural habitual awareness and perception on question processing and susceptibility to scale effects (Schwarz 2003)
- Social desirability sometimes described as a response style (Johnson & van de Vijver 2003)

 Nebrask

Other Conceptual Frameworks (3)



- Face management theories
 - Under some criticism as a universal principle
- Cultural frames of reference
 - Time (Boroditsky 2001)
 - Space (Levinson 1983)
 - Deixis (Levinson et al. 2002)
 - Causation



Next steps

- Making sense of the pieces
- Identifying interrelationships
- Investigating relevance for material design, version production and implementation
- Identification of areas where more inquiry is needed



Questions?

Thank you.





Communicative Process and Products (4)



- Enacting politeness
 - Welcoming to begin meetings (Maori and Pakeha; Schnurr et al. 2007)
- "Truth" and "Deception"
 - Impossible promises
- Silence
 - Different tolerance of silence in German discourse than in Spanish (Fernandez 2008)



Communicative Process and Products (5)



- Turn-taking
 - Interruption and topic management depends on language used (bilingual Cantonese-English speakers; Du-Babcock 1999)
- Modesty/deference/self-concept
 - Who is entitled to speak?
 - Who is seen as the relevant speaker?
 - What positions will be adopted?
 - Response style connections
 - Direct/indirect; hedging responses

