

Impact of Modern Geo-Political Change on Language used Cross-Cultural Quality of Life Research

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Introduction and Objective

In recent decades there has been a great deal of shifting in various geo-political borders throughout the world. In many cases, we have seen multiple countries come into existence where there was previously one larger combined nation (see Figures 1-4). Often before that, there was an older and different arrangement of smaller principalities. Each time such a shift occurs, aspects of culture are affected, including its language.

Further, the progress being made in health-care research and the globalization of newly developing concepts such as 'quality of life' are having an impact on the languages in these changing cultures. In some cases, older forms of language are being rejuvenated or strengthened to assist in developing a new national identity. In such circumstances, it is not unusual to find a language without key terms to reflect the newly developing concepts.

The objective of this presentation is to use recent experiences in developing Croatian, Czech, and Slovak language versions of the QOLIE-31 (a standardized QOL measure for persons with epilepsy) to demonstrate examples of these issues.

Impact of Geo-Political Changes on Developing Translations

1. 'Blended' or 'borrowed' language elements needing to be separated

Neighboring cultures that were originally independent of each other, but later became mixed under a single geo-political influence, often demonstrate a 'blending or borrowing' of various words or terms in their language. In recent years, the separation of these cultures into individual countries has been accompanied with the need in some to return to a more pure form of the new country's original language. It is important that the ethnic origins of translation consultants is in keeping with the origins of the new country in order to assure appropriateness of the language version being developed.

2. Modern globalization of concepts requires the development of new language

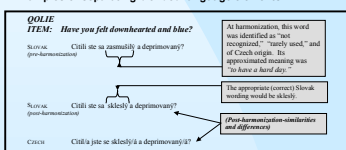
As newly independent countries are formed from changes in prior, larger principalities, attempts to revive previously separate and original languages brings the translator up against another difficulty: the original language has no terms for many new concepts in modern health care and global research. This can be resolved in different ways, including: (1) adopt a western (usually English) influence into the language and create a new word; or (2) use a combination of words from the original language to approximate the new meaning; or (3) re-craft an older word from the original language and provide it with an updated meaning. If the language of a new country is being used to assist in establishing (or reviving) a national identity, there will be resistance to the use of option (1), and preference toward the use of (2) and (3).

Aspects of similarities and differences in these languages as found in the QOLIE-31

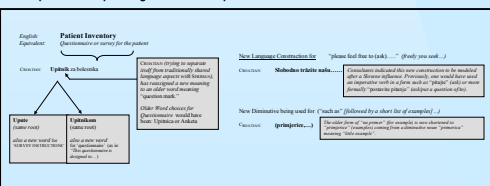
Quality of Life		"Pretty Good"	
CZECH	Kvalita svého života	CZECH	Spíš dobrá (pretty good)
SLOVAK	Kvalita svojho života	SLOVAK	Dost' dobra (pretty good)
CROATIAN	Kvaliteta svog življenja	CROATIAN	Prilično dobro (rather good)

	All of the Time	A little of the Time	None of the Time
Cognitive Equivalents	(Always)	(Rarely)	(Never)
CZECH	stále	málokdy	nikdy
SLOVAK	stále	málokedy	nikdy
CROATIAN	stalno	rjeđko	nikada

Examples of separating blended language elements



Examples of incorporating modern concepts



Changing Geo-Political Boundaries

Figures 1-4: Illustration of Shifting geopolitical borders in Eastern Europe

Figure 1. 1972 Map: Czechoslovakia Languages: Czech and Slovak



Slovakia (with prior history of independence) became part of Czechoslovakia in 1918 and experienced its third independence in 1993. With regard to Czech, the Slovak language has become a changing, growing part of a new national identity.

Figure 2. 1997 Map: Czech Republic, Language = Czech Slovakia, Language = Slovak



Figure 3. 1972 Map: Yugoslavia Languages: Serbo-Croatian, Slovenian, Macedonian, Albanian



Croaters have had a historical connection with Bosnian Serbs which shared music, literature and other cultural benefits. With formerly such a part of Yugoslavia, these are newer separate countries and developing their own unique cultures.

Figure 4. 1997 Map: Croatia Language: Croatian Other separated Countries: Bosnia, Slovenia, Macedonia and Yugoslavia



Items of the QOLIE-31

Summary

- With advancing technologies and the spread of new global concepts in health and well-being, it is getting increasingly complex to develop culturally appropriate language versions of measures designed to evaluate a patient's condition-specific quality of life. The shifting of national borders in recent times has insinuated an additional impact on this process because changes in culture cause changes in structure and currency of language.
- An increasing expansion of global clinical trials to evaluate pharmaceutical compounds is requiring an increase in available language versions of HRQOL measures. In some cases, it may be that previously developed translations need to be reviewed and updated in light of new geo-political impacts on cultures. In all cases, the standardized criteria for developing cross-cultural adaptations needs to be applied with extra awareness and caution to assure that the 'in-country' processes are in synchrony with the definitions, cultural developments, and language developments of the newly formed country and its changing culture.