

# **Backtranslation vs. Committee Approach: An Experiment Comparing How They Perform in Questionnaire Translation**

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Alisú Schoua-Glusberg  
Research Support Services  
alisu@researchsupportservices.com

Ana Villar  
City University, London  
Ana.Villar.1@city.ac.uk

# Outline

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- ☐ Background
- ☐ Research goals
- ☐ Research design
- ☐ Findings
- ☐ Lessons learned and next steps



# **BACKGROUND**

# Survey Translation

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1. Increasing need for multilingual surveys
2. Translation usually outsourced
3. Need to make sure translation is fit for use
4. Need to take appropriate assessment steps

# What is survey translation assessment meant to do?

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1. Judge adequacy of text for culture
2. Judge appropriateness of translation
  - ☐ Misunderstandings/translation mistakes
  - ☐ Regional variations, tone adequacy
  - ☐ Check for grammar errors/typos
3. Provide alternatives where mistakes are encountered → find solution
4. Evaluate how question is understood

# Translation Assessment Methods

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1. Expert review
2. Committee review
3. Focus groups
4. Cognitive interviewing
5. Comparison of original text to a back-translation

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# Back translation (BT)

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1. A text translated into language B from language A is translated back into language A.
2. The two language A texts are compared to try to decide on the quality of the language B text.
- 3 The non-English B text is NOT assessed in standard BT assessment



# What is Committee Approach?

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(Also known as Team Approach)

A team of translators works together:

- They TRANSLATE the instrument independently (full or split)
- They meet to REVIEW and refine the initial translation(s)
- Present at the meeting one or more persons who can ADJUDICATE disagreements

Thus, they implement first steps of Harkness' TRAPD model.



# **RESEARCH GOALS**

# Research goals

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- ❑ Gather evidence on efficiency of
  - ❑ Back translation
  - ❑ Committee approach
- ❑ Does each approach catch as many translation problems/issues as the other?



# **RESEARCH DESIGN**

# Background Information

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- ❑ Procedures we chose mirror standard practice in BT and CA based on large literature review and our own practice
- ❑ We used Folkman & Lazarus' 66 item Ways of Coping Scale, widely used questionnaire containing a wide range of thoughts and acts that people use to deal with the internal and/or external demands of specific stressful encounters.

# Sample Items

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## Ways of Coping Scale (Folkman & Lazarus)

Please read each item below and indicate, by using the following rating scale, to what extent you used it in the situation you have just described.

(Not used/Used somewhat/Used quite a bit/Used a great deal)

1. Just concentrated on what I had to do next – the next step.
2. I tried to analyze the problem in order to understand it better.
3. Turned to work or substitute activity to take my mind off things.
4. I felt that time would make a difference – the only thing to do was to wait.

# Design for Committee Approach

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- ❑ Followed full committee (vs. split) so there would be one full original translation to send to backtranslator
- ❑ Each of 3 English-Polish translators worked independently
- ❑ Committee discussions followed
- ❑ Fully reviewed and adjudicated final version was produced

# Design for BT

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- ❑ Of the 3 translators, we chose translator with strongest credentials
- ❑ Translation from that translator was given to backtranslator
- ❑ BT was reviewed by research team as would typically be done in BT, by comparing with original English
- ❑ For discrepant items, comparison of original English and BT was done with another Polish translator. Errors or problems in BT were identified. Errors or problems in original translation were identified.



# Compare Both Methods

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1. Identify problems in the original translation:
  - ☐ that were found by BT process
  - ☐ that were missed by BT process
2. Identify problems in the original translation:
  - ☐ that were found by CA process
  - ☐ that were missed by CA process

# FG with Monolinguals

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We held a focus group with Polish monolinguals (Polish) to get their views on most idiomatic version in cases where style differs in OT and CT

12 participants (7 women, 5 men) / Ages 24 to 69 / Time in US ranged from weeks to 19yrs

Analysis still to be completed

# Steps Completed to Date

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1. Original Translation (OT) + Back translation (BT)
2. Committee translation (CT)
3. Identification of OT issues caught by BT
4. Identification of issues created by BT where OT was not a problem
5. Identification of OT issues caught by CT
6. Identification of OT issues missed by BT
7. Identification of issues created by CT
8. Preliminary look at FG findings



# **FINDINGS TO DATE**

# Findings on BT

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- ❑ Comparison of Original English (OE) and Backtranslated English (BT) showed:
  1. Of the 66 items, 31 appeared fully consistent in meaning
  2. In the 35 items investigated:
    - ❑ 12 showed problems in 1<sup>st</sup> step (OT)
    - ❑ 12 showed problems in 2<sup>nd</sup> step (BT)
    - ❑ 5 were not really problems
    - ❑ 6 need further investigation because of use of idioms or because of ambiguity in original

# Example: BT error (false positive) and OT error

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- ❑ Stood my ground and fought for what I wanted (OE)
- ❑ Postawiłem na swoim i walczyłem o to, co chciałem osiągnąć.(OT)  
[I stood my ground and fought for what I wanted to achieve.]
- ❑ I stood up for myself and fought for what I wanted done. (BT)

# Findings on BT

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- ❑ Comparison of Original English (OE) and Backtranslated English (BT) showed:
- ❑ BT implies problems with target that are **not** problems
- ❑ BT will find some *possible* problems
- ❑ BT does not identify source of problem or its resolution
- ❑ Further steps needed, including target language expertise

# Preliminary findings on CT

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- CT found 10 instances where semantically BT did not identify problems but where the OT was found to be unidiomatic (stilted / translation sounding)
- CT appears to have found all problems that BT identified



# Initial FG Findings

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- ❑ Not unexpectedly, a lot in language is idiosyncratic
- ❑ Looked at first 10 items. On 2, all OT and BT meant the same. On other 8, 39 said yes and 55 said no. (What does this say about the final BT step?)
- ❑ Participants equally divided as to which sounds more idiomatic.
- ❑ More reasons to pretest translations

# Next steps

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Our findings point to limitations of BT: it creates as many problems as it finds

- Finish analysis to compare methods
- Include monolinguals in assessing most idiomatic version

# Recommendations

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- If committee translation involves an adjudicator who is not a speaker of the target language, add step in committee meetings where CT of each item is glossed back into the source language.

# Thank You

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□ Questions

□ Email:  
alisu@researchsupportservices.com