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## Experiment for testing questionnaire translation methods in the European Social Survey (ESS): “Ask the same question” (close) versus more adaptive approaches

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# 1. Background



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## Dilemma

- Most surveys: “Ask-the-same-question (ASQ)”
- No definition of what ‘same question’ means
- Researchers make different interpretations
  - ‘As close as possible’ at the word level
  - Others focus on making stimulus functionally equivalent and believe this requires adaptation
- No empirical evidence yet on which interpretation leads to more comparable data

## Deciding level of closeness: example

How much of the electricity used in [country] should be generated from each energy source?

Energy sources: Coal, Natural gas, Hydroelectric power, Nuclear power, Solar power, Wind power, Biomass

- A very large amount
  - A large amount
  - A medium amount
  - A small amount
  - None at all
-

## Deciding level of closeness: example (cont'd)

- Advance translation and translation verification suggested in most languages 'amount'
  - share / portion / part
- BUT portion posed limitations on the answers: you can't have a very large portion of all energy sources
- TEP: Natural language use vs. safe translation?
- Which version yields most comparable data?

## Different forms of adaptation

Type	Domain	Subtype
1	Language	Linguistics-driven
2	Language	Pragmatics-driven
3	Language	Comprehension-driven
4	Culture	Terminological/factual-driven
5	Culture	Norm-driven
6	Measurement	Familiarity-/recognizability-/ format-driven
7	Measurement	Other

(Behr 2013)



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## 2. Research goals



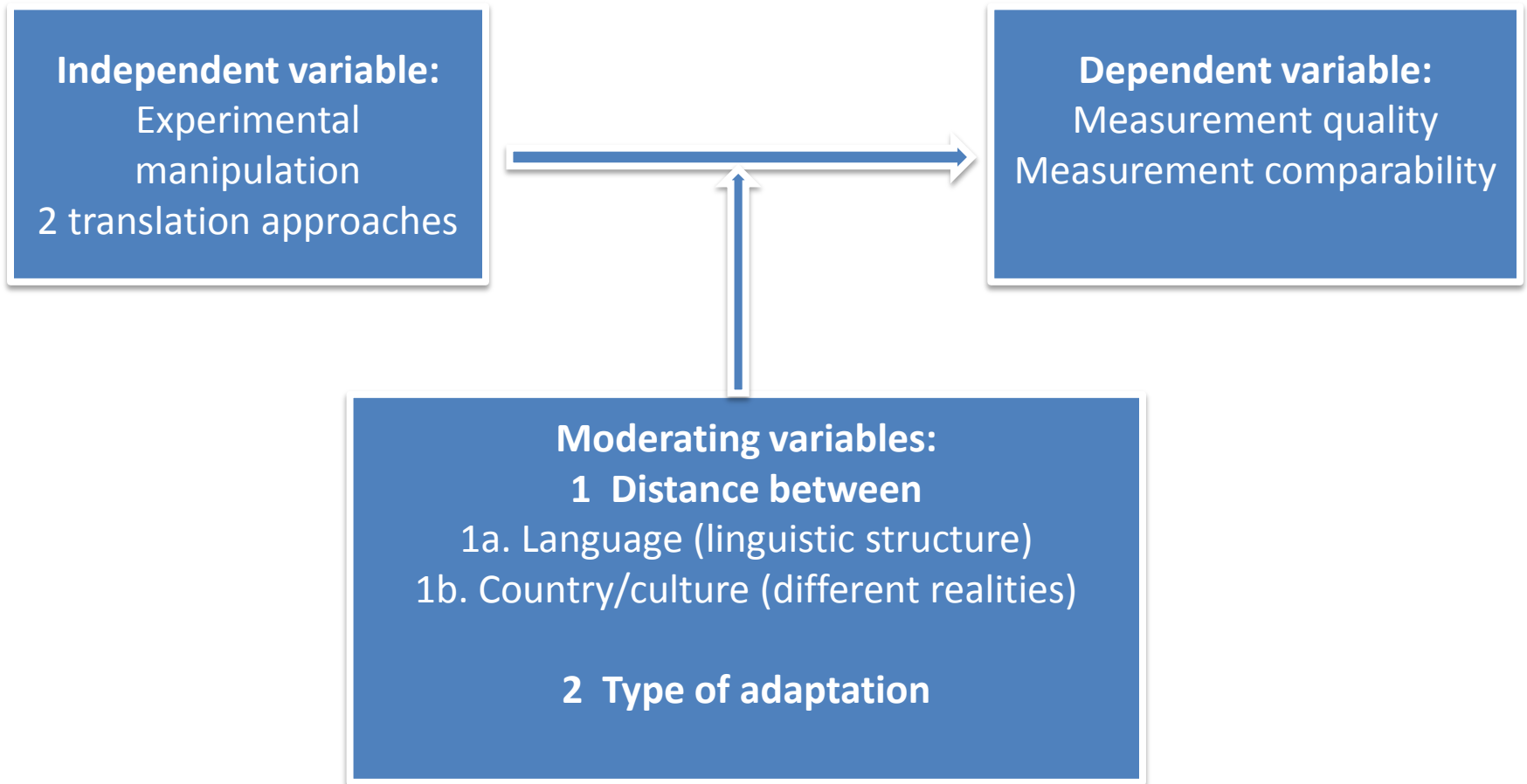
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## Research goals / questions

- What to do when "dilemmas" come up?
- Which approach is better: 'as close as possible' vs. 'encouraging adaptation'
  - Better = yielding more comparable data
- Under which conditions is that approach better?  
Does the effect differ by...
  - Language: are some languages more resilient to close translations than others?
  - Type of adaptation: factual, linguistic...
  - Degree of adaptation: are some adaptations "too much"?



## Overall model



# Research design

- 2 sets of instructions produced: close vs adapted
- 2 languages: Slovene (Slovenia) & Estonian (Estonia)
- For each language 3 teams and 3 sets of items:
  - 2 parallel Translations following experimental instructions
  - Review / Adjudication meeting with instructions present
- Manipulation checks
  - Audio taping
  - Follow up interviews with translators
- Data collection: Cross-National Online Survey (CRONOS) panel
  - 60 items, 500 respondents per language (including source language)

## Instructions excerpt

### Encouraging close TR:

- As close as possible and sensible, not literal
- Don't modify semantic and pragmatic meaning
- Don't modify examples, idioms, symbols
- Survey speak allowed

### Encouraging adaptation:

- To make suitable to the socio-cultural context
- Idioms, colloquial language
- Adapt symbols
- Should not sound like translation

**Close = 'As close as possible'**

**Adapt = 'Encouraging adaptation'**

	<b>Team 1</b>	<b>Team 2</b>	<b>Team 3</b>
<b>Items 1-20</b>	Close	Adapt	Adapt
<b>Items 21-40</b>	Adapt	Close	Adapt
<b>Items 41-60</b>	Close	Adapt	Close

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## Organising the translations and review meetings

- Challenge: avoid contamination of approaches
    1. Each translator to produce translations following the first assigned method by deadline
    2. Each team has a first review meeting (1<sup>st</sup> assigned method)
    3. Wait 1-2 weeks
    4. Each translator to produce translations following the second assigned method
    5. Each team has a second review meeting (2<sup>nd</sup> assigned method)
    6. Another 1-2 weeks
    7. Etc.
-

## Item selection

- 60 questionnaire items (from ESS / SHARE / ISSP / EVS)
- Guiding principles:
  - Include a variety of forms of adaptation
  - Chose questions that allow invariance testing
  - Questions that had been shown problematic in translation, especially in Estonian and Slovenian

# Analysis

- Analysis ↔ items selected
- Depending on questionnaire items
  - Multigroup Confirmatory Factor Analysis
  - Item response theory
  - Web probing
  - Questions from benchmark surveys
  - Content analysis of the review meetings: also learn about how instructions worked

## Challenges setting up the experiment

- Define the level of closeness and adaptation for each experimental condition
- Translate that definition into a manipulation: instructions
- Finding suitable translators and reviewers
- Ensure that participants adhere to the instructions
- Select questions that may be affected in all languages
- Defining what makes an approach better
  - Control for translator quality effects
  - Control for type of adaptation effects
  - Control for language effects



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- ESS Methods Advisory Board
- Frederic Mahler, SHARE



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# THANKS !

## Ana & Brita



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