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Survey researchers have long recognized the interactive, collaborative nature of orally administered survey interviews and how, as a type of talk-in-interaction, they differ from ordinary conversation (e.g., Suchman & Jordan, 1990; Schaeffer, 1991; Houtkoop-Steenstra, 2000; Maynard & Schaeffer, 2002). By focusing on the interactive and collaborative aspects of orally administered survey interviews, this body of research has illustrated how such a view not only helps to understand the survey process, but also opens the way for improvement in questionnaire design, testing, and interviewing techniques.

While the interactive nature of face-to-face and telephone survey interviews is widely recognized by survey researchers, there appears to be less appreciation of the fact that communicative norms for interaction in orally administered surveys vary widely from one culture and language group to the next, which may have significant consequences for survey non-response and data quality. We would like to make the case that telephone surveys that cross cultural and linguistic borders must take into consideration not only lower level semantic and pragmatic equivalence, but also must be sensitive to cross-cultural variation in the norms of language use. What is needed is a framework for understanding and documenting differences in communicative norms that may arise at different points in telephone surveys conducted across cultural and linguistic borders. This paper will identify the parameters of variation within such a framework that should be considered by survey researchers and translators when crafting telephone surveys.

1   Note on the Translation of Surveys

Current best practices and guidelines for questionnaire translation ultimately aim to promote equivalence of meaning and reference between questions in a source survey and those in translated counterparts (Harkness, 2003). Unfortunately, the guidelines followed in the field focus mostly on lower level semantic and pragmatic equivalence, and very little on higher level discourse features. Harkness, Van de Vijver & Johnson (2003) dis-

cuss two main approaches to translation from a source survey to other languages. The "adopt" approach involves strict or close translation of survey items in order to maintain the measurement properties of source items. The "adapt" approach involves increasing cultural appropriateness by modifying questions. While the need for closeness of translation is respected by Harkness (2003), she also points out that there may be linguistic and pragmatic differences across languages that require divergence from close translation. She also notes that survey translations that do not pay heed to these differences may be compromised:

> "It is misguided to believe that we can develop questions with a unique and literal reading based on the lexical meaning of words alone. Thus, survey translations that focus on conveying lexical meaning and exclude consideration of pragmatic meaning have an obvious Achilles heel….To date, there has been little consideration of pragmatics research in literature dealing with questionnaire translation" (p. 48).

Harkness illustrates this point with examples limited to sentence-level pragmatic differences across languages as they relate to survey questions, such as grammatical gender and the use of answer scales. The remainder of the current paper will show that the Achilles heel extends to higher level differences across languages, which also must be heeded in translating surveys, especially those that involve the interaction of interviewers and respondents.

2   The Telephone Survey as a Speech Event

The telephone survey is a subtype of the interview speech event, which is governed by specific norms of language use. Unlike ordinary conversation, the telephone survey is highly structured with its own special characteristics. First, its participants are usually strangers, with one playing the role of interviewer and the other respondent. And while the mutual goal of interviewer and respondent is to arrive at accountable answers, each is subject to different constraints. While the interviewer initiates new topics and asks questions, the respondent is limited to answering and may ask questions only for clarification or to inquire about the overall management of the interview. The telephone survey has its own organization, with an opening, a body, and a closing, each with its own unique procedures and norms. Most importantly, the survey interviewer is subject to the constraints of standardization, meaning that questions must be read as worded (to obtain an answer that can be seen to be produced by the respondent and not the interviewer), probes must be done nondirectively, and a cooperative relationship must be maintained for the duration of the interview. Standardization aims for consistency of interview behavior, so that answers are comparable.

At the local level of interaction, with respect to the survey interview, the proper recording of accountable answers for social scientific purposes is an achievement that depends on an organization of interviewers' and recipients' concerted practical actions. These include specific kinds of speech acts, such as questions, answers, clarifications, probes, etc., and have been referred to in the literature as the "interactional substrate" (Maynard & Schaeffer, 2002). Research has shown that examination of interactional detail permits the identification of conversational practices – elements of the interactional substrate – that persist in the relatively constrained environment of the standardized telephone survey.

The telephone survey has organizational features of both interviews and telephone conversations. The telephone survey is sharply bounded by opening and closing sections, each conducted with respect to culture-specific norms. Openings of telephone surveys are far more elaborate than openings of ordinary telephone conversations. Opening sections of telephone surveys generally involve a variety of interactional tasks, including greetings, identifying the caller, establishing the relationship of the caller to the respondent, explaining the purpose of the call, determining the appropriate respondent, and addressing any concerns of the respondent. The opening of the telephone survey sets the stage for the interview section, defining roles and expectations for the interaction that follows. The way the opening unfolds between the interviewer and respondent may have significant implications for both survey non-response and data quality (Couper & Groves, 2002). Closings of survey interviews are usually more abbreviated than closings of ordinary telephone conversations, and most likely have no impact on survey non-response and data quality.

The opening section of the telephone survey is followed by the interview proper, which consists of sequences of questions and answers, interspersed with new topic introductions and side sequences in which interviewers and respondents diverge from the script to collaborate in arriving at accountable answers. Such side sequences may involve requests for clarification or elaboration, or repairs of misunderstandings (Moore & Maynard, 2002; Suchman & Jordan, 1990).

3   Cross-Cultural Communication and the Telephone Survey Interview

While there is little existing research on variation in communicative norms in telephone survey interviews that cross cultural or linguistic borders, much has been done examining how telephone conversations and communicative norms more generally vary across cultures. The examples that follow draw on this body of research and illustrate how telephone surveys, as a specific type of talk-in-interaction, are subject to a variety of cross-cultural differences. We contend that these differences are not trivial, and that they may affect both survey non-response and data quality.

3.1 Openings

Research has revealed that the norms governing openings of telephone conversations vary considerably from one culture to the next. For example, the practice of immediate identification by name is standard telephone practice in the United States, but is uncommon in Chinese language environments. Pan, Scollon & Scollon (2002) found that Chinese sales representatives in an American training program resisted the suggested practice of self-identifying when they made a phone call or as soon as they answered the phone. Dutch interactants, in contrast tend to self-identify by name when they answer the telephone, as Houtkoop-Steenstra (1991) found in an examination of opening sequences of 87 Dutch telephone calls. This behavior was interpreted as a response to a summons (i.e., the telephone ringing), which was usually followed by a reciprocal self-identification by the caller in the ensuing turn. According to Houtkoop-Steenstra, the Dutch response may reflect a cultural orientation toward the local accomplishment of social status, something less likely to be found in American telephone calls. Lindstrom (1994) compared the sequential organization of Swedish telephone conversation openings with those in the United States and the Netherlands. She concludes that

> "in the United States there is a preference for other-recognition over explicit self-identification. In the Netherlands, by contrast, this preference is reversed.…(t)he Swedish preference lies between the American and Dutch extremes" (p. 231).

Pan, Scollon & Scollon (2002) looked at reactions to three business telephone calls conducted by a Hong Kong professional. While Hong Kong focus group participants viewed the relatively direct openings of the professional as fairly natural and matter of course, Beijing focus group participants reacted quite negatively to the three calls, viewing them as too "business-oriented" and lacking in "personal feeling," since the caller moved too quickly into the main point of the call. They felt that the pace was too fast, and the conversation was uncomfortably brief and abrupt. They commented that the fast speed and direct topic introduction gave the impression of a cold "business-is-business" call. Although they themselves sometimes receive these no-nonsense calls, they did not appreciate them. To these people, who are mostly in the same business, the caller sounded busy and indifferent. They said that he "didn't care whether the other party was listening or not," "didn't try to get the attention of the other side," and "didn't have any emotion." They concluded that this was the Hong Kong style, which represented a busy, modern society that lacked interpersonal interaction and close relationships.

Similarly, in a study comparing Greeks and Germans, Pavlidou (2002), found that Greeks prefer an exchange of phatic utterances before arriving at the reason for a telephone call, whereas Germans tend to opt for a more direct path to the main point of the call. These examples show that telephone survey researchers and translators conducting surveys

across cultural or linguistic borders should be sensitive to such differences. While quickly coming to the point of a call may be appreciated in one culture, it may cause offense in others, potentially leading to survey non-response.

3.2 Questions, answers, and topic shifts

While questions and answers are most likely part of the communicative repertoire of all cultures and language groups, the way they are carried out may vary from one culture to the next, with implications for telephone survey interviews that cross cultural or linguistic borders. For example, questions that call out a dispreferred response may give rise to different behaviors across cultures (within conversation analysis, dispreferred responses are those that are presumed by the answerer to be contrary to the hopes or expectations of the questioner). In many Asian cultures, under certain circumstances, people tend to avoid "no" answers in response to yes/no questions. This is especially the case where there is an asymmetrical relationship between interlocutors in more formal types of interaction. Within telephone survey interviews, avoidance of dispreferred "no" responses may be highly problematic, requiring at the least considerable work on the part of interviewers to ferret out a definite "yes" or "no" answer.

In many or perhaps most cultures, answers to questions are obligatory. Questions that cannot be answered are generally accompanied by an explicit explanation (e.g., "I can't answer that now"). Conversation analysts have noted that given the sequential organization of talk and the nature of adjacency pairs, anything immediately following a question will be interpreted as an answer. However, in some cultures, answers to questions are not obligatory. For example, Philips (1990) found that immediate answers to questions are not normative for the Indians of the Warm Springs Reservation in central Oregon. This has obvious relevance to telephone survey interviews, which rely on a shared norm that questions must be followed by answers.

Scollon & Scollon (1995) state that there is a western preference for a deductive pattern for topic introductions, whereas eastern cultures prefer an inductive pattern for introducing topics. They describe a typical call-answer-topic pattern for western cultures, in which the first topic is generally introduced immediately by the caller after establishing contact with the answerer. Asian cultures, in contrast, tend to exhibit a call-answer-facework-topic pattern, where the new topic is delayed until there has been an adequate display of facework on the part of the interlocutors. According to Scollon & Scollon, the purpose of the facework in this sequence is to allow both parties to get a sense of each other's mood or position. Such differences in the norms for topic introduction may have repercussions for cross-cultural telephone surveys. For example, an Asian respondent might feel that an

American interviewer was too abrupt or even rude by skipping the requisite amount of facework, whereas an American might view the lead-up to the main topic as irrelevant or even annoying.

3.3   Global differences in communicative norms

The previous sections have addressed cross-cultural differences in communicative norms that may affect specific parts of telephone survey interviews, namely openings, question/answer sequences, and topic shifts. Other kinds of cross-cultural variation that may also have an impact on surveys are not limited to specific sections of the telephone survey. These include level of exposure to the survey interview as a type of speech event and establishment and maintenance of rapport with respondents.

Exposure to surveys. It should not be assumed that all people know how to participate appropriately in a survey interview. In fact, familiarity with surveys as a type of interview varies from one culture and subgroup to the next. For example, Pan & Scollon (2004) found that many Chinese immigrants in the United States lack any experience of participating in surveys, either in their home country or in the United States. In China, census data and other demographic statistics are collected through administrative channels, and individual citizens are not aware of the need or the procedure of collecting data through surveys. Of the 40 respondents interviewed, none had any experience with telephone surveys.

Hughes (2004) investigated how United States immigrants from three countries perceive surveys. She found that Chinese, Ethiopian, and El Salvadoran respondents (eight from each group) had no experience with surveys in their home countries, but that most had experience filling out school forms. In Ethiopia and in El Salvador, there is no official census. In China, the official census is conducted through work units (companies, organizations) and local community committees. Most of the respondents had heard about the U.S. 2000 Census through a massive advertising campaign, but few had participated in it. Many respondents knew about the Census telephone survey, but did not participate, because they felt uncomfortable giving out their information to a stranger over the phone. Clearly, variation in exposure to the survey interview speech event could have implications for the comparability of data collected across cultures.

Establishing and maintaining rapport. An important aspect of telephone survey interviews is the establishment of rapport and relationship between the interviewer and respondent. Problems arising from the failure of interviewers to behave in culturally appropriate ways can lead to awkwardness at the least, and survey non-response at the worst. Telephone surveys that are translated too closely from a source survey run the risk of

forcing interviewers to violate various cultural norms involving face, politeness, and the linguistic encoding of status and social distance.

Pan, Scollon & Scollon (2002) reported on a case study of an American telecommunications training program. The training manager was trying to encourage his Chinese-speaking sales representatives to use phrases such as "please" and "thank you" in making their sales pitch. The sales representatives were given a Chinese script translated directly from the English script. According to the script, the sales representatives were supposed to use "please" and "thank you" at every possible point in their conversation with Chinese-speaking customers, and their performance would be marked down if they failed to do so. During the three days of performance evaluation, 10 Chinese-speaking sales representatives were monitored. Among them, nine received zero points in the category of politeness level, because they failed to use "please" and "thank you" in their conversations with Chinese customers. The tenth person received one point out of three for this category. As a result, they all failed in their performance evaluation, because their politeness level was not up to the company's standards. The irony is that the calls monitored were very polite by Chinese standards, and most of the sales representatives succeeded in signing up their customers for the company's service. The sales representatives were very frustrated with the training program. One woman even yelled, "Mark me down if you will. I cannot do it."

In many languages, including Chinese, it is not natural to use expressions like "please" and "thank you" in daily conversations. These terms are used mostly on very formal occasions; in other situations, they imply a large social distance between two speakers. When sales representatives use these polite terms excessively in their conversation with customers, they may sound suspicious to Chinese people, who may feel they are being trapped into buying some service. So despite the rigid training, the Chinese-speaking sales representatives still refused to use "please" and "thank you," instead preferring other forms of polite expressions. In Chinese, for daily conversations, politeness is indicated by other linguistic features, such as repetition of a verb (e.g., "take, take," "see, see," "read, read"); repetition of adjective phrases (e.g., "good, good," "fine, fine"); a tag question (e.g., "Is that OK?"); tone of voice, intonation, rate of speech, or the insertion of appropriate pauses; and other discursive features.

Another global consideration is the encoding of relationship between the interviewer and respondent in telephone surveys. In some languages, for example, Korean and Japanese, aspects of relationship such as relative power and social distance are encoded at lower linguistic levels in the grammar. Surveys that are translated into such languages must allow for multiple linguistic choices on the part of interviewers, depending on the identity

of the respondent. However, since most interviewers and respondents are strangers, and since the visual cues for identity are absent during the telephone survey interaction, some initial interactional work at the beginning of the interview may be needed to establish a working relationship for linguistic purposes. Translated surveys that do not allow for this initial work run the risk of offending respondents when interviewers choose inappropriate forms based on poorly informed assumptions about the identity of respondents (e.g., their age and status).

Forms and manners of address also vary considerably from one culture to the next, and direct translation of address terms from a source survey may lead to adverse consequences. While some cultures assume an ethos of closeness and solidarity between strangers, others assume greater social distance that must be reflected in terms of address. For instance, in Polish culture, it is entirely inappropriate to address someone other than a family member or friend by first name, whereas this is more acceptable in American culture. Addressing a Polish respondent by first name in a telephone survey would almost certainly result in non-cooperation. In Chinese culture, it is not uncommon to address a higher status stranger as "Uncle" or "Auntie" to display deference. Obviously, translation of a source survey in Chinese to some other language might need to modify or omit these special terms of address.

4   Discussion

No less than telephone conversations or face-to-face interviews, telephone survey interviews are a type of talk-in-interaction governed by culture- and language-specific norms. As such, telephone survey interviews that cross cultural or linguistic borders must be designed to take into consideration varying norms of language use. For surveys that are translated, this means that translations must be modified to fit the norms of the target language. Standard translation techniques might overlook these kinds of variation, preferring to translate more directly from the source language, possibly leading to various kinds of interactional troubles.

The examples provided earlier to illustrate this point indicate that there are both local parameters of variation and global considerations that survey researchers and translators must address. Telephone surveys that cross cultural or linguistic borders should take into consideration variation in norms of language use with respect to openings of calls, question and answer sequences, and topic shifts. They should also be designed and translated with sensitivity to global differences in norms of language use, including cultural experience with surveys and cultural differences in establishing, maintaining, and encoding rapport and relationships.

The notion that survey translations must sometimes diverge from a source survey in order to respect varying norms of language use appears to conflict with the aim of asking questions in an equivalent way, thus ensuring comparability of data. There is a paradox, therefore, with respect to conducting surveys across cultural and linguistic borders – close translation of survey items may in some cases compromise comparability of data.

Some of the problems resulting from a lack of sensitivity to cross-cultural differences in communicative norms may simply lead to awkwardness in interviews. An extreme result might be survey non-response or incomplete interviews. Others may lead to compromised data quality and affect measurement error. Future work should be empirical in nature and should examine which types of variation are more likely to increase measurement error and which are more likely to have more benign consequences.

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