



The Netherlands Institute for Social
Research



Q2010 Training Courses

Cross-national surveys

Designing and translating
questions

Based on Harkness et al.
(many years)
and Saris et al. (many years)



Questionnaire design

Review of literature and existing instruments

Establishment of conceptual framework

Elicitation of items

Evaluation of cross-cultural equivalence

Development and refinement of draft questionnaire

Evaluation of psychometric properties

Evaluation of responsiveness

Preparation of users' manual and scoring scheme

Signing off procedure



Questionnaire design in ESS

[Questionnaire development report](#)

Commission international academic specialist to prepare paper on question batteries (and theory) on

- People's values and ideological orientations
- People's cultural/national orientations
- Underlying social structure of society



Questionnaire design in ESS

Ensure that various concepts were actually represented as precisely as possible

Reliability and validity tests (SQP)

Translation from source language into 1 target language for two-country pilot

Two-nation pilot

Analysis pilot

Comments national coordinators

Final source questionnaire and annotations

Translation and documentation

Verification

Small pilots in every participating country



Same/different questions

Ask different questions (ADQ) (ex-post output harmonisation)

- National diets
- Attitudes towards politics

Ask the same questions (ASQ) (input harmonisation)

- Do identical questions cover the same concept in different countries?

Mixed strategy

- Education
- Political parties

<http://www.ccsr.ac.uk/methods/events/SRARMP1/documents/Moon.ppt>



Old/new questions

Adopt

Adapt

Create



Adopt existing instruments

Easy and inexpensive

Many statistical techniques available

Questionnaire pretested in at least one country

Comparison with existing data possible

Cultural anchoring: suitability and translation

Replication of monocultural questions makes close translation likely, even if unsuitable

Existing does not mean good



Adapt existing instruments

Easier and less expensive than new instrument

Cultural context suitably enhanced

Adaptations possible at source questionnaire level or for particular countries

Few statistical techniques available to deal with dissimilar versions across language versions

Adaptation documentation required

Coordination of different adaptations needed

Existing does not mean good



Forms of adaptation

Terminological, factual

- Congress, parliament, Bundestag
- Voting mandatory, being an EU member

Language driven adaptation

- He/she

Convention-driven

- Left to right reading

Culture-driven

- Different norms, customs, practices
 - Two mothers
 - Same sex marriages



Create new questions

Sequential

- One source questionnaire “British English”
- When one survey moved to other country
- When new countries come into cross-national survey
- Country-bias
 - English language
 - English concepts “community”, “GDP”
 - English way of life

Parallel

- Cross-cultural input in every phase during development
- High development cost and complex organisation

Simultaneous

- Decentering (2 countries): cultural specifics eliminated to maximize adequacy for both
- Common core concepts implemented in country-specific fashion
- Country-specific issues added
- Not practicable for multinational studies
- High development cost and complex organisation



Practical solution ESS

ASQ

Create new questions

Reliability and validity tests and pilot

Input from national coordinators on source questionnaire

Adaptation on factual issues

Annotation source questionnaire

- “with xxx we mean”

TRAPD translation procedure

MTMM experiments in final questionnaire



Translation in ESS

Back translation

- It's raining cats and dogs
- Have you had your tea yet?
- Geniessen in vollen Zügen
- Dear undertakers

Perfect backtranslation does not guarantee a good question in the target language

- Good help in finding obvious errors (whealthy/healthy)



TRAPD

Translation

- More than 1 translator
- Parallel or split
- What is a good questionnaire translator
- Training of translators

Review

- Discuss and compare

Adjudicate

- Decide on 1 version

Pretest

SQP-test

Verification

Documentation

- Also of review process