Questionnaire translation in cross-cultural surveys

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Topics

1. Comparable translations in cross-cultural surveys
2. Team / committee approach / TRAPD
   [as applied in the European Social Survey (ESS)]
3. Translatability / cross-cultural implementation of the source questionnaire

1. Comparable translations in cross-cultural surveys

- In cross-cultural = multi-lingual surveys,
  ALL **language version** must be as comparable as possible
- This helps to ensure **comparable survey data**

“**Ask-the-Same-Question (ASQ)**” (e.g. ESS)

- Same stimulus in all language versions
- Functionally equivalent translation

➔Translation & Adaptation

- “As close as possible, but as distant as necessary”
- Close ≠ word-by-word translation
- Often word-by-word translations not possible because languages differ in lexis, grammar, structure
- NO word-by-word translations

Translation & Adaptation

Example ESS Round 7:

D33: Using the same card, please tell me to what extent you think [country] should allow unskilled labourers from [poor country outside Europe providing largest number of migrants] to ***come to live*** in [country]?

Dutch/Flemish:	“hier te komen ***wonen en leven***”
	“hier te komen ***wonen***”

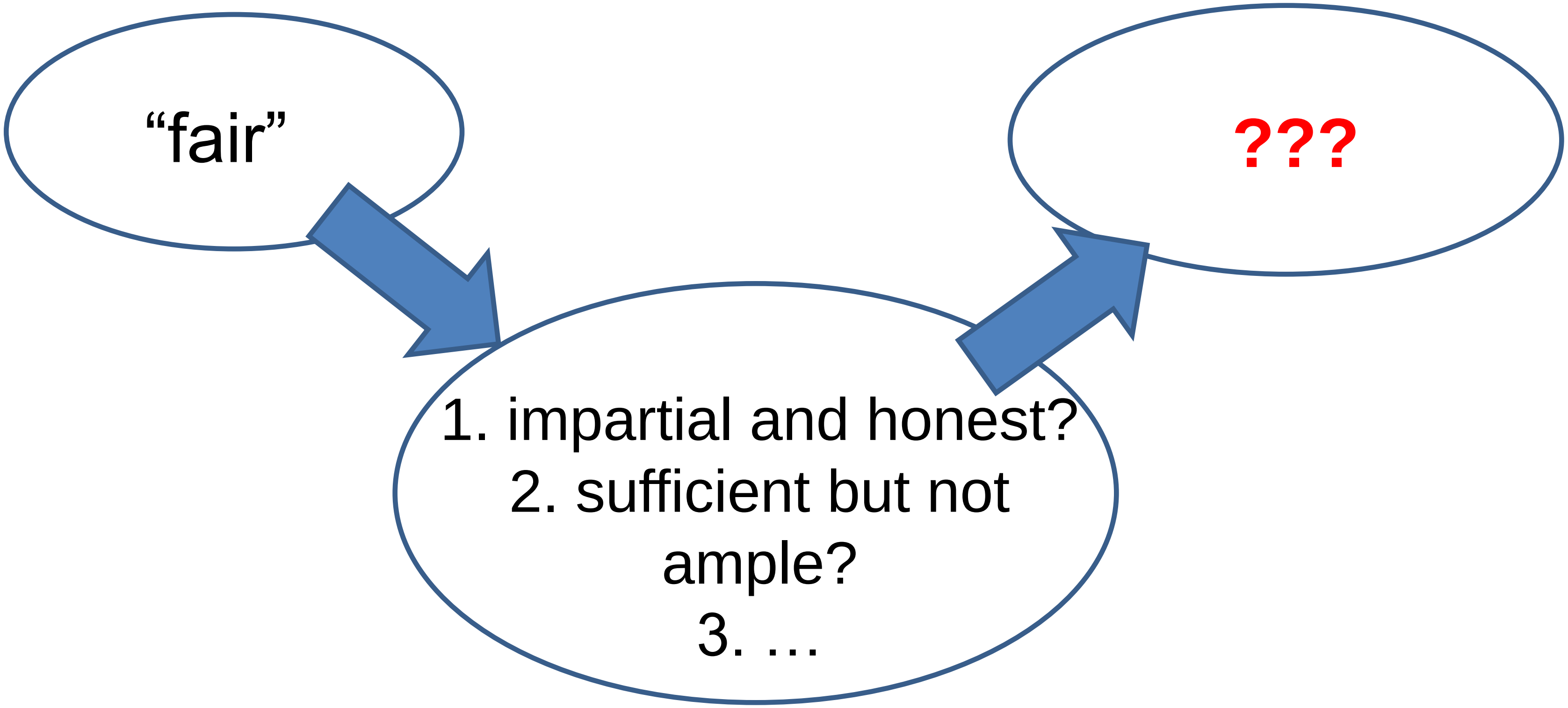
➔ **Translation** issue: how close ??

Translating meaning

What does it **mean** in EN?

➔ Express this in (your) target language

NB: NO one-to-one equivalencies between 2 languages!!



“fair”

1. impartial and honest?
2. sufficient but not ample?
3. …

???

Translation & Adaptation

Example ESS core questionnaire:

“During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following?

Have you … worn or displayed a ***campaign badge / sticker*****?**”

- ➔ May have to use other symbols in other countries, e.g. scarves or flags
- ➔ **Adaptation** (may otherwise be confusing / alter stimulus)

Which method for translating questionnaires for cross-cultural / multi-lingual surveys?

Backtranslation ??

~~Backtranslation ??~~

NO Backtranslation !!

2. Team / committee approach ‘TRAPD’ scheme

(Janet Harkness)

Team / committee approach / TRAPD

- Translation process, NOT assessment
- Translation quality through
  Multi-step + multi-disciplinary process
- **Team + cooperation** for detecting and ironing out translation problems and mistakes

- **Special form: TRAPD** (**T**ranslation, **R**eview, **A**djudication, **P**retesting, **D**ocumentation)
- TRAPD linked with:
  Janet Harkness & European Social Survey (ESS)

Team / committee approach: Basic procedures

- **T**ranslators translate
  (‘double translation’: 2 independent *parallel* translations)
- **R**eview session: reviewers (and translator/s) discuss and review each question
- **A**djudicator decides/signs off
  consults with senior reviewer
  if possible also joins in review session(s)

Team / committee approach: actors

- **T**ranslators:
  - experienced, also in questionnaire translation
  - briefed
- **R**eviewer:
  - experienced survey researcher
  - familiar with survey design
  - good translation skills
- **A**djudicator:
  - familiar with specific survey
  - good translation skills

Why 2 parallel translations?

ISSP 2007 EN-DE:

In your free time, how often do you … find yourself **thinking about work**?

T1: […***find yourself thinking about work*** *…*]

T2: [*…* ***can't switch off****…*] (abschalten)

- Almost never only 1 correct translation
- Mistakes / oversights / different understanding etc.

➔ Need to discuss best possible translation !

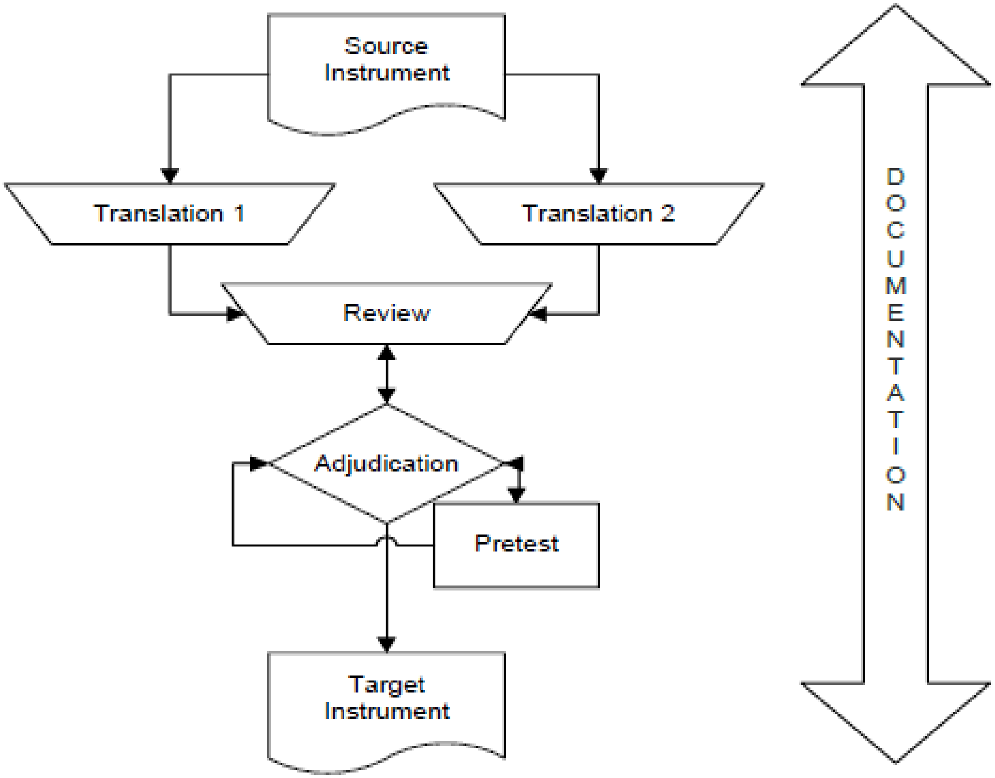
TRAPD

Pre-testing
pre-test translations with sample of target population

➔ testing = best quality check of questionnaire translation!

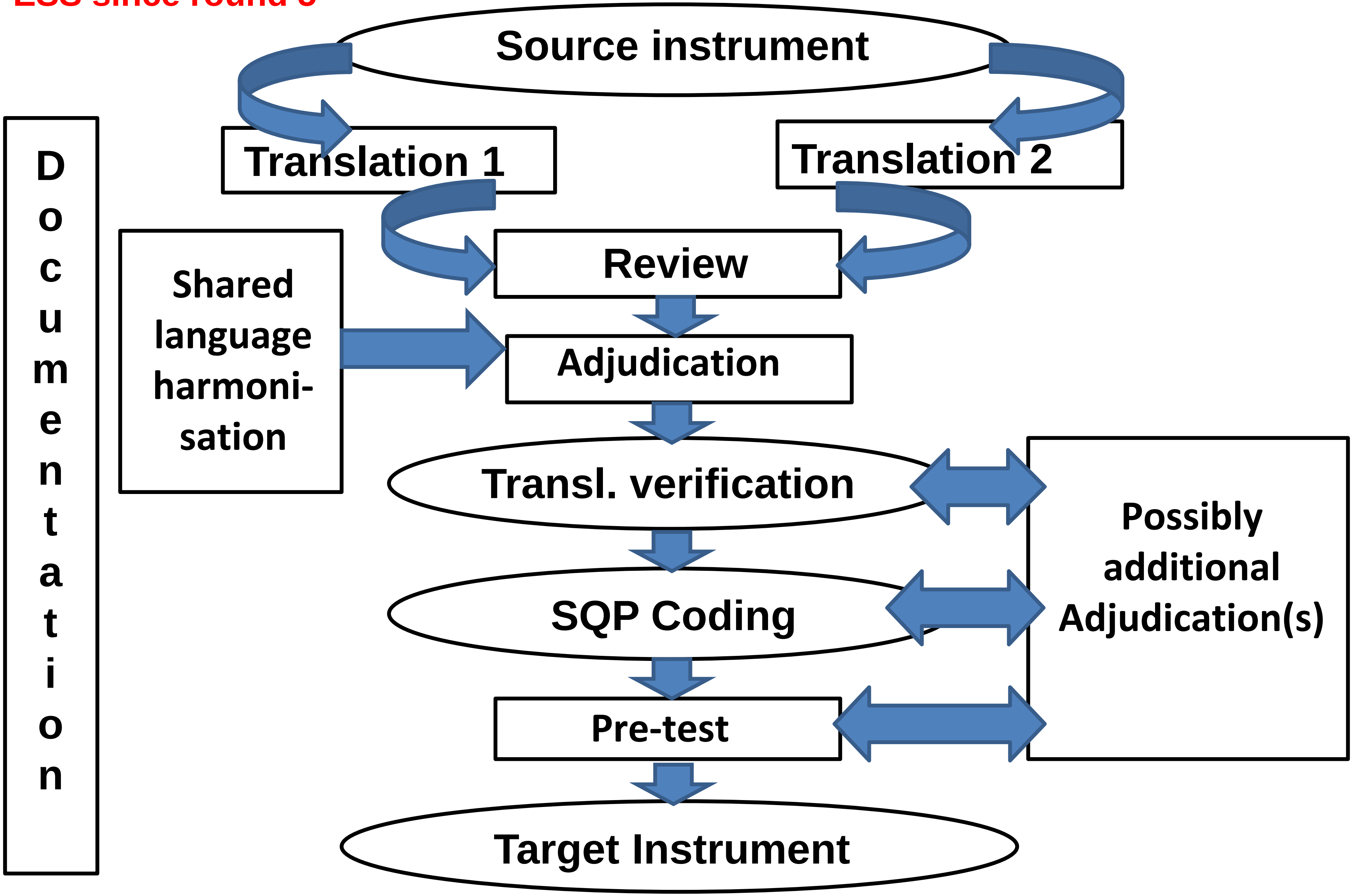
Documentation
document whole process for (project-)internal and external use

Figure 1. The TRAPD Team Translation Model


Source Instrument
Translation 1
Translation 2
Review
Adjudication
Pretest
Target Instrument
DOCUMENTATION

Janet Harkness (2011)

ESS since round 5



Source instrument

Translation 1

Translation 2

Review

Shared language harmoni-sation

Adjudication

Transl. verification

SQP Coding

Pre-test

Target Instrument

Possibly additional Adjudication(s)

Documentation

3. Enhance translatability / cross-cultural implementation of source questionnaire

Methods to enhance translatability / cross-cultural implementation of source questionnaires

- Translatability Assessment (e.g. cApStAn or medical field)
- Advance Translation (e.g. ESS / EWCS)

“Achieving optimal translations begins at the design stage.” (Tom Smith 2004)

- Linguistic / semantic level
  ➔ *source text unambiguous / easy to understand / easy to translate (into 20+ language versions)?*
- Cross-cultural / factual level
  ➔ *concepts in source text (‘what is asked’) transferrable into ALL target cultures?*

Translatability Assessment by cApStAn

- Covering a variety of target language groups
- Draft translations to identify translation and adaptation problems ➔ "quick and dirty" translations not intended for further use
- 1 translator (linguist) / language
- Rather 'commenting'

Advance Translation (ESS / EWCS)

- Usually about 3 languages
- Full team approach (TRA steps / multi-discipline) / language
- Elaborate, fully-fledged translations
- Fallacies better detected through thorough translation process + discussion / team approach
- Translations: not to be used, but quality comparable to final translation

Example detected through Translatability Assessment by cApStAn

“I can solve my problems on digital devices myself.”

When I have problems with digital devices, I can solve them myself.

OR

I can use digital devices to solve my problems by myself.

??

➔ Consistent understanding and translation needed!

Example detected through Advance Translation (ESS)

“To what extent do you generally feel that you have a sense of direction in your life?”

Annotation added for ‘**sense of direction**’:
“a feeling or an idea of how someone would like their life to be in the future”.

➔ Consistent understanding and translation needed!

Questions ?

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Examples

- “I can solve my problems on digital devices myself.”
- “I sometimes get rattled in stressful situations, but that’s not the norm.”
- “To what extent do you generally feel that you have a sense of direction in your life?”
- “How dizzy did you feel?” vs.
  “How lightheaded did you feel?”
- “Because of my weight my body feels uncomfortable when I move around.”