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PROBLEMS OF TRANSLATION IN CROSS-CULTURAL RESEARCH¹

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There are various types of translation problems, not all of which have received sufficient attention. Translation of questions or other verbal stimuli has received more attention than problems of achieving equivalence in translations of orienting and task instructions and responses. Vocabulary equivalence must take into account language as used by respondents and the possibility of terms lacking equivalents across languages. Equivalence in idiom and in grammar and syntax may be important, but equivalence in terms of experiences and concepts tapped is probably most important of all. Direct translation cannot be assumed to produce equivalent versions of verbal stimuli. Back-translation is not only achievable but is likely to be highly satisfactory if care is taken in its use, especially in locating translators facile in the actual language of target subjects. While the de-centering proposals of Werner and Campbell have much to recommend them, de-centering becomes progressively difficult as one goes from two to multi-culture studies. For the latter purposes a "carrier" language seems inevitably necessary.

To at least some degree every cross-cultural research project must involve the use of language, if only to convey the instructions for a "non-verbal" procedure of some sort. Of course, some projects are far more dependent on linguistic communication than others, and some are exclusively verbal, or linguistic, in nature. We think that there are at least potential communication problems in all cross-cultural research, e.g., can one be sure that a Pashtun version of "Please do this as quickly as you can" is the same in its meaning as

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the English? Nonetheless, the problems do vary, and it is worthwhile to note the kinds of problems that are involved and the errors they may produce. We hope in this paper to achieve some clarification of the process of translating from one language into another for purposes of cross-cultural research. We will begin with a discussion of the types of materials which cause translation difficulties, go on to a discussion of the kinds of equivalences which are necessary, and then describe attempts which have been made to overcome translation difficulties. Along the way we will refer to our own work in connection with a comparative study to be carried out in several cultures. It will be evident that we have relied heavily on the work of Werner and Campbell (1970) and Brislin (1970).

Types of translation problems in cross-cultural research

There are, generally speaking, four types of translation problems in cross-cultural studies although little attention has been paid to but one of them. First, nearly all instances of cross-cultural work require that some orientation to the research be given. Ordinarily those persons who are research subjects or informants must be given some rationale for the tasks set for them, and it would seem obvious that some attention should be paid to the equivalence of such introductions as made in different cultures. However, there are no instances known to us in which an investigator specifically mentions such a problem, let alone a solution to it. In any case, there often will be instances in which an investigator must "explain himself" to members of different language groups, and when that necessity arises, its companion necessity is for precision in translation.

The second type of translation problem involves the translation of instructions specific to different types of tasks or measures being used. Even though the response of a subject may require no verbal component, it is almost always necessary that the nature of the task and of his response be explained in words (Anderson, 1967). And those words must be translated from one language to another when one crosses linguistic boundaries. Again, very few investigators seem to have paid much attention to this problem. It seems usually to be assumed that translations are adequate. Very few investigators can be described as having been sufficiently wary to make us totally confident in their findings. Rather paradoxically, it is probably the case that the briefer the instructions are, the greater the tendency to assume similarity. However, as Werner and Campbell (1970) make clear, it is, in fact, more difficult to get and to be sure one has gotten a satisfactory translation of a short passage than of a longer one. Such phrases as "Do your best," "Guess if you want to," "Take the one you like best," and "Make A the same as B" involve many translational pitfalls for the unwary. It is the lack of context in short phrases and sentences that makes the problem so difficult. Or, viewed in another way, the redundancy in short messages may be very limited. Recently we have been using the Rod-and-Frame Test to measure field dependence-independence in different cultures, and two of the most difficult problems we encountered were in finding a Tagalog
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(Philippine) word or phrase for "upright" or an Urdu word for "rod."

The third type of translation problem is the obvious one of phrasing questions or other verbal stimuli in ways that are comparable in two or more languages. Interview questions, statements on personality inventories or attitude questionnaires, and verbal stimuli on projective tests such as incomplete sentences are all examples of the third type of translation problem. This is a problem to which many investigators have addressed themselves. In fact, the problem is so obvious that it is inescapable, and unlike the first two problems, there are almost no investigators unaware of the problem. However, we might point out that translation problems can and do arise even within cultures when different subcultures are being examined, and many investigators have ignored the likelihood that a particular verbal stimulus may not mean the same to a person in one subculture as to a person in another. Dialect differences, use of scholarly rather than vernacular language, and regional differences in colloquial speech and idiom all contribute to potential subcultural research problems. Odd as it may seem, English may at times need to be translated into English, and Urdu into Urdu.

The fourth type of translation problem involves translation of responses from one language or dialect to another so that comparisons may be made. Many questionnaires have limited response alternatives, e.g., true–false, agree–disagree, and the translation is made prior to the response. However, for open-ended questions, interviews, projective tests and the like, it may be necessary to translate the responses. When responses must be translated, the same problems exist as in translating other material. In many cases translation and its attendant expense and difficulties can be avoided by coding, categorizing, or scoring responses in the language in which they are given. If the coding system is easily communicated and relatively unambiguous, many difficulties can be obviated. To be sure, the coding system itself must be translated, but that is a decidedly simple task when compared to translation of responses, and especially when one has access to bilingual coders. It should be noted, though, that Ervin (1964) found that language of response could make a difference in the responses of bilinguals, and bilingual coders need to be checked for their consistency also.

PROBLEMS OF EQUIVALENCE IN TRANSLATION

As we stated earlier the major problem in translation is to determine that the translation is equivalent to the original language. There are, however, a number of different kinds of equivalence that have somewhat different effects and implications. We propose here to discuss several different aspects of equivalence which must be considered in transporting a research instrument from one linguistic area to another. While the problems vary somewhat in importance and are most serious when languages and cultures are maximally different, we think that all the problems exist in some measure even within cultures; they merely become increasingly troublesome with increasing-decreasing linguistic and cultural similarity.
Vocabulary Equivalence

Perhaps the most obvious kind of equivalence is in vocabulary, in the words used in two or more translations. For example, an item such as "I am happy most of the time" could be translated rather directly into another language than English with the major vocabulary problem being, in most instances, finding an equivalent term for "happy." Or, in using a Semantic Differential (Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957), one would need to find comparable terms for such items as strong-weak, rich-poor, and fast-slow.

While it might seem that vocabulary problems could be solved with a good dictionary, and indeed, that is a valuable resource, the fact of the matter is that the problems are not by any means so simple. In the first place, dictionary language is often not the language of the people. In fact, we could make a parallel comment about the use of translators, who are often chosen from a population of highly educated persons who speak and write somewhat pedantically in both their languages. We have numerous instances of translations made with either dictionary or translator that proved unworkable because they did not have the right meaning to persons for whom the test was intended. Thus, a good first rule in translating is to use translators who have good acquaintance with the language as used by the prospective test respondents.

A second aspect of the problem of vocabulary equivalence in relation to dictionary translations is that most words in the dictionary are defined in a number of ways or by a number of terms. It is not easy to know which terms to select for the translation. The problem is to reflect in the term chosen the obvious meaning and the important nuances of the original term. Such terms as responsible, suggestible, aloof, and tough are all English terms with nuances that make it difficult to find just the right equivalent in other languages. On the other hand such Urdu terms as sanjida, pakbaz, ameen and ghairat (all indicating good and desirable personality traits in Pakistan) are also expressive of delicacies of thought that make the discovery of a vocabulary equivalent difficult.

There may, in fact, be terms in one language for which it is almost impossible to find an equivalent in another language. For example, we found that there is no really good Tagalog term for feminine, i.e., a term that makes it possible to say "Maria is more feminine than Elena." Similarly, there was no Tagalog equivalent for domestic that we might apply in describing people, so as to say, "Mr. Santos is very domestic in his interests." On the other hand, hiya (related to shyness, embarrassment, shame, and deference) and pakikisama (related to getting along with others, acceding to wishes of one's peer group, and conformity) are Tagalog words difficult to translate into English because there just are not any equivalents. We found it somewhat difficult to find good counterparts for orderly, conforming and polite in Urdu, and moonis, humdum and habeeb (all indicating differences in degree of friendship and closeness) are Urdu words without ready English equivalents.

A frequent attempted solution to problems of non-equivalence of terms, one recommended by Werner and Campbell (1970), is the use of several words
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in the target language to try to convey an idea expressible in one word in the source language. Although such a procedure will be discussed later in this paper, we would note here that differences in length of materials should be kept within fairly close limits.

Vocabulary equivalence is not necessarily equally difficult to achieve between all pairs of languages. We have no data on this but there are many reasons such as cultural differences, as well as linguistic traditions, for incompatibility between two languages. To illustrate, however, we have been involved in considerable translation from English to Tagalog and back, and from English to Urdu and back. It is our distinct impression that it is easier to translate between English and Urdu than between English and Tagalog. At least a part of the difference in difficulty we attribute to the differential availability of words in the two languages which are comparable to English words.

Tagalog does not seem to have very good words for a lot of English terms and vice versa. While there are obvious problems translating from English into Urdu, it seems to be richer in the kinds of words which are used in English texts. Brislin (1970) found substantial differences between languages in translation error rates (while he found Tagalog-English to be relatively easy, it is almost certainly the case that his Tagalogs were more nearly bilingual than his other linguistic assistants).

To the extent that words do not mean the same thing to respondents in different cultures, the responses are uninterpretable with respect to cultural similarities or differences. But, vocabulary equivalence is only part of the problem.

Idiomatic Equivalence

Frequently in translating one encounters problems that arise because idiomatic speech is employed in one language, and idioms never translate properly, if at all. In fact, one often becomes aware of idiomatic language only when one attempts to translate and realizes that a direct translation would not make sense at all. For example, the direct translation of the Tagalog adjectival expression hipong-tulong is "fish sleeping"; yet a more meaningful equivalent in English might be conforming, indecisive, or "following the present current of thought or action."

Although it might seem that one should avoid use of idioms in producing technical research material, and that is what Werner and Campbell recommend, idioms are so firmly embedded in our speech patterns that under most circumstances we are scarcely aware of them. Moreover, to attempt to avoid idioms completely in, for example, writing instructions or writing items, would probably produce a highly stilted, pedantic form of discourse which would be utterly unsuitable for research efforts with the general population in any culture. And, of course, if one is translating the responses of an informant or subject, idiom cannot be avoided. Therefore, the best that can be done is to attempt to insure that when idioms are used in a translation they are equivalent in meaning to the idioms used in the original, and that the general level of
idiomatic speech in the two languages is approximately equivalent so that one does not seem more scholarly, more stilted, or in some other way different from the other. For example, the Tagalog idiom galit-bulkan is literally translated "angry volcano" and is interpreted to mean a sudden expression of anger. One might be able to use the English slang term "blow up" as an idiomatic equivalent. To "keep your mouth shut" can be translated into Urdu, but a better equivalent in terms of usage would be tum chup rahe, which back translates as "you keep quiet."

Grammatical-Syntactical Equivalence

Still another equivalence problem arises from the fact that languages differ widely in their grammars and syntaxes and these differences are often critical to the meanings in various translations. While these problems are probably of somewhat greater importance with longer passages, they do occur even in relation to very short passages, perhaps even for single words. One of the reasons for a grammatical equivalence problem involving single words is that two languages may not have equivalent parts of speech. Thus, for example, if there is no gerund in a particular language there may be some problems in achieving good equivalence for the commonly used gerunds in English. (Urdu has no gerund quite like English). A fairly ordinary type of test item consists of asking an individual which of a list of activities he enjoys and the list is often couched in terms of such gerunds as singing, dancing, eating, playing, writing, and the like. While it is most certainly possible to develop an equivalent form for such items in most languages, there do arise some difficulties in specifying the exact linguistic form which is to be used in a language which lacks the gerund. Other parts of speech such as adjectives, adverbs, and the like, may be missing in particular languages and may pose some problems for translators.

Nonetheless, the more important problems in attaining grammatical syntactical equivalence involve longer passages. Probably one of the more common grammatical problems in achieving equivalence is in dealing with verb forms. Not all languages deal with the problems of verb mood, voice, or tense in the same way by any means, and it is sometimes very difficult in a given language to put expressions which have the same verb form or meaning in English. For example, in the Tagalog dialect there is no subjunctive mood. As a result, it becomes impossible to find literal equivalents and difficult to find conceptual equivalents for English conditional subjunctive expressions. The English sentence, "If I had had the money, I would have bought the dress.", can be translated in Tagalog to Kung mayroon sana akong pera, nabili ko sana ang baro. The literal translation of this Tagalog sentence into English would be "If I have the money (understood I have not), I bought the dress (understood I did not)." Needless to say, the tense and the conditional sense seem not to be the same as the original English.

The whole area of translation has been so little studied in the context of the field of psychology that it is difficult to cite specific instances of syntactic
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nonequivalence, although there is no question that they abound and that they can affect the meaning of translations.

The work of Whorf (1956) contains many examples such as the Hopi utilization of what we think of as nouns as verb or action forms. Thus chair is chair-ing or the act of sitting. Or, looking elsewhere one finds that in English it is obligatory to specify number in relation to nouns, nearly all of which are either singular or plural. However, in Yoruba (Nigeria) it is not at all obligatory that number be specified. And Arabic obliges that number be specified as singular, dual, or plural. Obviously such syntactical variations can very much affect meaning and the problems of translation.

Experiential Equivalence

There are two remaining equivalence problems which are of a somewhat different order than the ones we have discussed above, since the remaining two do not involve purely linguistic considerations. Nonetheless, they are important for translators to keep in mind and may constitute severe impediments to the development of adequate materials for studies in societies with different languages. The first of these is experiential equivalence, the second is conceptual equivalence.

By experiential equivalence we mean that in order for translations to be successful from one culture to another they must utilize terms referring to real things and real experiences which are familiar in both cultures, if not exactly equally familiar. Werner and Campbell call this "cultural translation" as distinguished from linguistic translation. If two cultures differ so greatly in the nature of their objects, in the nature of their social arrangements, in their overall ways of life, or that objects or experiences which are familiar to members of one culture are unfamiliar to members of another, it will be difficult to achieve equivalence in meaning of a variety of linguistic statements no matter how carefully the translation is done from the standpoint of the language involved. Let us take a perhaps trivial, but very obvious example. If the item "I would like to be a florist" appeared on a personality or interest measure for use with Americans it would probably be understood by most of them. That same item, however, would be incomprehensible to most people around the world, no matter how carefully it were explained to them. Flower shops simply are not found in most parts of the world and, in many cases, the idea of a flower shop where one has flowers made into fancy arrangements and the like would be totally foreign to the experience of most people. Consequently, if one wished to achieve experiential equivalence one would have to think about why the item involving doing the work of a florist is used in an American sample and then find an equivalent that is in terms of local experience type of activity in the other culture being studied. Thus, if in an American test the item is scored for femininity because it is thought to reflect an interest in feminine kinds of activities, then in another culture in which flower shops were missing one would have to look for a similar kind of economic activity primarily identified with females and thought to reflect an effeminate outlook even when it occurred among males.

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That might not be easy to do but, for example, in the Philippines most market vendors are women, and it is possible that Filipinos might think a male effeminate if he were a market vendor. In that case one could use the item "I would like to be a market vendor" as an experiential equivalent to "I would like to be a florist."

In some cases there may be no alternative but to eliminate items because a counterpart does not exist or would be of too uncertain equivalence in another culture. Animals, household objects, architectural features, terrain features, biological specimens, etc. are all examples of categories of concrete objects where cultures may differ so much in experience that the problem of attaining equivalence is difficult. No translation of "department store" into Urdu is possible because they are unknown in Pakistan, and the closest one could get would be "large shop."

However, it should not be thought that the problems of equivalence pertain only to such concrete aspects of cultures. They may also stem from differences between other cultural arrangements. One good example lies in the kinship patterns and social relations that differ so widely from one culture to another. The term "cousin," for example, means something very different in the Philippines than it means in the United States, and it means something else again in Pakistani culture. Or, to take another example, the typical school classroom or even university classroom is so very different in its meaning, in the way it is conducted, in the relationship among the students or in the relationship between the students and professors, that it is very difficult to insure that any items or statements about the university classroom as an experience can possibly be equivalent for members of cultures as diverse as, let us say, Pakistani and American. Such an item as "I seldom speak up in class" would undoubtedly have a very different meaning for American and Pakistani students because the experience of being in a class is so very different for the two groups. Again, achieving an adequate translation of the item would involve figuring out what the item was supposed to reflect in the way of a trait or response disposition in an American culture and then finding an equivalent lying within the experience of typical Pakistani students.

The position taken here is much akin to that of Przeworski and Teune (1970), who suggest that in most instances of the kind at issue here the important question concerns the equivalence of inferences rather than of stimuli. They indicate that inferences must be validated within rather than across social systems. "An instrument is equivalent across systems to the extent that the results provided by the instrument reliably describe with (nearly) the same validity a particular phenomenon in different social systems" (opus cited, p. 108). While we are perhaps somewhat more interested in and sanguine about achieving linguistic equivalence than Przeworski and Teune, and while we have some reservations about using similarity of factorial structure as the sole criterion of equivalence, we are in general agreement with their propositions.
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Conceptual Equivalence

The final problem in achieving equivalence between measures to be used in two or more cultures is the problem of insuring that the concepts used in the measures, interview, or other translated materials are equivalent in the two cultures. This is somewhat apart from the previous kinds of equivalence problems for it may very well be that one has in two cultures a word which, when translated, mutually yields high agreement and yet it may not be that the concepts implied by the two words are, in fact, identical or particularly close in nature. For example, the item "I love a parade" might be quite easy to translate into other languages than English and, at least on a word-for-word basis there would be no problem in equivalence in such things as vocabulary and experience. Nonetheless, the concept "love" as used in that English item is far different in its implications from the concept which might be implicit in words used in other languages. English is, perhaps, not an especially rich language for expressing positive feelings about things and, consequently, the word "love" is used to mean several different things, or at least to connote varying degrees of positive affect toward some object.

A second aspect of the problem of conceptual equivalence is that a concept well understood and frequently employed in one culture may be lacking altogether in another culture, or it may appear at least in such varied different fragmented forms that it is very difficult to construct materials that treat the true concepts equivalently. For example in the Philippines it proved to be very difficult to find even a concept, let alone words, which had the same connotations as the common American concept of homosexual. The available Philippine words are used in a variety of ways which suggests that the concept simply does not exist in the same highly developed form as it does in the American culture (Sechrest & Flores, 1969). In fact, it is our feeling that doing translations in both directions in two or more cultures is an excellent way of coming to understand the divergent ways of thinking about problem areas in different cultures.

The Paradox of Equivalence

We have gone into some detail concerning the problems of achieving equivalence across two or more languages as if equivalences were the fundamental problem. Actually, in certain respects it is not, for there may be a distinct paradox involved in translation for the sake of achieving equivalence. The paradox is that if one demands that a form of a test or other measure yield comparable results in two cultures in order to demonstrate equivalence, then the more equivalent two forms become the less the probability of finding cultural differences. On the other hand, if one looks predominantly for cultural differences and ignores the problem of equivalence, then the less attention that is paid to the problem of equivalence the greater the probability of finding cultural differences. For example, in his work on the comparison of Japanese and American college students responses to the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule, Berrien (1967) argued that differences found between the two samples
stemmed from different concepts of social desirability for the two cultures. If that were done, however, it is entirely possible that important cultural differences would be obliterated, or at least obscured, by the attempt to achieve what is a rather misleading form of equivalence. Obviously, we are not thinking here of the kinds of questions for which prior knowledge can be used to justify expectations either of differences or similarities between cultures, e.g., proportion of Roman Catholics in a culture. The paradox is troublesome for more complex issues for which prior expectations are uncertain or a poor guide, e.g., "What is the true cause of personal misfortune?"

The resolution of the equivalence paradox is not a simple one, but our feeling is that it probably lies in some method of triangulation whereby measures are subjected to increasingly more severe tests of equivalence, and we determine what sort of convergence in the responses of two cultures we may be able to obtain. The more rapidly the findings from two cultures converge in terms of the degree of effort required to achieve equivalence, the smaller the differences between the two cultures probably are. In any case, we can never know for sure what the absolute differences between cultures are and can probably only guess at their relative magnitude. Thus, we may be able to say that the members of two cultures are more similar with respect to one area of functioning than with respect to another, or that they are more or less similar to each other than they are to members of some third culture. There are, of course, some measures for which diminishing returns of equivalence manipulations are likely to be achieved at a very rapid rate. For example, in the case of the Rod-and-Frame test it seems scarcely likely that any real differences, for example between men and women, are simply a function of equivalence of instructions to the two groups.

Obviously in research the aim of producing versions of some communication which are equivalent in two or more languages has a pragmatic justification. One does not labor over translations for the sake of art. The aim of equivalence is that the specific influence of language on responses may be removed. It is, as we have suggested, difficult to know when equivalence has been achieved, but Werner and Campbell and Brislin have proposed several very useful criteria. However, in his empirical study of translation equivalence Brislin had monolingual raters examine an original English version and one translated back into English in order to detect "errors that might make differences in the meaning people would infer." That process when followed by correction of the errors produced reasonably good translations although pretesting of the instruments revealed some additional errors.

**Direct Translation**

The most common procedure by which an attempt to achieve equivalent forms of questionnaires, interview, and the like for cross-cultural research has been the direct translation. That is, a translator or translators who are bilingual attempt to translate as best they can from one language into the other. This translation procedure, as a matter of fact, is still characteristic
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of a great deal of work of a cross-cultural nature and it is particularly likely to be used in relation to brief sets of materials, orientation, instructions, and the like. The method has also been used for the development of adjective check lists and similar materials. However, as Werner and Campbell have pointed out it is exactly for such brief materials that a method of direct translation is likely to be most inadequate. To be sure, it is probably rare that a translator works without any check at all on the adequacies of his efforts, but in a great many instances the checking is likely to be unsystematic and inadequate.

There are several problems with direct translation, the most important of which is that idiosyncrasies may be introduced by the translator himself. The translator himself may not be sufficiently skilled on one or the other of the languages in which he is working, he may not be culturally representative of the group for which the materials are to be used, and he may, by reason of his own experience, have peculiarities of word understanding or word use which will not be shared by persons for whom the materials are intended.

Obviously, it would be going beyond the realm of reason to assert that all translations made by a single translator are inadequate, but we feel that the probability of inadequacies of translations may go undetected. Therefore, we believe that the method should be rejected out of hand, particularly when in nearly all instances there are better, if not perfect, alternatives. We would, however, point out that the method of direct translation is still quite common and, in fact, it is probably still characteristic of the large bulk of all anthropological translation.

Back Translation

Werner and Campbell have described a method of translation which is distinctly superior to the method of direct translation even though it may not be the ideal solution in many instances. In the method of back-translation a translation is first made from one language to another, for example, from English to Urdu, by one or more translators. The translated material is then back translated, for example, from Urdu to English, by another translator or set of translators. The two versions of the original can then be checked for the adequacy of the translation. For example, if a statement in English such as "I get tense before examinations." is translated into Urdu and then comes back into English translated from the Urdu as "I get excited before examinations." the discrepancy between the two versions would suggest to the experimenter that the further translation is required. Presumably, by successive translations and back-translations a better and better approximation to the original can be obtained, and the final version of the translated material should be satisfactory.

However, we would suggest that not all problems in translation are quite

3 There is no good Urdu equivalent for tense, and the likely substitute, Tanao, might be backtranslated as excited, upset, or even embarrassed.
so easily solved as might be suggested by the foregoing. For one thing, when a back-translation is accomplished there are almost inevitably some discrepancies between the original English version and the back-translated version. It then requires a judgment on the part of someone whether the two versions are, in fact, equivalent. There may be a number of reasons for nonequivalence which have to be treated quite differently in the process of developing a satisfactory research instrument. For one thing discrepancies may occur because the original translation was inadequate, and if that is true the only solution is improvement of the translation. However, the inadequacy may have stemmed from different sources. It may have been the result of an idiosyncratic translation by the translator. For example, a translator may himself not know the difference between the words "tense" and "excited," or may not regard the distinction as important. A second possibility is that since the translation and back translation are done by different people, the two separate English versions may be more equivalent than they seem because of idiosyncratic habits in the use of English words. Thus, if the word "annoyance" is translated into Urdu and then comes back translated into English as "pain" it is entirely possible that the discrepancy is attributable to faulty knowledge of English rather than to any inadequacies in Urdu. In any case, in such an instance the experimenter would have to make a decision as to whether the translation was inadequate or not, that is, whether "pain" is a reasonable English synonym for "annoyance," e.g., as in "waiting in line is a pain."

A second source of difficulty in producing equivalent back translations is that the lack of equivalence may in fact stem from the absence of a satisfactory word, or at least from the lack of equivalence of concepts in the two languages. Thus, the word "homosexual" when translated into Tagalog usually becomes "bakla," which, when translated back into English might come out as "sissy" or something of that sort. The problem lies not in the idiosyncracy of the translator or in the failure to use the best term, but simply in the fact that there is no equivalent in Tagalog for the English term "homosexual." Such problems of nonequivalence can only be resolved by having available a number of bilingual speakers who can be consulted with respect to the problems involved. Preferably the bilingual speakers should come from different backgrounds of the subjects who are to respond to the instrument being developed. For example, we have found that many of the persons who are most readily available as translators are persons who are considerably higher in education than the subjects who will be using the instrument and they therefore produce stilted, academic versions of a questionnaire which are not readily understood by the subjects. In fact, an additional problem arose in the Philippines where, since there are many different dialects, many potential translators were in fact native-speakers of the dialect into which they were making translations. Because of the movement toward development of a national language in the Philippines there has been a considerable increase in the number of students who are studying the national language, Pilipino, in school. Such speakers of Pilipino may actually be superior in terms of grammatical knowledge and in terms of formal linguistic knowledge of Pilipino or Tagalog to native speakers, but in fact their
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language is different from that of the native speaker of Tagalog, and if one is to use a questionnaire with native speakers then the versions produced by the academically trained persons may be quite inadequate. For example, the Tagalog word for science, *aghaw*, is not familiar to many native speakers who do use the English word. We believe that the only solution is to have available as translators, or at least as informants, persons who are native speakers of the language to which the translation is to be done.

Actually the process of back-translation, when properly done, is iterative, *i.e.*, an initial translation is made, back-translated, examined for errors, corrected, again back translated, etc. At every stage improvement depends upon a rather critical set being taken by the translator working at that stage. Brislin has shown that the pretesting is an important addendum to the back-translation process, for he found a number of meaning errors that had previously gone undetected. Errors may well go undetected for any of a number of reasons mentioned above, *e.g.*, translators of different subculture than subjects, conventions in translating that are not completely legitimate (bakla-homosexuality), etc. Fortunately, despite the problems with back-translation as a technique, Brislin has shown that very good results may be obtained when it is carefully done.

The major advantage of back-translation is that it operates as a filter through which non-equivalent terms will not readily pass. If there is not an appropriate word or phrase in a target language for one in the source language, that fact has a high probability of being discovered. For example, if there is no equivalent in a target language for the American expression "take advantage of someone," it will probably be back-translated as 'boss someone around,' "cheat someone," etc. The investigator will be able to decide fairly accurately just what concepts he can employ in the two languages. He need not speculate; he can act on the basis of the back-translation results.

De-centering

An ultimate solution to the problem of translation has been suggested by Campbell and Werner and it involves the development of genuinely bilingual versions of research instruments. They believe that many inadequacies of research instruments for cross-cultural use come from the fact that they are usually developed in one culture and then translated into that as applied to another culture. Consequently, they have many disadvantages stemming from a narrow cultural base. The solution proposed by Campbell and Werner is that research instruments should be developed by collaborators in the two cultures and that items or other materials should be generated jointly in the two cultures. They believe that this will require somewhat longer versions of the materials which are produced, but versions which are more likely to be equivalent in terms of the dispositions they tap. Thus, de-centering refers to the process of obviating cultural and linguistic biases by the initial and joint use of two languages.

Certainly the process of de-centering has a great deal to recommend it.
As others have pointed out, there is a substantial asymmetry in cross-cultural research in that the majority of it has been generated within the American academic community and, thus, the concepts ordinarily studied stem from that community. Such concepts as machismo, the Latin-American concern for masculinity, nak unchi, a Pakistan concept related to pride (literally nose high), the concept of utang na loob, a Philippino concept for reciprocal obligation, and on, the Japanese concept of filial loyalty and obligation, are rarely, if ever, studied in Western societies. Such concepts as dependency, hostility, homosexuality, and guilt are favorites for the studies conducted by Westerners wherever they go. Secondly, by permitting longer, more elaborate versions of tests or other materials it is likely that greater equivalence can be achieved. Thus, if instead of requiring single adjectives to describe some state such as dependency, it is possible to use four or five or six different words to describe the state, it is probably more likely that an equivalent set of words can be found in some other language.

Unfortunately, the process of de-centering has two major disadvantages that will limit its usefulness severely. One has to do with the very length of the materials being produced, a problem noted earlier in this paper. It is quite difficult to use verbal materials in any case with members of groups that are not themselves highly verbal and not accustomed to verbal responding, verbal interrogation, and the like. If the process of de-centering requires longer versions of material, it means less ground may be covered, that certain types of respondents will be unavailable, or that the responses may be distorted by the differential reactions of subjects to lengthy and complicated verbal stimuli. A second disadvantage of de-centering is that it places a very severe limitation on the number of languages in which one may work. Thus, with questionnaires we have been using we have been able to obtain versions in English, Tagalog, Maranao (a Philippine-Muslim dialect), Urdu, Hindi, and Spanish. All these versions were produced, however, by beginning with the English version and then working to the other separate versions. There is no possibility of de-centering the questionnaires from a linguistic standpoint since it is almost certain that there are no individuals who are fluent, indeed if there are any who are knowledgeable at all, in such diverse languages as English, Spanish, Maranao, and Urdu. A process of de-centering would seem to require a genuinely multilingual, rather than merely bilingual, translator and it seems unlikely that there are very many cultures for which multilingual translators would be available. Moreover, it might well prove hopeless to try to reduce three or four cultures simultaneously to some lowest common denominator.

On the other hand, it should be noted that back-translation without de-centering does not involve such stringent requirements for cultural and linguistic omniscience. The English, Tagalog, Maranao, Urdu, Hindi, and Spanish problem described above could probably be resolved rather well if one or two bilinguals could be located to check across such boundaries as Spanish-Tagalog, Urdu-Hindi (largely a matter of alphabet and local usage), Tagalog-Maranao, etc.
PROBLEMS OF TRANSLATION

The Need for a Carrier Language

The considerations above concerning the limitations of the technique of de-centering have led us to conclude that it is likely that for most cross-cultural research, particularly for multi-cultural research, a carrier language is needed. That is to say, we believe that it will be necessary to find one common language in which the basic concepts for materials are carried from one culture to each of the others. Because there are probably more speakers who have English as one of their languages than any other group of bi- or multi-linguals, it seems likely that in most instances English will serve as the carrier language. That is not a necessity, however, and in particular within countries or geographic areas the carrier languages may not be English. Thus, for example, in Pakistan it is quite possible that Urdu could be used as a carrier language and that translations could be made then from Urdu into Bengali, Sindhi, or Pashtun without ever going through an English version. Still there is no reason one might not work with French, Spanish, German, etc. as carrier languages if it is desirable to do so.

We do want to support the notion that cultural de-centering can be done, however, even if linguistic de-centering is not particularly feasible. It is not only feasible, but highly desirable to try to get test materials, especially for adjective check lists or self-descriptions, or the like, produced by members of different cultures so that the important concepts in relation to problem areas can be genuinely cross-cultural and not narrowly Western or even American in origin. We have not progressed far on this latter problem but we are in the process of collecting personality items originally written in Urdu which can potentially be translated into English and used with both American and Pakistani populations.

It is probably too much to expect that anyone will ever be able to devise a universal personality inventory, but cross-cultural researchers need not be as narrow as we have been. The need for translation in cross-cultural research will continue and even increase in importance. However, it is our view that, thanks to the work of such people as Werner, Campbell, and Brislin, the serious methodological problems may be resolved and inadequate translation will become less of an impediment to high quality research. Even now it would seem that many of the inadequacies might be substantially reduced by following with some care the recommendations which have already been proposed and tested.

REFERENCES


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