

Communication and Cross-Cultural Surveys



**SIXTH INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON
COMPARATIVE SURVEY DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION
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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.

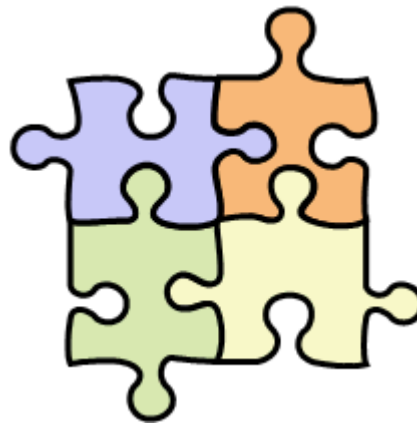
Research Goals (2)



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

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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)

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