

Multilingual Translation Issues in Qualitative Research: Reflections on Semi-structured Interviews with Parents of Children with Autism from India and Turkey.

There is a growing awareness and interest in developing culture and language sensitive knowledge for speech therapy provision in various parts of the world. The optimal method for obtaining such knowledge requires the use qualitative inquiry methods, specifically an ethnographic approach, since this line of inquiry allows a deeper understanding and a thick description of authentic human experience in its natural context. Interviews, participant observations, artifacts and relevant documentation are used as the tools to grasp a better understanding of people's lived experiences. When these tools are used in a cross-cultural study, due to the inseparability of the human experience and the language spoken in a culture, data collection process becomes more complicated. In such cases what allows researchers and their audiences to access the experience of people who are not from their own culture is translation. Yet, despite being an integral component of cross-cultural research it has been frequently overlooked. The common assumption is that translation is an objective and neutral process, in which the translators are "technicians" in producing texts in different languages. However, translating the collected data into English is fraught with methodological pitfalls related to colloquial phrases, jargon, idiomatic expressions, word clarity, and word meanings. It cannot be assumed that a particular concept has the same relevance across cultures. Simply translating word-for-word into English is not adequate many-a-times to account for linguistic and cultural differences.

This study discusses challenges of language differences in qualitative research, when participants and the main researcher speak the same non-English native language and the results of the study is intended for an English speaking audience. Drawing from the field of translation studies and the findings from the translation exercise conducted in two research projects on lived experiences of parents of children with autism from India and Turkey, the authors highlight some of the methodological issues about translation in cross-cultural qualitative research. Based on the premise that interpretation of meaning is the core of qualitative research, the challenges related to

translation, which is itself an interpretive act, are discussed. The authors describe the lessons learned through the data translation processes. The focus of the presentation is on the translation challenges pertaining to the parent-participants' lived experience, in particular the common theme of "prognosis" which comes up both in the Turkish and Indian context. Several potential sources and types of threats to meaning quality are reviewed in regard to this theme as an example. Recommendations are made, aiming to contribute to the best possible representation and understanding of the experiences of the participants and thereby to the validity of qualitative research. Few suggestions are made for minimizing (avoiding, detecting, and remedying) these translation issues, although it is acknowledged that "error" itself is socially constructed and open to multiple interpretations.

REFERENCES

Ball, M. J., Müller, N., & Nelson, R. L. (Eds.). (2014). Handbook of qualitative research in communication disorders. Psychology Press.

Esposito, N. (2001). From meaning to meaning: The influence of translation techniques on non-English focus group research. *Qualitative health research*, 11(4), 568-579.

Polkinghorne, D. E. (2005). Language and meaning: Data collection in qualitative research. *Journal of counseling psychology*, 52(2), 137.

Twinn, S. (1997). An exploratory study examining the influence of translation on the validity and reliability of qualitative data in nursing research. *Journal of advanced nursing*, 26(2), 418-423.

Van Nes, F., Abma, T., Jonsson, H., & Deeg, D. (2010). Language differences in qualitative research: is meaning lost in translation?. *European journal of ageing*, 7(4), 313-316.