Deliverable Number: D3.1

Deliverable Title: Standards for the implementation of the two survey translation approaches: the 'stay close to the source' approach & the adaptive approach

Work Package: 3: Maximising equivalence through translation

Deliverable type: Two instruction documents

Dissemination status: Public

Submitted by: GESIS-Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences

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SERISS (Synergies for Europe's Research Infrastructures in the Social Sciences) aims to exploit synergies, foster collaboration and develop shared standards between Europe's social science infrastructures in order to better equip these infrastructures to play a major role in addressing Europe's grand societal challenges and ensure that European policymaking is built on a solid base of the highest-quality socio-economic evidence.

The four year project (2015-19) is a collaboration between the three leading European Research Infrastructures in the social sciences – the European Social Survey (ESS ERIC), the Survey of Health Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE ERIC) and the Consortium of European Social Science Data Archives (CESSDA AS) – and organisations representing the Generations and Gender Programme (GGP), European Values Study (EVS) and the WageIndicator Survey.

Work focuses on three key areas: Addressing key challenges for cross-national data collection, breaking down barriers between social science infrastructures and embracing the future of the social sciences.

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Note on Deliverable 3.1:

In the context of SERISS Task 3.1, an experiment is organised to test two different approaches to questionnaire translation: the so-called 'ask-the-same-question' approach, which is a rather close translation method and has been the basic rule in most of the multilingual surveys, will be tested against a different approach that allows a higher degree of adaptation, an approach that has so far not been applied by the major surveys out of the concern that comparability between the different language versions may be hampered by a presumably too large distance between the source and the target versions.

The results of this experiment will be highly useful for the field of survey research because so far, translation teams in questionnaire translation have often been hesitating about the level of adaptation or freedom that may be permitted in comparative survey projects. Having empirical evidence in this respect has been needed for a while and will be a novelty.

This experiment will be carried out in two languages: Estonian in Estonia and Slovene in Slovenia. In each of these countries, three translation teams will work on altogether 60 questionnaire items to be translated according to both methods from English into both languages, subdivided into three sets of 20 items each. An elaborate research design has been worked out in order to minimize team effects: each item will be translated three times into each of the languages, twice following one method and once following the other method. An important aspect in the research design was to minimise potential team effects. The resulting translations will be fielded in the CRONOS webpanel that is a product of SERISS Work package 7.

The research question is to find out the differences in the translations resulting from the two methods, more insight into how adaptation works and is being handled in these two languages and if one method yields better data than the other. The overall goal will be to try and deduce guidelines for questionnaire translation stating the level of adaptation or freedom that may be allowed in order to achieve high-quality, but still comparable data.

The translations in the context of this experiment will be carried out between the beginning of July and the middle of September 2017.

For instructing the translation teams about the two different translation approaches, two separate Instructions documents have been drafted, and this deliverable consists of these two documents.

The translation teams are composed of persons with experience in questionnaire translation and questionnaire design but who have not yet participated in the ESS translation procedures. As the test teams should not be aware of the fact that two methods are tested, no hint in the titles or text of these two documents should make them understand the exact purpose of this experiment. Therefore, the approaches 'close/ask the same question' and 'adaptive' are not mentioned in these texts, neither in the titles nor in the texts.

This deliverable is organised as follows: first come the instructions document as it will be sent to the teams using the 'ask the same question / close' translation approach, and second the instructions document for the teams using the 'adaptive' approach.

The elements in the document titles that are highlighted in yellow will be modified in each case, making reference to: (a) the batch of items (1st 20 items, 2nd 20 items, 3rd 20 items), and (b) the respective teams (Estonia 1-2-3, Slovenia 1-2-3). No more precise information will be given in the documents sent out to the testing teams.

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SERISS Questionnaire Translation Studies 2017

Instructions for Translation Teams

Team [Slovenia 1-2-3xxx / Batch xxx]

General note:

Many thanks for taking part in our SERISS questionnaire translation studies!

We will send you three sets of 20 questionnaire items each.

- *Each new batch of 20 items is a completely separate study and therefore new translation project. Because of the goal of each study, the translation instructions for each set of questions will differ. It is crucial for the success of each study that you follow the translation instructions carefully, rather than using the instructions from the previous batch to carry out your work. We would like you to start each time anew, according to the respective translation instructions and the explanations given in the source text.*
- *Some of these questions have been translated previously for other studies. Please disregard (and avoid if possible) any existing translations of the items that you may find on the web.*

Target population and survey mode:

The target group of the translated questionnaire will be a sample of all persons aged 18 and over (no upper age limit) resident within private households in your country, regardless of their nationality.

The survey will be administered online as a self-completion questionnaire.

[1] The authors acknowledge the European Social Survey (ESS)'s Translation Expert Panel, and in particular Dorothée Behr (GESIS-Leibniz Institute for the Sciences) and Alisú Schoua-Glusberg (Research Support Services, Chicago) for their contribution in drafting and finalizing this document.

Specific translation guidance

Please follow these instructions as strictly as possible!

- ➔ Make sure that the content and message of the source text is translated in its entirety so that nothing is lost.
- ➔ Your translation should be as close as possible and sensible to the source text, but not a word-for-word or literal translation, because these questions will be used to interview the general population.
- ➔ Do not modify the semantic or pragmatic meaning of the source text.
- ➔ Do not add or modify text elements, such as examples, symbols or idioms.
- ➔ Keep the same style and register as in the source.
- ➔ Your translation should be linguistically correct and correspond to normal language use in your target language.
- ➔ Some parts of the source text may only sound natural in the context of a survey interview (e.g., 'How much do you agree or disagree?'). In these cases, consider whether similar 'survey speak' exists in the target language.

General processes

The overall translation approach: the 'Committee-based approach' (also known as 'team approach' or 'committee approach')

The SERISS questionnaire translation procedure follows a team approach in which translators and experts with survey knowledge work together to produce the translated versions. In this team approach, two roles are involved in producing the final version of a translated questionnaire: *translator* and *reviewer-cum-adjudicator*.

- *Translators* should be skilled practitioners who have received training or briefing on translating questionnaires; ideally they are trained and/or professional translators with several years of experience in questionnaire translation.
- *Reviewers-cum-adjudicators* (sometimes also referred to simply as 'reviewers') need to have very good translation skills and must be familiar with questionnaire design principles and/or survey research in general; ideally this will be a person with a certain standing in survey research. This person should chair and guide the 'committee' or 'review' meeting in which all items should be discussed one after the other (see below).

A good part of the work, apart from first translations, is done actually working in a group or team. The translators translate the work assigned and meet with the reviewer-cum-adjudicator to discuss the draft versions and arrive at a final version of the translated questionnaire.

The basic idea of the 'team' or 'committee' approach is to rely on a *multi-disciplinary* and *multi-step* translation approach: the quality of the final translations should be enhanced by (a) involving players with different qualifications and skills, mainly in linguistics/translation, survey research and social sciences, cultural and linguistic knowledge needed to translate appropriately in the required varieties of the target language, and (b) enabling different translation options to be developed, discussed and assessed in a series of several steps. This way it can be avoided that careless translations are fielded without performing different quality checks and being carefully considered by different people involved.

Why a team and not just a translator?

Using one translator may appear to be cheaper and faster than using several translators, a reviewer and an adjudicator and would also seem to eliminate the need to coordinate teamwork. However, relying on one person to provide a questionnaire translation is problematic, in particular if no team-based assessment is undertaken. A translator working alone and simply 'handing over' the finished assignment has no opportunity to discuss and develop alternatives. Regional variance, idiosyncratic interpretations, and inevitable translator blind spots are better handled if several persons are involved and an exchange of versions and views is part of the review process. In addition, survey translations often call for words people say rather than words people write. Group discussion where linguistic expertise is combined with input from researchers with experience in survey implementation is likely to highlight such problems. Team approaches include the translators in the review meetings. Since they are familiar with translation problems in the texts, the review is more effective. So the translators also act as reviewers in the review meeting.

Team approaches to survey translation and assessment have been found to provide the richest output in terms of (a) options to choose from for translation and (b) a balanced critique of versions.

Organising the translations and the review session

The process will start with 2 translators translating the whole text in parallel, that is, independently from one another. Then, both translations are discussed in their entirety in the review session, chaired by a reviewer-cum-adjudicator.

The whole process will be documented in an Excel file.

The two parallel translations

For every batch of 20 questionnaire items, the two translators will receive an Excel file populated with the English source questionnaire items. They will have to add their translations with any comments, queries or observations they may have in this Excel file.

The translators should in no case contact each other during the translation phase!

The two translators will be asked to deliver their translations to the reviewer-cum-adjudicator by an agreed date.

The review session

Preparing the review session:

Before the review session, the reviewer-cum-adjudicator should send around the Excel file containing both parallel translations to all meeting participants (that is, normally, both translators and the reviewer-cum-adjudicator). This should happen early enough so that every participant has enough time to get familiar with both translations and to make up their mind about possible queries or problems to discuss during the meeting.

During the review meeting:

- The following people should participate in the review meeting: the 2 translators and the reviewer-cum-adjudicator. Additional people may participate, depending on the particular needs or team composition (such as additional translators or linguists, English native speakers, additional survey researchers or questionnaire designers).
- The roles during the meeting should be clarified and agreed on before starting the discussions:
  (a) Chair / moderator of the meeting: usually the reviewer-cum-adjudicator chairs the meeting.
  (b) Taking notes: it is useful to clarify early enough who will take notes and document translation decisions as well as queries or comments.
- The review meeting should be held in the target language of the translation being discussed.

The review meeting should be organized as follows:

- Set up a projector to show both parallel translations plus the columns for the final translation visible during the meeting.
- Record the meeting for documentation purposes (audio-recording).
- All items must be discussed one by one; every element, that is, every sentence and answer category, must be discussed.
- Always consider all parallel translations: based on these the best-possible translation should be agreed on during the meeting; this means not just selecting one of both, but often new translation options arise in the course of the review discussion.
- All meeting participants should actively participate in the committee meeting for discussing and together agreeing on the final translation: this means both the translators and the reviewer-cum-adjudicator. While the reviewer has the leading role to chair and moderate the review discussions, the translators have a decisive role on the final decisions, as these are to be taken by the whole translating team.
- The final translation decisions should have the character of FINAL translations, so that no polishing will be needed after the review meetings.

Documentation of Translation Process and Outcome / Dealing with translation comments and queries

The whole process will be documented in an Excel file.

The source text will be copied into the Excel file, and there will be columns prepared for all steps:

- Both initial independent translations: columns for translations as well as columns for any comment the translators may have on their initial translations;

- Review session: (a) a column for the translation agreed on during the review session, (b) a column for comments arising during the review session;
- Additional columns may be added as needed, but please don't add any new rows.

It is recommended that translators note down – while doing the translation – problems, alternatives, uncertainties or any other thoughts they wish to share with reviewer-cum-adjudicators. The Excel form allows translators to make this documentation *while* doing the translation.

Queries or comments

If you feel that there are issues that prevent you from going ahead in the translation process, please contact the project management at ess_translate@gesis.org.

Please note any comments in the 'comments' columns in the Excel file.

Annotations / footnotes

You will see some annotations, also referred to as 'footnotes', in the source text: these are exclusively meant to facilitate the translation process and should NOT be translated.

Careful proofreading at the end

At the very end, before sending your translations to the project team (ess_translate@gesis.org), please make sure you carefully proofread your translation, checking for:

- Completeness—ensuring there are no omissions
- Copy-paste errors
- Spelling mistakes, missing commas, exclamation points…
- General meaning correspondence: There have been cases where careless reading has led to mistranslations: "wealthy" was translated as "healthy", or "wanting a job" was translated in the sense of "waiting for a job".

Parallel translation and review (and adjudication) are meant in particular to pick up these issues, but one last check (or two) before sending the translations off can help avoiding serious data loss.

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Specific translation guidance

Please follow these instructions as strictly as possible!

- ➔ Make sure that the content and message of the source text is translated in its entirety so that nothing is lost.
- ➔ Where necessary, please adjust the question to make it more suitable to the socio-cultural context of the target culture. You may find this necessary to facilitate the understanding in the target country or to address issues of sensitivity and cultural differences in how the topic is seen in the country.
- ➔ Use idioms or typical elements of spoken or colloquial language, as appropriate.
- ➔ If necessary, change text elements like examples or symbols.
- ➔ Aim to produce the most adequate translation that facilitates understanding by the target population and enhances precision and quality. Where needed, take a certain level of freedom in how the text is phrased.
- ➔ The translated text should not sound like a translation but rather like a text drafted in the target language.
- ➔ The target text should correspond to the natural language use and to the survey habits in your target country and target language.

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