Isabelle Renschler, Brian Kleiner, and Martina Bichsel

Dialect-driven interviewer adaptation: experiences from Switzerland

Lausanne, September 2010

Working Papers Series   2010-3

FORS Working Paper series

The FORS Working Paper series presents findings related to survey research, focusing on methodological aspects of survey research or substantive research. Manuscripts submitted are papers that represent work-in-progress. This series is intended to provide an early and relatively fast means of publication prior to further development of the work. A revised version might be requested from the author directly.

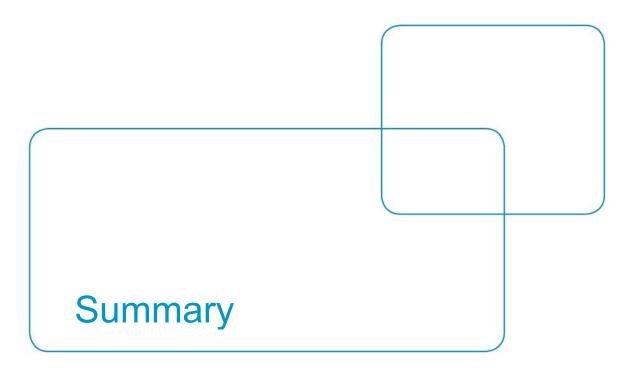Further information on the FORS Working Paper Series can be found on www.fors.unil.ch.

How to cite this document:
Renschler, I., Kleiner, B., & Bichsel, M. (2010). Dialect-driven interviewer adaptation: Experiences from Switzerland. *FORS Working Paper Series,* paper 2010-3. Lausanne: FORS.

Summary

There is now a small but growing body of methodological research addressing aspects of survey translation, with focus on best practices in procedures and quality control, as well as on various features of question and scale equivalence. However, beyond issues regarding scripted translations of surveys, there is little recognition in the literature that in certain linguistic contexts during orally administered surveys questions must undergo a sort of "sight translation", where interviewers transform them ad hoc from written to spoken forms of particular dialects of languages. Our exploratory study examined the extent to which such dialect-driven interviewer adaptations may influence the ways that questions are asked, how the intended meaning of questions may be changed in the process, and how this may affect responding in the interview interaction.

Key words: survey translation, measurement equivalence, interviewer adaptations, dialect.

Table of contents

When *I* use a word [...] it means just what I
choose it to mean – neither more nor less.
- Humpty Dumpty, Through The Looking Glass,
Lewis Carroll

1.   Introduction

Although there is a growing body of literature on aspects of language and equivalence in survey design, including work on questionnaire translation and scripted adaptation from a source to a target language, so far little attention has been given to the role of dialects and dialect-based adaptation in the design and implementation of surveys. Guidelines that have been developed on survey translation (see, for example, Pan and de la Puente 2005; Harkness 2003) have heightened awareness among researchers of the importance of language considerations in survey design, and normally apply to the scripted versions of questionnaires in the process of creating comparative surveys.[1]

Our study is a first exploratory move that addresses the extent of dialect-driven interviewer departures from scripted written questions, with focus on the effects of such departures on question meaning. When questionnaires are orally administered in particular linguistic settings, they must be adapted to spoken dialects, often on the spur of the moment ("on sight")[2] and at times to dialects that have no written form. In this process, standardisation is reduced and question meaning can be altered. This raises the question of the extent to which measurement equivalence is affected.

1.1.   The role of dialect in surveys

Dialects[3] can significantly manifest themselves in a variety of ways within surveys, both in questionnaire design, as well as in the survey interview interaction. With respect to design, it is generally the case that survey instruments are crafted within a standard dialect of a language within a country, that is, the most prestigious variety of the language within a society, spoken natively usually by higher status populations and encoded in the written language, or within the variety that is used for writing.

Use of standard dialects of languages for questionnaires -- whether consciously or not on the part of the survey designer -- makes much sense from a practical standpoint. First, they are generally more likely than nonstandard dialects to be socially acceptable forms of

---

[1] See also translation guidelines for the European Social Survey as well as the "Cross Cultural Survey Guidelines", developed at the University of Michigan: http://ccsg.isr.umich.edu/;
ESS: http://europeansocialsurvey.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=66&Itemid=112
[2] "Sight translation" involves the extemporaneous adaptation of written text to spoken language.
[3] A dialect is a variety of a language spoken by a particular subgroup of speakers of the language within a society, based on region, social class, or ethnicity. Dialects differ linguistically in terms of pronunciation, vocabulary, syntax, and norms of usage.

communication for respondents within survey discourse, although there are some exceptions to this. Second, standard dialects in many countries tend to be understood by greater numbers of people than particular regional or class-based nonstandard dialects.

The correctness of this approach, however, might account for why the role of dialect is largely neglected by survey designers. Moreover, survey designers are often native speakers of standard dialects and construct questions using standard written forms. In addition, their involvement during the actual administration of questionnaires, where they might notice problems related to dialects, is often limited. Thus, they may consider dialect variation as being of minor importance, or they may simply overlook it.

Its relevance though may rise to the surface under certain circumstances. To take an example, in international contexts where there is no single standard and where there is the need for language harmonization (e.g., Spanish in Latin America, or varieties of English within English speaking countries around the world), survey designers or translators must choose very carefully appropriate terms that are common to all varieties, avoiding for example terms that may not be understood or that may have negative connotations for some respondents.

To take another example, there are cases where some or even most potential respondents cannot understand the standard dialect of their language. For example, this is the case in China, where many regional varieties are extremely different from standard Mandarin, and where not all people understand or speak the standard. There are other countries which share these characteristics to some extent (e.g., Spain, Italy, Turkey).

Finally, there are contexts where surveys must be crafted or administered in local or regional dialects because the standard would not be a socially acceptable form of communication for this particular kind of interaction. Such is the case for diglossic situations[4], where a formal standard variety is encoded in the written language, but is not used for everyday life situations involving forms of spoken communication. In such circumstances, it is generally not appropriate to use the standard for orally administered surveys. Further, not all respondents would have the linguistic competence in the spoken

---

[4] In diglossic situations, two dialects or languages coexist within a language community, where one is learned only at school and is reserved for a very small number of highly formal contexts, and where the other is learned natively and is used for all everyday situations. Within the field of sociolinguistics, the situation in Switzerland is often cited as a classic case of diglossia, but diglossia exists in many countries. The particularity of Switzerland might be that everyone uses "dialect" for everyday oral interactions independent of social class or profession, and that speaking dialect conveys no negative connotations to its speakers (cf. Siebenhaar and Wyler, 1997).

standard to participate. In some contexts, using dialect may also increase the sympathy of respondents and persuade them to respond to someone speaking "the same language" (Cialdini 2001).

Some of the dialect-related problems described above are aggravated in contexts where there is no written form of regional or nonstandard dialects. In such cases, there is no real option to write questions in a form that would render them understandable or acceptable to respondents. Thus, with no resort to a written script, it is up to interviewers to adapt and reformulate the written survey questions to make them comprehensible and culturally appropriate for respondents. Such is the case in the Swiss German-speaking regions of Switzerland, where interviewers commonly reformulate written standard German questions into spoken Swiss German during the survey interaction.

1.2. Measurement equivalence in surveys

Equivalence of meaning across language versions of survey instruments is a necessary condition for obtaining comparable measurement across questions and response options (Smith et al 2005). Achieving this equivalence in cross-cultural, multi-language surveys is a considerable challenge (for example, Van der Vijver and Leung 1997; Mohler et al 1998; Harkness et al 2003; Smith et al 2005), as the precise transfer of meaning, intent, and measurement properties from one language to another is a highly complex and difficult task.

Within this framework, very little attention has so far been given to the relationship between equivalence and dialects within languages, most likely because questionnaires are rarely conducted in different dialects of the same language, and therefore the problem of equivalence is usually not pertinent. However, problems of equivalence may come into play in the survey interaction in cases where interviewers adapt written survey questions of a standard language into spoken dialects.

Although the transfer of meaning from standard written language to spoken dialect may seem less challenging than from one language to another, the process of adaptation to spoken dialect can introduce unwanted and uncontrollable changes. This process merits particular attention, since there is ample evidence that even small changes in question wording can change the answers that respondents give (see for example Schumann and Presser, 1981, Rasinski, 1989 Fowler and Mangione 1990). Further, while some of the changes may be relatively innocuous, others may affect the intended meaning of the written questions and lead to misunderstandings on the part of respondents.

The question of whether or not to allow adaptation of survey questions to spoken dialect thus involves a methodological bind. On the one hand, if interviewers are allowed to adapt

survey questions as needed, standardisation[5] will be compromised. On the other hand, if questions are posed exactly as written, they will neither be understood nor accepted by many respondents. Ultimately, in order to render written questions more intelligible and askable, interviewers have no choice but to modify the texts of questions as they see necessary. Adaptations to dialect by interviewers are therefore an inevitable but risky step in such contexts to allow for oral administration of survey questionnaires. At the same time, it is also conceivable that some changes may even *improve* responding if they increase the sympathy of respondents, render questions more natural sounding, and do not interfere with key measurement properties. In any event, this necessarily raises the question of the extent to which the process of adaptation reduces measurement equivalence.

1.3. Survey practice and use of "dialect" in Swiss German-speaking Switzerland

All national surveys in Switzerland are conducted across linguistic and cultural borders, generally in German, French, and Italian. In the Swiss German-speaking part of the country[6], telephone or face-to-face survey questionnaires are commonly constructed in standard German, but are administered in the spoken dialects. Speaking "dialect" is an important part of regional, cantonal, and national identity, and there are only a few specific settings where speaking standard German is demanded or polite (Siebenhaar and Wyler 1997). Given that there is no standardised written form of the Swiss German dialects and that there are many specific dialects[7], interviewers have to adapt the questions from the scripted questionnaire. The process of how to make the questions suitable for oral transmission is sometimes addressed by the survey agency in interviewer training, but data collection agencies have no unified policy in this.

---

[5] Since the early beginnings of survey research and interviewing, standardization has been an important feature to ensure the comparability and quality of survey data. However, some types of departures by interviewers, especially repair techniques, are considered as beneficial to respondent cooperation (see Van der Zouwen, 2006, Maynard et al. 2002). But uniform wording of questions across interviews remains still one of the most fundamental and universally supported principles of standardized interviewing (Groves et al., 2007).

[6] About 64 percent of the Swiss population indicates Swiss German as mother tongue, according to figures of the last census. See also Georges Lüdi, Iwar Werlen (2005). Eidgenössiche Volkszählung 2000 Sprachenlandschaft in der Schweiz, BFS: Neuchâtel.

[7] Despite the varied dialects, the Swiss can still understand one another although they may have trouble understanding some words or particular dialects (such as the one from Wallis). In general, Swiss German speakers communicating across dialects do not accommodate much to others' dialects, but rather each speaks his/her own dialect.

It should be noted that most written questionnaires are modified to a certain extent by survey designers in the direction of the Swiss German dialects, even more so when it comes to the Swiss part of international surveys where often there are small changes of wording that are more suited to particular cultural understandings (and political circumstances).[8] However, these normally modest changes in wording still do not allow for *reading* the questions as they are written. In addition to quite extreme changes in pronunciation, interviewers must adapt specific lexical and syntactic properties of questions.[9] Further, the extent of necessary adaptation varies according to the regional dialect of the interviewer. Interviewers therefore still have to modify the scripted questions appropriately without recourse to any written aid, which is a complex task that adds heavy demands on working memory and attention to the already burdensome cognitive task of interviewing (Japec 2008).[10]

Writing questions directly in dialect has never apparently been seen as a valid option, because of the variety of dialects and the lack of a largely acknowledged standard written code. Moreover, while there does exist a limited literary tradition of writing in Swiss German, reading or writing a text in dialect is a very unusual exercise.[11] In contrast, it is common to think that standard written German can easily be translated spontaneously to spoken dialect. Thus, it is generally considered that interviewers routinely ensure the equivalence of question meaning from written standard German to spoken dialect in the same way that Swiss German speakers adapt information from the standard in their everyday life.

It is assumed – by those who conceive the studies, by the data collection agencies, and by data users – that the changes made by interviewers have a minimal impact on the meaning of survey items, and that respondents are answering to the "right" questions as intended. However, it is clear that beyond ordinary interviewer departures from the written questionnaire, such dialect-specific adaptations carry the risk of compromising

---

[8] The scripted questionnaire in standard German is therefore similar to but not identical to the scripted German questionnaire, for example, within the European Social Survey. The same applies also to the Austrian questionnaire.

[9] Some practical examples for lexical changes are: arbeiten = schaffe; Fernsehen = fernseh luege; am treffendsten = am beschte, versuchen = probiärä; tun = mache, Dinge = Sache ; syntactic changes are for example: Waren = «sind gsi». For more examples, see Siebenhaar and Wyler (1997).

[10] Some interviewers do make notes in the questionnaire or on a side sheet of paper, which may help with remembering lexical and syntactical changes that have to be introduced.

[11] There is Swiss German poetry, some Swiss German songwriters make their lyrics available in dialect, and there is some literature for small children in dialect. Written dialect is also sometimes used in advertisements or in personal communications.

measurement equivalence and data quality. Such dialect-based customisation in the survey context therefore deserves a particular focus.

1.4. Purpose of the study

Until now, there has been no systematic evaluation of the nature and effects of dialect-based interviewer adaptation, and little is known about what happens during the adaptation of questions from standard written German to spoken Swiss German in survey interviews. The aim of this study was to assess the extent to which Swiss German speaking interviewers deviate from the scripted questionnaire in order to render questions comprehensible and socially acceptable for respondents. An important aim was to determine if adaptations by interviewers alter the meanings of questions, and whether these practices may provide lessons for us regarding survey question development and/or interviewer training in such linguistic contexts.

2.   Method

2.1.   Background on the data

In June and July 2005, within the context of the European Social Survey (ESS), a collaborative study between ZUMA (now the Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences, GESIS) and SIDOS (a predecessor of FORS) was conducted in Germany and Switzerland on oral adaptation in telephone surveys (Harkness et al., 2007). The primary purpose of the study, which involved 100 recorded interviews, was to examine the nature of sight translation processes, where interviewers were required to translate spontaneously from a source ESS questionnaire in English to German or to Swiss German.[12]

Five of the ten interviewers in the study were German and conducted the interviews in Germany. The other five were from Switzerland (mainly from the region of Berne) and conducted their interviews with respondents in Swiss German speaking regions of Switzerland. Each of the interviewers conducted 10 interviews, with five ad hoc adaptations from the English source questionnaire, and five from the German version. The instrument included 43 questions. The interviewers selected for the study were experienced, but were given no special training or instructions for this particular experiment.

2.2.   Approach

To address the current study's research questions, we examined 24 of the recorded interviews conducted in Switzerland from German to Swiss German (the 25th interview did not yield an audible recording). There were five recorded interviews for four of the interviewers, and there were four from a fifth interviewer. The 24 interviews were fully transcribed by two native speakers of Swiss German with transcription experience, following a system of conventions geared toward our anticipated analyses. Notably, the transcription approach aimed to capture pertinent linguistic and paralinguistic features of the spoken interactions, such as interruptions, emphasis, and intonation. It did not,

---

[12] More precisely, of the 100 recorded interviews, 50 involved English to German or English to Swiss German translation, while the remaining 50 served as a sort of control and involved German to German or German to Swiss German interviews (25 each). As in common practice, the German questionnaire (translated already from English) used for the Swiss interviews was close to the German version used in Germany, with the exception of some minor changes needed for the Swiss context, including a few grammatical changes to render the questions slightly more "Swiss German".

however, aim to represent pronunciation, unless it was felt in specific cases that doing so might have analytic value.

Portions of the resulting transcriptions were then behavior coded according to a devised two-part coding scheme, one part for the questions, and one part for initial responses. Given resource limitations, it was not possible in the end to code all 1,032 instances of questions (43 questions x 24 interviews). Questions were selected for coding in a way that allowed representation of all items and each of the five interviewers, roughly one instance of each question for each interviewer, selected at random.

With respect to the coding process, after a significant amount of training and first attempts it became clear that independent coding of questions and initial responses resulted in inadequate levels of interrater reliability.[13] This was due most likely to the complexity and level of subjectivity involved in the task. It was decided therefore to switch to a team or committee approach with consensus-based decisions. For this process, from 3-5 coders would consider together and discuss each question and response instance until consensus was reached on the appropriate codes. In the few instances where no consensus could be obtained, the case was adjudicated by project staff. In the end, 229 questions and corresponding initial responses were coded.

Key to the coding of questions was distinguishing trivial departures from those that could well have led to a change of the intended (and perceived) meaning of the question, and thus to different responses. We also distinguished departures that occur routinely during most orally conducted telephone interviews from those that occur apparently as a result of dialect influence, that is, where some written aspect of a question could not appropriately be asked as such in spoken dialect. For the question part of the scheme, for each transcribed interview, selected questions were coded for grammatical correctness and completion, extent of departure from the written question, whether or not the departure was due to dialect, whether there was a change of meaning, and whether a change of meaning was due to dialect (see exhibit 1).

Departures from the written question could be coded as "One or two changes" or "Three or more changes", and changes of meaning could be coded as "Yes, for most or all respondents", or "Yes, possibly for some respondents". For example, the omission of a word in a specific response category may effect only the respondents who would have chosen this response category.[14] Whereas, when a word in a question is replaced by

---

[13] That is, the degree of consensus among independent raters.

[14] To take another example, consider the question "Which best describes the area where you live?" If "A farm or home in the countryside" left out as an answer category, people that live in such an area will choose the next closest answer possible. For them, the omission will therefore have an impact on their response, whereas for people living other areas it will have no effect.

another word having a different meaning, this will more likely have an effect for all respondents.[15] A change of meaning was considered to have occurred when some semantic element was altered or deleted from the written question, or where a new semantic element not present in the written question was introduced by the interviewer. Assessing whether a change of meaning occurred, and if so whether it was for all or some respondents, involved a higher level of subjectivity for raters, compared to the other codes (e.g., number of departures, grammatical correctness).

Exhibit 1: Coding grid for questions

B32
Politische Parteien, die die Demokratie abschaffen wollen, sollten verboten werden
(Political parties that wish to overthrow democracy should be banned)

BEFRAGER: VORLESEN
1   Stimme stark zu (Agree strongly)
2   Stimme zu (Agree)
3   Weder noch (Neither agree nor disagree)
4   Lehne ab (Disagree)
5   Lehne stark ab (Disagree strongly)
8   (Weiss nicht) (Don't know)

_1359 [5236-5352]
   49. I: Oh key! Politischi Parteie wo d'Demokratie wei abschaffe söttet verbote wärde.

Grammatically correct and complete	1…..Yes√		2…..No
Extent of departure	1…..No changes (*skip to next question*)	2…..One or two changes √	3…..Three or more changes
Departure due to dialect	1…..Yes√		2…..No
Change of meaning	1…..Yes, for most or all respondents	2…..Yes, possibly for some respondents	3…..No (*skip to next questio n*) √
Change of meaning due to dialect	1…..Yes		2…..No

In addition to the coding of questions, we examined the transcriptions to analyze aspects of the interaction between the interviewers and respondents. The aim was to allow for correlation of different kinds of interviewer departures from the script with problematic moments in the interviews, as reflected in the initial responses of respondents, where initial responses were defined as the first turn taken by the respondent after a question was posed by the interviewer.

---

[15] An example for this is the question about how much a person watches TV. The scripted version of the question asks "in total", whereas the interviewer replaces this by "approximately".

Following this logic, and the classic behavior coding scheme of Oksenberg, Cannell, and Kalton (1991), initial responses to selected questions were coded as "Adequate answer", "Interrruption with answer", "Request for clarification", "Qualified answer", "Inadequate answer", "Don't know", or "Refusal to answer" (see exhibit 2). An initial response was coded as adequate if an immediate answer was given after a question, and that answer fit well to the question and available response options. "Inadequate answers" were those initial responses that obviously misunderstood or did not address the meaning of the question. Initial responses were coded as "Interruption with answer" when the respondent provided an answer before the question was read to completion, that is, before the full content of the question had been provided. "Request for clarification" was where the respondent would ask for further information, a precision of some aspect of the question, or some form of explanation before providing an answer. "Qualified answers" were defined for coders as answers that clearly addressed the intent of question but could not easily be categorized given the available response options.

Following typical practice in behavior coding of responses, all except "adequate answers" were treated as "problematic" in some way. It should be noted that initial responses were coded in relation to the scripted question and not the question as it was actually posed by interviewers. We should note that the full interviewer/interviewee interaction, including follow-up sequences, was not coded or analysed.

Exhibit 2: Coding grid for responses

B32
Politische Parteien, die die Demokratie abschaffen wollen, sollten verboten werden
(Political parties that wish to overthrow democracy should be banned)

BEFRAGER: VORLESEN
1   Stimme stark zu (Agree strongly)
2   Stimme zu (Agree)
3   Weder noch (Neither agree nor disagree)
4   Lehne ab (Disagree)
5   Lehne stark ab (Disagree strongly)
8   (Weiss nicht) (Don't know)

_1359 [5236-5352]
49.   I: Ohkey! Politischi Parteie wo d'Demokratie wei abschaffe söttet verbote wärde.
50.   R: Starchi Zuestimmig.

First response type	Interruption with answer	Request for clarification	Adequate answer	Qualified answer	Inadequate answer	Don't know	Refusal to answer
	1	2	3 √	4	5	6	7

With the coded questions and initial responses in hand, analyses included descriptive statistics and correlations. Analyses addressed the overall level of departures and changes of meaning of questions, as well as of "problematic" initial responses. Correlations were run to test whether there was a connection between problems with responding and extent of interviewer departure from the script and changes of meaning. Beyond the quantitative analyses, we also examined from a more qualitative perspective the nature of deviations from the script and apparent motivations for such departures. Analyses also focused on differences across interviewers and within interviewers across interviews to identify patterns of adaptation.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Findings for questions

Analysis of the selected questions revealed that a high percentage of questions, nearly 80 percent, were asked in a grammatically correct and complete form (table 1). The remaining questions were altered in a way that was not grammatically correct and complete, neither in standard German nor in Swiss German dialects. Three or more changes were introduced by interviewers for 66 percent of the coded questions, while one or two changes were made for another 29 percent. Of the 95 percent of questions that were modified by interviewers, 69 percent were dialect-based adaptations. The 31 percent of changes that were not dialect-based were due to other motivations.

Considering the semantic effect of the departures from the original scripted wording, we found that 61 percent of these departures did not alter question meaning. However, the meaning was changed for 39 percent of the questions, where it changed either for most or all respondents (14 percent) or possibly for some respondents (25 percent).

Review of the findings for particular questions showed that no questions were immune to interviewer adaptations, and all were roughly equally prone to changes, including changes of meaning. Further, all five interviewers engaged in adaptation and change of meaning of questions to some extent, although one interviewer was slightly more likely than the others to do so.

Table 1: Findings for codings of questions as asked by interviewers

		Percentage	Number of cases
Grammatically correct and complete	Yes	79	181
	No	21	48
Extent of departure	1-2 changes	29	67
	3 or more changes	66	152
	No change	4	10
Departure due to dialect	Yes	69	155
	No	31	69
Change of meaning	Yes, for all respondents	14	32
	Yes, for some respondents	25	55
	No change of meaning	61	136

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

3.2. Findings for initial responses

Fifty-seven percent of the *initial* responses were coded as "adequate". On the other hand, 43 percent of initial responses were "problematic" and did not involve an immediate adequate answer. Nearly one out of five initial answers (18 percent) was "inadequate" with respect to scripted questions. One out of four initial responses were either interruptions with answers (5 percent), requests for clarification (9 percent), or qualified answers (11 percent). See section 6.1.6 for some sequences including adequate and inadequate initial responses.

Here we do not know what part of these percentages are due to interviewer changes to questions or to the written questions themselves. In order to shed light on the results, we present analyses in the appendix of particular question formulations. The interactions between interviewer and respondent also provide more insight into the descriptive findings.

Table 2: Findings for codings of initial responses to questions

	Percentage	Number of cases
Adequate answer	57	130
Inadequate answer	18	42
Interruption with answer	5	11
Request for clarification	9	20
Qualified answer	11	26
Total	100	229

3.3. Discussion

With respect to interviewer departures from the written questions and the initial responses of respondents, the study's results are striking, especially in relation to what are standard levels in the field. It is a general rule of thumb that more than 10 percent of interviewer departure from a script poses a problem for data quality and comparability, and that 20 percent should be the threshold of tolerance for problematic initial responses to particular questions (Zukerberg, Von Thurn, and Moore 1995; Fowler 1989)). In terms of changes of meaning, there does not seem to be a standard acceptable level, most likely because *any* change of meaning is in principle undesirable.

The results, however, must be understood within the context of the original experiment, and within the particular Swiss context:

- First, it must be kept in mind that the 24 interviews were recorded as part of an experiment and may not have been done under natural and ordinary survey conditions. In addition, the results are based on a small number of cases. Thus, the results do not necessarily reflect the actual behaviors of interviewers (and respondents) in surveys conducted in Switzerland. The results could be somewhat similar in real survey contexts, but without further study it is impossible to say for sure.

- Second, the context in Swiss German speaking regions of Switzerland is necessarily one of sight translation into dialects that have no written form. It is simply not possible or appropriate for interviewers to read questions as written – they must adapt questions to make them askable in spoken Swiss German, that is, more comprehensible, natural sounding, and culturally appropriate. Therefore, the results cannot fairly be compared to standards in the field, which pertain to more "normal" survey conditions. A sensible comparison would rather be to compare these findings to those of similar linguistic settings. As far as we know, however, no other such data exist.

- Third, from a methodological point of view, the assessment of change of meaning and its degree of importance is a complex process that is among other things determined by highly subjective factors like the understanding of semantic nuances and linguistic sensitivity. Therefore, the figures must be interpreted with caution. However, the results basically rely on the same principle as survey research itself, that is, that all people (respondents) share a common understanding of the intended meaning of questions, independently of subjective cognitive processes or language proficiency, which allows for comparative analysis and generalisation.

Despite these qualifications, we believe that the level of change of meaning indicated in the study results is inappropriately high.[16] If it is reflective of real interviewer practice in Swiss German-speaking Switzerland, this means that a significant portion of survey questions are altered in a way that may change their measurement properties compared to what was intended by their scripted versions.

---

[16] This is true even if we take into account that only one-third of the changes affected all the respondents (the remaining two thirds being changes of meaning only for some respondents) and that the degree of importance for such changes varies.

The observed high level of change of meaning could also be attributed to the specific task demands during this exercise of interviewing with sight translation from standard written German to Swiss German. Interviewers in Swiss German-speaking regions are not only expected to carry out the normal work of interviews (e.g., asking questions, interpreting whether responses fit to response categories, repair work), but they also must interpret questions simultaneously and modify them appropriately without recourse to any written aid (Japec 2008). In the present interview setting, this can be viewed as a quite complex cognitive task with heavy demands on working memory and attention. Since working memory and attention represent systems of limited capacity, it could be hypothesized that the cognitive load in this task sometimes reaches a critical level, where cognitive control fails and problematic questions are produced. This could be the underlying cause for the many observed disturbances in the interview process, including unintentional changes of meaning. Consistent with this, it should be noted that coding revealed no specific cases where changes of meaning were due to the needs of asking questions in dialect. But of course in order to test the hypothesis of cognitive overload, controlled settings of interview situations with manipulated experimental conditions would be necessary.

It is important to reiterate that not all changes of meaning are equal with respect to their impact on the answers of respondents. Certainly some may be relatively harmless, while others may fundamentally change responses. Unfortunately, our data do not allow such a fine discrimination of changes of meaning, although the examples provided in the appendix show that at least in some cases specific changes pose a high risk of leading to different responses. Finally, even if we could systematically assess the seriousness of specific instances of change of meaning to questions, it is nearly impossible to link such changes systematically to particular corresponding responses.[17]

It is also not possible to conclude anything at this point with respect to data quality. Indeed, we do not know how differences in formulations (for example "he claims" instead of "he believes") were perceived by the respondents, and if respondents gave different answers just because there was a subtle change in wording. One could argue that people probably concentrate more on the general message that is conveyed than how exactly something is said, especially when they just want to move quickly through the interview. Respondents could also still be influenced by preceding questions, or the overall survey topic and respond therefore according to their general feeling about an issue, ignoring completely all

---

[17] Qualitative methods such as conversational analysis might in some cases unearth respondent understandings in relation to specific changes of meaning, and while the results would be interesting, they would most likely not yield a full view of the cognitive processes of respondents in response to specific question reformulations.

the fine semantic nuances. On the other hand, words clearly also carry meaning and an apparent slight change of wording can introduce misunderstandings of survey questions.

As for the high level of problematic initial responses, we suspected that this might be related to the level of departures or to the level of change of meaning of questions by interviewers, but tests of correlation revealed no such connection. The low number of coded sequences (229) may have limited the possibility of detecting a correlation. On the other hand, it could be that interviewer changes to questions *promoted* in some cases the adequacy of responses.

Besides changes of meaning, there were also many cases of less than optimal adaptations (incomplete or grammatically incorrect sentences, repetitions of parts of questions due to wrong article, etc.). It is difficult to determine precisely what is the impact of such changes, both in terms of content and the rhythm of the interview. We can simply note that questions sometimes become much longer, or that uncertainties arise about the focus of the question, and they at times also lead to unusual formulations.

In a context where interviewers have the assignment of adapting questions for spoken language, and where no specific guidelines are given, interviewers will do their best, but will do so based on an individual understanding of what this means. The fact that questions are adapted to dialect leads also to some extent to a survey interaction that is somewhat more similar to conversation than in normal formal interviews, since dialect typically signifies relatively informal interaction. Thus, perhaps interviewers may feel more comfortable departing from the formal script, and respondents may allow themselves to depart from more rigid question and answer sequences to give comments, interrupt, pose questions, or qualify answers, rather than choose immediately the proposed answer categories or scales. While initial responses were often problematic, it may be that this informal give and take between the interviewers and respondents had a positive influence on survey participation, and perhaps as well on answer quality. What remains unclear is whether such conversational aspects are less common in the French- and Italian-speaking parts of Switzerland, and more generally in other survey contexts.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Our results showed, as can be expected in such a specific context, that a very large portion of the questions examined were modified by Swiss German-speaking interviewers in telephone survey interviews to make them fit to dialect. What is more surprising is that for a high percentage of cases the meaning of questions was altered. In addition, a high percentage of the initial responses were not "adequate", suggesting problems with the question formulations. In our view, these findings are not necessarily indicative of poor interviewing practices. Rather, they are linked to the necessary efforts of interviewers to make questions askable in Swiss German. Changes of meaning to questions in such contexts are not dialect *driven*, but result in large part from the cognitive load associated with the sight process of dialect translation.

In any event, if such findings are a reflection of actual interviewing practices in Switzerland, it is clear that there is room for thinking about optimizing survey conditions for interviewers, both in terms of improving questionnaires as well as training. In order to assess how representative our findings are, we will examine interview recordings from other surveys. We will start by looking at some recorded SHARE 2010 interviews[18], and will continue collecting information within the MOSAiCH 2011 and other international surveys that are conducted by FORS. Recordings of recent ESS interviews would be especially interesting, as they would allow for direct comparison of questions and wording. By doing so, we plan to create a larger data basis that will lead to more generalizable results.

At this point, we would recommend several remedies that might lead to increased standardisation, reduced interviewer variance, and more fidelity to question meaning in ad hoc dialect translation. First, survey designers should examine the extent to which written questionnaires can be modified to approach more closely the linguistic features of spoken non-written target dialects. These might include primarily lexical and syntactic features, since such modifications might have a modest impact on the question formulations, and may not place additional burden on interviewers (compared, for example, to phonetic changes encoded in writing). On the contrary, such changes to written questions should reduce the cognitive load placed on interviewers, since the questions would require less transformation into the spoken dialects and could more easily be read as written.[19]

---

[18] More than a dozen recordings will be available in the end of August 2010 that were collected with the consent of the survey agency and the respondents.
[19] The problem of dialect variation must also be considered in modifying questions. Probably changes into linguistic features that cross most or all dialects would be most appropriate.

Second, we would recommend intensive training of interviewers with respect to how to conduct sight dialect translation in an appropriate way. This would include training on the importance of standardisation in relation to the need for capturing the intended meaning of survey items. Of course, it would also include item by item discussion of the intended meaning of questions. Differences between the written standard form and spoken dialects should be explicitly addressed, along with examples of typical lexical and syntactic changes.

Also, we believe that it would be worthwhile to explore this issue more in depth by conducting some experiments. One possibility could be to integrate into "treatment" questionnaires, in addition to the question formulation in the standard variety, a dialect-written wording, by using and adapting existing standardised Swiss German dialect writing.[20] Interviewers would still have to make some final adaptations to the scripted questions due to their specific dialect, but the written text would be directly readable, and the cognitive effort of translating reduced, with the questions adapted in advance. This would require a shift towards the acknowledgment that spoken language requires greater attention in surveys, and that in this specific context the standard variety is not appropriate to encode oral features of communication. It would certainly need some additional training, but would promote standardisation and could be helpful for interviewers. This might eventually also be beneficial for survey translators for international surveys who are usually assigned to translate questions close to the spoken language, but are not given any guidelines on how closeness to dialect should be implemented.

We would therefore also aim to gather materials on interviewer training that may exist already at the survey agencies, and supplement them with guidelines for adaptation based on suggestions from survey experts and Swiss linguists. After additional research, we could also produce guidelines for survey designers and translators, to help them write survey questions in ways that bring them closer to Swiss German dialects. The guidelines for training, survey design, and translation should include examples of recurrent adaptations and would be especially helpful in the context of the international surveys that FORS conducts regularly.

Further research might also involve examination of interviewing practices in similar linguistic contexts around the world. It should be noted that the survey context in Switzerland is most likely not unique—there exist around the world many such diglossic linguistic situations (e.g., in north African countries, Brazil, Pakistan, Norway, Greece), as well as in many countries where dialect variation is extreme enough to have implications

---

[20] Attempts to produce a standardized writing of Swiss dialects have been undertaken by different authors, for instance by Eugen Dieth. These rules include practical advice and could be adapted to current needs of survey research.

for the survey context (e.g., India, Turkey, Spain, Italy, China). Therefore the issues addressed in this paper are probably of broad significance for survey research.

5.   Bibliography

Blasius, J. and Friedrichs J. (2009). The effect of phrasing scale items in low-brow or high-brow language on responses, International Journal of Public Opinion Research, Vol. 21 (2)

Bollen, K. A. (1989). Structural equations with latent variables. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Billiet, J. (2003). Cross-cultural equivalence with structural equation modeling. In J. A. Harkness, F. J. R. Van de Vijver & P. P. Mohler (Eds.), Cross-cultural survey methods (pp. 247-263). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Cialdini, R. B. (2001). Influence: Science and practice (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Dieth, E. (1986). Schwyzertütschi Dialäktschrift: Dieth Schreibung. 2. Aufl./ bearbeitet und herausgegeben von Christian Schmid-Cadalbert, Sauerländer: Aarau.

Ferguson, C. A. (1991). Epilogue: Diglossia Revisited. In: Southwest Journal of Linguistics 10, 214–234.

Groves, R. M., Fowler, F.J. Jr., Couper, M.P., and Lepkowsi, J. M. (2004). Survey Methodology. Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley Interscience.

Haas, W. (2004). Die Sprachsituation der deutschen Schweiz und das Konzept der Diglossie. In: Christen, Helen (Hrsg.) (2004): Dialekt, Regiolekt und Standardsprache im sozialen und zeitlichen Raum. Wien.

Hägi, S. and Scharloth, J. (2005). Ist Standarddeutsch für Deutschschweizer eine Fremdsprache? Untersuchungen zu einem Topos des sprachreflexiven Diskurses. Linguistik online 24, 3/05. http://www.linguistik-online.de/24_05/haegiScharloth.html

Harkness, J. (2003). Questionnaire translation. In J. Harkness, F. Van de Vijver & P. Mohler (Eds.), Cross-cultural survey methods (pp. 35-67). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Harkness, J., Van de Vijver, F., and Mohler, P. (2003). Cross-cultural survey methods. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Harkness, J., (2007). Oral translation in telephone surveys. In J.M. Lepkowski, C. Tucker, J. M. Brick, E. D. De Leeuw, L. Japec, P. J. Lavrakas, M. W. Link, R. L. Sangster (Eds.), Advances in Telephone Survey Methodology, Wiley Interscience.

Jowell, R., Roberts, C., Fitzgerald, R., and Eva G. (2007). Measuring attitudes cross-nationally. Lessons from the European Social Survey. London: Sage.

Japec, L. (2008). Interviewer error and interviewer burden. In *Advances in Telephone Survey Methodology,* ed J.M. Lepkowski, C. Tucker, J.M. Brick, E.D. de Leeuw, L. Japec, P.J. Lavrakas, M.W. Link, and R.L. Sangster, pp.187-211. Hoboken: Wiley.

Levin, K., Willis G. B., Forsyth B. H., Norberg A., Kudela M. S., Stark D., and Thompson F. E. (2009). Using Cognitive Interviews to Evaluate the Spanish-Language Translation of a Dietary Questionnaire, Survey Research Methods, 3(1), 13-25.

Lessler, J.T. and Kalsbeek, W.D. (1992). Nonsampling Errors in Surveys. Wiley, New York.

Lyberg, L., Biemer, P., Collins, M., de Leeuw, E., Dippo, C., Schwarz, N. and Trewin, D. (1997). Survey Measurement and Process Quality. Wiley, New York.

Maynard, D., Houtkoop-Steenstra, H,, Schaeffer, N.C., and van der Zouwen, H. (2002). *Standardization and Tacit Knowledge: Interaction and Practice in the Survey Interview*. New York: Wiley Interscience.

Mohler, P. P., Smith, T. W., and Harkness, J. (1998). Respondents' ratings of expressions form response scales: A two country, two-language investigation on equivalence and translation. ZUMA-Nachichten Spezial, January, 159-184.

Olson, L. E., Osborn, L. , Blumberg, S. J. and Brady, S. (2003). Development of a Methodology, Paper presented to the American Association for Public Opinion Research, Nashville, May, 2003.

Prieto, A. (1992). A Method for Translation of Instruments to Other Languages, Adult Education Quarterly, 43: 1-14

Saris, W. E., and Gallhofer, I. N. (2007). Design, evaluation and analysis of questionnaire for survey research. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Schoua-Glusberg, A. (2006a). Assessing comprehension of translated questionnaires with qualitative methods. Proceedings of the Statistics Canada Symposium 2004: Innovative Methods for Surveying Difficult-to-Reach Populations. www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/11-522-XIE/2004001/Schoua-Glusberg_eng_final.pdf.

Siebenhaar, B. and Wyler, A. (1997). Dialekt und Hochsprache in der deutschsprachigen Schweiz. Zürich: Pro Helvetia. Fünfte vollständig überarbeitete Auflage.

Smith, T. W., Mohler, P. P., Harkness, J., and Onodera, N. (2005). Methods for assessing and calibrating response scales across countries and languages. Comparative sociology, 4(3-4), 365-415.

Pan, Y, and de la Puente, M. (2005). "Census Bureau Guideline for the Translation of Data Collection Instruments and Supporting Materials: Documentation on How the Guideline Was Developed." http://www.census.gov/srd/papers/pdf/rsm2005-06.pdf

Van der Vijver, F., and Leung, K. (1997). Methods and data analysis of comparative research. In J. W. Berry, Y. H. Poortinga & J. Pandey (Eds.), Handbook of cross-cultural psychology (pp. 257-300). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Van der Zouwen, J. (2006). Interviewer and Survey Researcher, Bulletin of sociological Methodology, 89, 49-64.

Werlen, I. (1998). Mediale Diglossie oder asymmetrische Zweisprachigkeit? Mundart und Hochsprache in der deutschen Schweiz. In: Babylonia 1, 22–35.

6.   Appendix

The following sections provide some examples from the transcriptions to illustrate problematic outcomes, including cases where questions of equivalence of measurement properties are particularly interesting. Selected examples illustrate different aspects, including interviewer variance, real-time difficulties of proper adaptation, subtle changes of meaning that could have had an impact on measurement equivalence, and problems in the initial responding and the subsequent interactions.

6.1.1.   Departures within interviewer

In our data, departures occurred across interviewers, but there was also variation in forms of adaptation *within* interviewers across interviews. To the question "Do you have a paid job?", one interviewer used on the whole three different formulations across five interviews (example 1). Besides using the adapted form of the scripted version "einer bezahlten Beschäftigung nachgehen" (literally translated "to have a paid job"), which does not sound very natural in Swiss German, the interviewer introduces two other variations that express the idea of having a job and that sound more natural. However, since the expressions "berufstätig sein" (to have a job) and "beruflich tätig sein" (to work, to have a job) are less precise, two different things are asked. In instances 2 and 3 it is just about having *a job*. Whereas the original question was about a *paid job*.

Example 1
Gehen Sie einer <u>bezahlten Beschäftigung</u> nach?
Source questionnaire (SQ): Do you have a <u>paid job</u>?

Interviewer A_instance 1
((schnalzt mit der Zunge)) Ohkey! U, göht dir zur Zit enere <u>bezaute Beschäftigung</u> nache. [paid job]
A_instance 2
Ohkey. Und, äh, sit dir zur Zit <u>bruefstätig</u>.   [a job?]
A_instance 3
Ohkey! Uu, sit dir zur Zit <u>brueflech tätig</u>? [to work]
A_instance 4
Ohkey! Uund, heit dir zur Ziit e <u>bezauti Beschäftigung</u>? [p<u>aid job</u>]
A_instance 5
((schnalzt mit der Zunge)) Mhm, ohkey! Uu heit dir zur Ziit äh <u>bezauti Beschäftigung</u>? [<u>paid job</u>]

6.1.2. Departures across interviewers

To illustrate the fact that interviewers adapt individually the questions, example 2 shows a case where an interviewer (B) uses "he claims" instead of "he believes." For the same question, another interviewer (C) omits the word "should" in "…every person in the world should be treated equally", and instead says the equivalent of "…every person in the world gets the same treatment". "Gets the same treatment" can also be misleading, if one thinks of medical treatment.[21]

Example 2
Er hält es für wichtig, dass alle Menschen auf der Welt *gleich behandelt werden sollten.* Er *glaubt*, dass jeder Mensch im Leben gleiche Chancen haben sollte.

SQ: He thinks it is important that every person in the world should be treated equally. He believes everyone should have equal opportunities in life.

Interviewer B:
I: Und er hautet's für wichtig das aui Mönsche uf dere Wäut glich behandlet söt werde. Er *behoupt* das jede Mönsch im Läbä glichi Chance söt ha.
(he claims)

Interviewer C:
I: Oh-key! E Person wo's für wichtig hautet dass aui Mönsche uf de Wäut *gliichi Behandlig- überchömmed* und wo gloubt dass jede Mönsch- im Läbe, die gliiche Chance sötti ha?
(get « the same treatment », « should » is missing!)

6.1.3. Failed adaptations

In the process of ad hoc adaptation, it happens that interviewers do not find the right term in Swiss German, or hesitate and have to make corrections. Unusual adaptations such as those below occur now and then, and testify to the increased workload for interviewers due to the need for translation. In example 3, the interviewer does not know what to do with *mitgewirkt (participated),* which does not sound natural in Swiss German. The attempt to replace it produces an even more unusual formulation.

---

[21] In the discussion about the revision of the Swiss health insurance system, this question comes up now and then in the context of the reduced reimbursement of treatments. Some fear that a system of "two classes" is being created where only rich people can afford costly treatments because they pay them out of the pocket.

> **Example 3**
> In einer politischen Partei oder einer Gruppierung *mitgewirkt.*
>
> SQ: (..) participated in a political party or action group?
>
> Interviewer D:
> I: Ohkey! Äh, *sit dr* inere politische [Partei oder] inre Gruppierig *mit gsi.*

In example 4, the second sentence is extended by "es im Läbe Abwechslig brucht und das das ou wichtig isch", which produces a slight shift in the focus of the question. Instead of just saying (literally backtranslated) that "diversion is important in life", the interviewer says "She thinks that diversion is necessary in life and that this is also important". What is then meant by *this*—is it *diversion* or the fact that *she thinks*?

> **Example 4**
> Sie liebt Überraschungen und hält immer Ausschau nach neuen Aktivitäten. Sie denkt, *dass im Leben Abwechslung wichtig ist.*
>
> SQ: She likes surprises and is always looking for new things to do. She thinks it is important to do lots of different things in life.
>
> Interviewer E:
> I: ((einatmen)) Di nächschti Person liebt Überraschige und - - tuet immer Usschau haute nach neue Aktivitäte. [Sie] denkt *dass es im Läbe Abwechslig brucht und das das ou wichtig isch.*

In example 5, the interviewer has problems of finding the formulation that sounds natural, as well as the right articles. She repeats the beginning of the sentence twice, as well as the second part. In between, there are apologies. More precisely, the interviewer has troubles finding the correct formulation, as she needs to make the change from the German genitive case '*des*' into Swiss German, where this case does not exist.

> **Example 5**
> Sagen Sie mir bitte, wie Sie - alles in allem - den aktuellen Zustand des schweizerischen Schul- und Bildungssystems beurteilen?
>
> SQ: Please say what you think overall about the state of education in Switzerland.
>
> Interviewer A:
> I: Ähm, itz säged dr mr bit-te- *aso chönnted dr mir säge* jo wie *wi-* dir aues in auem *der aktuelle Z- dr aktuell Zuestand tschoudigung, vor* schwizerische Schuel und Biudigs- vom schwizerische Schuel und Biudigssystem tüet beurteile.

6.1.4. Incomplete sentences

> **Example 6**
> Wie zufrieden sind Sie insgesamt mit Ihrem gegenwärtigen Leben? 0 bedeutet äusserst unzufrieden und 10 äusserst zufrieden.
>
> SQ: How satisfied are you with your life as a whole nowadays? Please answer using this card, where 0 means extremely dissatisfied and 10 means extremely satisfied.
>
> Interviewer C:
> I: [Oh]key. U we dr itz das insgsamte nomou aalueget wi eues (gfa-wärwärtige) Läbe würdet dr säge - - dir sit üsserscht unzfride odr - - üsserscht zfride, noull wär üsserscht unzfride bis ufe zum zähni üsserscht zfride.

In example 6, the main verb (sind/are you) is lacking. However, one can still understand the question. It is clearly a minor problem, since in spoken language people abbreviate this way quite often.

6.1.5. Replacements

> **Example 7**
> Waren Sie jemals während mehr als drei Monaten arbeitslos und auf Stellensuche?
>
> SQ: Have you ever been unemployed and seeking work for a period of more than three months?
>
> Interviewer D:
> I: (4s) Oh-key! Uund, äh, sit dir, jemaus meh aus drü Mönet arbetslos gsi oder uf Steuesuechi.

In the question of example 7, the word "and" is replaced by "or", which changes its sense, although this is clearly not a change due to dialect and probably a frequent mistake of interviewers generally. Whereas in the original question respondents have to answer a question on two joint conditions, they are asked here about two distinct items, one having ever been unemployed for a period of more than three months and the other having ever been seeking work for a period of more than three months.

> **Example 8**
> Wie viel Zeit verbringen Sie an einem gewöhnlichen *Werktag insgesamt* mit Fernsehen?
>
> SQ: On an average weekday, how much time, in total, do you spend watching television?
>
> Interviewer E:
> I: Auuso. Jetz, amne normale Wuchetag, Wärchtag, würdet dr säge wiviu lueget dr *ungefähr* Fernseh.

In example 8, the word "insgesamt" (in total) is replaced by "ungefähr" (approximately) which refers more to an average than to a total. In addition, there is a hesitation about what an average weekday should be: a day of the week or a working day. The interviewer first proposes *a day of the week*, and then corrects it to a *working day*. This can make a difference to some, especially to those spending much more time watching TV on a day where they do not work. Or it can make a difference to people who have a different workschedule than Monday to Friday, e.g., who work on weekends and have weekdays off.

In example 9, a slight change from "it is generally bad or good" to "they are generally bad or good" has occurred, which puts more emphasis on the people who come to live here than the phenomenon of immigration.

> **Example 9**
> Nun zwei Fragen zu Menschen, die aus anderen Ländern in die Schweiz kommen, um hier zu leben. Was würden Sie sagen, ist es im allgemeinen gut oder schlecht für die schweizer Wirtschaft, dass Zuwanderer hierher kommen?
>
> SQ: Would you say it is generally bad or good for Switzerland's economy that people come to live here from other countries?
>
> Interviewer A:
> I: Ooh-key. Denn chömed no zwö Frage zu Mönsche wo us angerne Länder id Schwiiz chöme zum da cho läbe, und zwar, würded dr im Augemeine säge *si sind* guet oder schlächt fürd schwizer Wirtschaft.

An example for a striking replacement is the next one (example 10), where the interviewer replaces "democracy" with "politics". The question is then literally about "political parties that wish to overthrow politics".

> **Example 10**
> Politische Parteien, die die Demokratie abschaffen wollen, sollten verboten werden
>
> SQ: Political parties that wish to overthrow democracy should be banned.
>
> Interviewer A:
> I: Di nögscht Ussag wär politische Parteie wo d'Politik abschaffe wend sötted verbote werde.

Example 11 is interesting in two respects: on the one hand "Schwule und Lesben" is replaced by the interviewers with "homosexuals", because they probably consider that it is more correct to use this general term, and the sentence seems to contain too many verbs and therefore the verb "dürfen" (to be allowed to) is skipped or replaced.

> **Example 11**
> Schwule und Lesben sollten ihr Leben so führen dürfen, wie sie es wollen.
>
> SQ: Gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own life as they wish.
>
> Interviewer A:
> I: Ohkey! Äh - - <u>Homosexuelli</u> <u>söued</u> ihres Läbe so füehre wies sie wend?
>
> Interviewer B:
> I: Ähm, <u>homosexuelli Persone</u> sötte ihres Läbe so- <u>chönne</u> füehre wie sie das wei.

6.1.6. Adequate vs. inadequate initial response

To illustrate the aspect of adequate vs. problematic response, two instances of survey interactions are presented below. In survey interaction 1 the initial response is *adequate* and the respondent chooses one of the proposed items from the response categories to answer the survey question (he says "I agree strongly to this").

The initial responses given in survey interaction 2 and 3 belong to the group of *problematic initial* responses*.* In survey interaction 2, the respondent does not answer the question, but rather he makes a comment ("I would leave it right as it is"). From this remark, the interviewer can deduce the answer, although the respondent's irony may leave some doubts about what the he really meant. In survey interaction 3, the respondent did not understand the question, and after the interviewer repeated it, answers with "yes".

B30_B33: Bitte sagen Sie mir, wie sehr Sie jeder der folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder wie sehr Sie diese ablehnen.
B30 Der Staat sollte Massnahmen ergreifen, um die Einkommensunterschiede zu vermindern.
(SQ): Please say to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. The government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels.

BEFRAGER: VORLESEN (READ OUT EACH STATEMENT)

1   Stimme stark zu (Agree strongly)
2   Stimme zu   (Agree)
3   Weder noch   (Neither agree nor disagree)
4   Lehne ab   (Disagree)
5   Lehne stark ab   (Strongly disagree)
8   *(*Weiss nicht) (*Don't know*)

Survey interaction 1

I: Ähm - - könnt sie mir säge wie sehr sie jedi vo de folgende Ussage, mvo- aso wie sehr sie jeder vo de folgende Ussage zuestimmend oder wie sehr sie, die au ablehnend
R: Mhm.
I: Und zwor ähm, de Staat sötti Massnahme ergriife um d'likommensunterscheid z'vemindere. Stimmed sie dem stark zue, tünd sie dem aifach zuestimme, tüend sie's ablehne-
R: Ich tue dem stark zuestimme.

Survey interaction 2

I: Itze, ähm, chöit dir mir säge wie sehr dass dir jedere vo de fougende Ussag tüet zuestimme oder abglehne. Ähm. De Staat sött Massnahme ergriife zum likommensungerschied z'vermindere. Tüet dr do starch zuestimme, zuestimme, weder zue no absch- ablehne, ablehne oder, starch ablehne.
R: Nai ich wür's gad eso loh. [(XXX)] ((lacht)).

Survey interaction 3

I: U säget mir wi dir- wi sehr dir fougendi Ussage- wi sehr dr dr fougende Ussage düät zuästimmä oder wie sehr das dr se düät ablehne. Dr Staat söti Maasnahme ergrifä um d'Ikommäsungerschid z'verminderä. Stimmet dr do stark zuä, stimmet dr zuä, weder noch, lehnet dr's ab oder lehnet dr's stark ab.
R: (Was) oder? Wiä haisst d'Frog?
I: Ähm öb dr Staat söt Maasnahme ergrifä um d'Iko- Ikommensungerschide z'verminderä.
R: Jo sicher, jo.
I: Sit dr do- stimmet dr do stark zuä.
R: Jo.

6.1.7. Inadequate answering and probing

Example 12 is an illustration of an inadequate answer. In the initial response, the respondent answers with a number, whereas five response categories were offered. Probably, the respondent was distracted and did not switch from the response scale used in the previous question to the response categories that were used for this question. However, when the interviewer tells him that he has to say whether he agrees or disagrees, the second response is still inadequate, since he says that he "feels ambivalent".

| **Example 12** |
| I: Itze ähm, chöit dir mir säge, wi sehr dass dir de fougende- Ussage tüet zuestimme oder wie sehr dass dr die tüet ablehne. Okey de Staat sött Massnahmen ergriife zum d'likommensungerschied z'verminere. Tüet dir däre Ussag starch zuestimme, efach zuestimme, weder noch ab- tüet dir si- ablehne oder sogar starch ablehne. |
| R: (1s) Joo - - s'sächsi, w-i säge. |
| I: Ähm nei dir müesst- dir müesst [numme] säge öb dr [eifach] zuestimmed oder ((phrase suspendue)) |
| R: [Oder]   [Aha!]   Jo so, [zwie]spältig |

Next are two examples of a sequence from the transcripts where the respondent seeks clarification several times and gives finally an answer that can be coded by the interviewer, but still is less than precise. It illustrates also the aspect of conversational informality.

| **Example 13** |
| I: Und ähm (1s) tüend sie mer etz au wieder säge wie sehr sie mit de folgende Ussage, aso über di Perso- dass sie dene zuestimme oder die ablehne - - Und zwor ai- die aint Ussag wär de Staat sötti Massnahme ergriife um d'likommensunterschied z'verminere. Tüend sie do stark zuestimme, zuestimme, tüend sie's ablehne oder stark ablehne, oder weder noch. |
| R: Aso da häässt - - de Staat sölli Massnahme onderneh dass die - - unfaire Löhn die höche horrende Löhn- ((lacht)) |
| I: Jo efach dass döt- [(es hät e Schär) oder], vo de, vo de likommen. |
| R: [Nüd so höch sönd]. Mhm. |
| I: Die Schär e bitzli- nid so- wienen Spagat macht. ((weiss nicht so recht was sagen, lacht verlegen)) |
| R: (1s) Jo äh s'chunnt au wieder druf aa mit wa fö Massnahme dass denn chömid. |
| I: Mhm. |
| R: Aso s'moss denn glich no fair si und- |
| I: Jo das (XXX) - - aber ähm, generell würdend sie säge, stimmend sie scho zue dass (si- mer) sötted Massnahme [ergriife]. |
| R: [Jo] moll scho. |
| I: Mhm. Stark zuestimme, oder afach- |
| R: Nai efach so. ((lacht)) |

Example 14

I: Jo. Ohkey. Und heit dr scho bestimmti Produkte boykottiert, in-nerhaub vo de letschte zwöuf Mönet.

R: Läbesmittel meinet- oder überhaupt ((räuspert sich))

I: M-Überhoupt s'cha i- z'langet- - - Läbesmittel- s'chöi Chleider si,   s'chönnt- aues mögleche si.

R: Jo aso (nid) würklich aber ich befass miich- im Moment etz scho mit China aso Chleider [us] China aso wobi äbe die Chleider wo mir gfalled sind zum Teil au us China [aber] eifach s'isch es Thema für mich dass ich mir das ächli gnäuer aaluege.

I: [Jo]   [jo]. Ohkey! Guet! ((fährt weiter mit der nächsten Frage))

Example 15 is a sequence that illustrates the work of the interviewer to bring the respondent to a clear answer, which is not so easy for this question. The respondent's first reaction to the question is, literally backtranslated "well, this is impossible, isn't it?". And the respondent continues saying that "this can't be decreed", even when the interviewer tries to bring him to an answer that could be coded. In the end, the interviewer suggests that in this case the respondent probably disagrees. The respondent answers with yes [Jooo-]. The interviewer then wants to know if he *simply* or *strongly* disagrees, which gives another six lines of interaction before the respondent says "simply disagree".

Example 15

I: Klar. Äh jetzt chöme no verschiedeni Ussage und dir müessted mer äh jewils säge in wie fern dr zuestimmed oder in wie fern dr ablehned aso jewils mit de Abstuefig, dir stimmed starch zue, dir stimmed zue, dir stimmed weder zue no lehned drs ab, dir lehneds ab oder dir lehneds starch ab. Auso. As erscht-i Ussag de Staat sötti Massnahme ergriife zum d'likommensunterschiede z'vermindere. (2s) Stimmed dr da zue oder nid, oder weder no ((phrase suspendue))

R: Jo. (2s) Jo das, das chamer jo gar nöd mache.

I: [Mhm].

R: [Me cha] das chamer nöd verordne.

I: Ja.

R: Oder? Das chamer nöd mache, ich wüsst nöd wiemer [das] wetti-

I: [Mhm] ((schneidet ihm das Wort ab)) Aber finged dr dass er das sötti mache wenns ignwie möglech isch oder söuers lah si.

R: Jah, er sött da d'Finger devo lah.

I: Aso lehne dr dem Fau ab.

R: [Jooo-]

I: [Starch] sogar oder-

R: Jo ich würds also ablehne, söll [da] de Staat da an und für sich muess da nöd iigriife süsch-

I: [Mhm]. Ohkey.

R: Süsch chöme mer do-

I: Und würded dr säge starchi Ablehnig oder eifach Ablehnig.

R: Nai aifacht Ablehnig ich-

I: Ohkey. [Uu-]

R: [Ich] würd nöd Jo stimme hä. ((lacht))