This seminar will deal with the topic of translating questionnaires for cross-cultural surveys. I will start with an introduction to the field of questionnaire translation, looking at different approaches. The different translation and translation quality assessment methods currently used in survey translation will be presented and discussed, such as single translation, back translation or team translation.

The best-practice standard in academic social sciences has been a ‘team’ or ‘committee approach’ which had been developed by Janet Harkness at the end of the 20th century (Harkness, 2003). It consists of an interdisciplinary approach bringing together actors from different backgrounds (in particular trained translators and social scientists / survey researchers); and this approach is based on a multi-step procedure, allowing the translation to pass different translation and assessment steps. A more elaborate form of the team approach is the so-called TRAPD scheme (consisting of the steps of Translation-Review-Adjudication-Pretesting-Documentation). The author has been leading the area of questionnaire translation in the European Social Survey (ESS) for ten years, and the ESS is the flagship project having implemented this TRAPD approach since its beginning in 2002. This seminar will present and discuss this TRAPD scheme, its implementation in practice, discussing also pros and cons.

As translation quality also depends partly on the source text, the importance of developing appropriate source questionnaires, as well as assessing and/or improving the translatability of source questionnaires will be discussed, both in terms of linguistic as well as cross-cultural aspects. Some methods will be presented that are being used in large-scale social sciences surveys to assess and improve translatability, such as advance translation or translatability assessment.

On the more practical side, the audience will learn about the do’s and don’ts in questionnaire translation. Specific aspects discussed include translating meaning to produce functionally equivalent items; finding a balance between fidelity and freedom in translation, scale translation or adaptation. The different translation and harmonization resources and support types will be presented, such as checklists, survey-specific and item-specific translation instructions, general web resources, dictionaries, electronic translation tools, and the importance of pretesting translations discussed.

In the practical part of this seminar, hands-on exercises will allow the participants to familiarise themselves with these approaches by carrying out realistic questionnaire translation as well as translation assessment tasks.
References:


Suggested reading:
Cross-Cultural Survey Guidelines, Chapters on Translation and Adaptation:
http://ccsg.isr.umich.edu/index.php/chapters/translation-chapter

Brita DORER is a translation scholar, specialised in the translation of questionnaires for multilingual surveys; her scientific interests include the assessment and quality enhancement of questionnaire translation and adaptation, translatability of source questionnaires / advance translations, adaptation versus close translation, translation process research. She obtained her PhD in translation studies from FTSK Germersheim / University of Mainz. 1997-1999 Lecturer for German (contract position) at Marc Bloch University, Strasbourg (France). 1999-2010 various freelance lectureships for English and French at the Foreign Language Institute, Karlsruhe University of Applied Sciences (Germany) and at the FTSK / University of Mainz in Germersheim (Germany). Since 1997, freelance translator for French, Italian and English (German mother tongue). Since November 2009 senior researcher at GESIS - Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences (Mannheim, Germany) in the field of questionnaire translation, heading, amongst others, the translation team of the European Social Service (ESS). She has been involved in translating survey questionnaires into German, such as ESS, ISSP, PIAAC, SHARE, EWCS, EQLS, in the roles of translator, reviewer, methodologist or consultant. Since winter term 2018/2019: scientific collaborator at the online doctoral school Research Methods in TI Studies (ReMeTIS) of the Faculty of Translation and Interpreting (FTI), University of Geneva.
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