

Mixed Methods

Attention to cultural variation has become an important source of insight in the social, behavioral, and health sciences. Mixed methods research provides an especially sensitive and powerful way to make systematic cross-cultural comparisons, in which qualitative approaches provide a window onto cultural meaning and the phenomenological “feel” of social life, and quantitative methods facilitate hypothesis testing and sophisticated modeling of social and behavioral phenomena. For researchers engaged in cross-cultural projects, this book offers a theory-based approach to integrating “numbers” and “text” based on discourse as the originary form of data collection, the method and framework of analysis, and the medium of publication. The book provides concise explanations, targeted examples, step-by-step instructions, and actual analyses of cross-cultural, quantitative survey data and qualitative interview data, with special attention to language(s) and translation as clues to the study of cultural variation.

ROBERT W. SCHRAUF is Professor and Head of the Department of Applied Linguistics at the Pennsylvania State University. He coedited *Language Development over the Lifespan* (2009; with Kees de Bot, University of Groningen) and *Dialogue and Dementia: Cognitive and Communicative Resources for Engagement* (2014; with Nicole Müller, University of Linköping).

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*Interviews, Surveys, and Cross-Cultural
Comparisons*

Robert W. Schrauf

The Pennsylvania State University



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Preface

Cross-cultural comparison has become ubiquitous in social science, as evidenced in cross-cultural psychology, cultural sociology, comparative political science, anthropology, cross-cultural gerontology, comparative and international education, global and international health, and international business. Similarly, the mixed methods paradigm has become an accepted methodological option in research practice and a standard feature in graduate curricula. In a raw key word search for “mixed methods” in the social science collection of Web of Science from 1975 to 2005, there were 408 hits, whereas for the period 2006–2015 there were 8,004 hits – more than 1800 percent increase in 15 years. Applied specifically to cross-cultural research, mixed methods research provides an especially sensitive and powerful means of making systematic cross-cultural comparisons, in which qualitative approaches provide a window onto cultural meaning and the phenomenological “feel” of social life, and in which quantitative methods facilitate hypothesis testing and the between-groups modeling of social and behavioral phenomena.

This book addresses two fundamental questions in mixed methods cross-cultural research. *How are qualitative and quantitative cultural data integrated? How are cross-cultural comparisons made with integrated data?* I answer the first question by developing a discourse-centered integrative framework that is based on the idea that discourse between persons is the fundamental form of cultural life, and that cross-cultural data are fundamentally linguistic and discursive. I answer the second question by demonstrating methods for making between-groups comparisons in successive moments: first within methods (qualitative; quantitative) and second with the integrated data.

I focus on surveys as representative of quantitative data and interviews as representative of qualitative data. As it turns out, the combination of a survey and interviews is the modal mixed methods design in general, and this is true of much of the published mixed methods cross-cultural work as well. Surveys and interviews necessarily involve linguistic interaction. Linguistic interaction as talk is palpable in face-to-face data collection, but even the printed or prerecorded survey involves the participant in a back-and-forth interaction with

worded items and (pre-) worded responses. By definition, linguistic interaction is *discourse*, and discourse is the central theoretical and practical concern of this book. As I will show, discourse has two principal meanings. Back-and-forth, turn-by-turn, linguistic interaction is discourse, but discourse also has the wider meaning of an organized way of speaking about a particular topic, with “proper” speakers who vary in their command of the topic and their relative legitimacy, prestige, and/or power relative to the topic. Think, for example, of pediatric medicine, fantasy football, information technology, or research grant seeking. Each is a discourse. These two meanings of discourse are intimately interwoven. Individual instances of real-time interaction reflect, reproduce, modify, or negate discourse as a socially organized topic.

Qualitative and quantitative methods differentially address these notions of discourse. Surveys and scales are appropriate for investigating discourse at the level of society; qualitative interviews capture actual interpersonal interactions. My first goal in this book is to show that a mixed methods analysis of integrated data is ideal for representing, modeling, and explaining discourse in this comprehensive sense, and my second goal is to show how to conduct such analyses.

The theory and methods in this book fit in the wider literatures on both mixed methods and cross-cultural research, and I often introduce topics by summarizing what I judge to be state-of-the-art examples of current qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research and then use these as springboards for revision and refinement within a discourse-centered framework of data integration. The advantage for the reader is that he or she sees a published application of current norms and accepted research practices, which is then followed by my presentation of related language- and discourse-centered alternatives. To concretize these alternatives, I also provide a “worked example” from a project on ethnic beliefs and Alzheimer’s disease conducted by my colleague, Dr. Madelyn Iris, and me in the mid 2000s.

As an introduction, in **Chapter 1** I review briefly the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative versus quantitative approaches, and I develop the fundamental mixed methods research design for making cross-cultural comparisons with fully integrated data. Second, I articulate the core meanings of discourse, as I will use the concept throughout the volume. Third, I introduce the Alzheimer’s Beliefs Study as the source of my demonstration data for the various analytic techniques that I will cover in the volume.

In **Chapter 2**, I begin with four published examples of cross-cultural mixed methods research that I selected from a range of disciplines: psychological anthropology, cultural sociology, teacher education, and health care. For each study, I examine two questions. The first is: What does this approach tell us about the *assumptions, nature, and implications of cross-cultural comparison*? The second is: *What is the logic and theory of*

integrating the contributions made by qualitative and quantitative data and analysis? These four articles exhibit an interesting range of social scientific, mixed methods frameworks for integrating data and making comparisons: ethnography, reflexive sociology, pragmatism, and the bias and equivalence framework. Reflecting on their strengths and weaknesses, I argue for the benefits of a specifically discourse-centered framework that attends to linguistic interaction as the indispensable web of actual social life, the source of data, and the medium of analysis. I suggest that this latter approach need not supplant but usefully supplements the findings available in current integrative paradigms.

Chapter 3 describes the basic linguistic theory necessary to pursue a discursive analysis of standard social science interview and survey data. This contemporary view of language starts not with standard dictionaries and normative grammars but rather with empirically available talk-in-interaction. In particular, I cover five key concepts: performativity (i.e., that language is not a report about the world but is itself a social action), indexicality (i.e., that meanings are tied to contexts), accounting (i.e., that people naturally and regularly justify or explain their thoughts and actions), talk-in-interaction (i.e., that linguistic interaction is highly patterned and systematic), and linguistic stance (i.e., that people regularly take positions about what they say). For each, I offer examples to show how one might identify and analyze the behavior in actual data.

In **Chapter 4**, I argue that the modal forms of mixed methods data collection – the survey and semistructured interview – are both thoroughly discursive, interactional events in which meaning is collaboratively produced by both respondent and interviewer. The original social interaction, however, requires extensive data transformation prior to analysis. In the case of the qualitative data, this is accomplished via successive forms of technically precise and fine-grained transcription that reveal the discursive, narrative, and linguistic devices used by interlocutors to shape their messages and to “do themselves” as cultural agents. In the case of the quantitative survey, a residue of the original interactional data is ultimately transformed into participants’ belief statements (items) with linguistic “stances” (response options) reported on a standard spreadsheet. I argue that linguistic stance is at the heart of survey response, and I suggest that an alternative way to read spreadsheets is to focus on the pattern of stances an individual takes rather than on the individual items that characterize a group.

Cross-cultural research requires explicit attention to cross-linguistic issues. **Chapter 5** begins with a review of two published studies from the cross-cultural literature, one quantitative, and the other qualitative, in which investigators adopt state-of-the-art translation (written) and interpretation (spoken) procedures for dealing with meaning equivalence across languages. I engage the translation practices in these two articles to reflect more deeply on the

nature of conducting meaning-for-meaning (vs. word-for-word) translation in social science, and I go on to argue that translation rests inescapably on the person, expertise, and experience of the bilingual/bicultural individuals who do the translating or interpreting. I also discuss translation/interpretation as an ongoing, layered, and cyclical process that ranges from data collection through multilingual transcription and ultimately to publication.

One of the key features of a mixed methods study is the progressive and cyclic nature in which data become available across the project and how decisions made along the way influence the ongoing data collection and analysis. **Chapter 6** is a worked example chapter in which I reflect on the concrete decisions and actual practices that we adopted in the Alzheimer's Beliefs Study relative to the methodological points made in the previous chapters. I begin by laying out the design of the project, across the various qualitative and quantitative phases, and I argue that as we faced and resolved issues of research design, data collection, and analysis, we experienced a deepening of our own linguistic and cultural insights about the data. In particular, I discuss how we operationalized notions of "cultural group" in each phase, how our transcription practices grew more detailed and hence more focused, and how we handled repeated translations of data collection instruments and the data themselves across the project.

Chapters 7 and 8 explore the discourse-centered framing of quantitative data and analysis. In **Chapter 7**, I begin with a state-of-the-art quantitative cross-cultural comparison in which the authors pursue a traditional item-based analysis of data. Noting that crucial information about within-culture variability is sometimes lost in such an approach, I outline an approach to culture as distributed discourse across a sociocultural field, and I present an alternative, participant-based approach to analyzing survey data. I introduce statistical techniques for mapping survey response as a sociocultural field, identifying the cultural expertise in the survey sample, and deriving the survey "answer key" (representing the culturally preferred answers). Finally, I outline the steps necessary to make cross-cultural comparisons with these methods.

Chapter 8 is again a worked example chapter, designed to give a detailed explanation of how to conduct the techniques introduced in the previous chapter. In particular, with analytic examples taken from the Alzheimer's Beliefs Study, I take the reader through the construction of appropriate spreadsheets and matrices, the production of discursive "maps" using a social network mapping program, and the use of factor analytic techniques to conduct the participant-based analysis. Finally, I show how these were applied to the Alzheimer's data to make and report cross-cultural comparisons.

Chapters 9 and 10 are devoted to the techniques necessary to conduct a discursive, interactional analysis of qualitative data from interviews and drawing cross-cultural comparisons from these. **Chapter 9** begins by considering a

published, state-of-the-art qualitative, cross-cultural study in which the authors do a content (thematic) analysis of interviews conducted with three ethnic populations. Reflecting on these analyses, I suggest that an interactional analysis of interview data will be a window onto the participants' enactment of their cultural identities and deeper insight into the cultural logics that undergird their behavior. I then give a detailed explanation for conducting such an analysis. I present three interpretive stages for analyzing interview material: interactional transcription, frame analysis, and the discursive analysis itself. Since transcription was the topic of Chapter 4, I begin this chapter by discussing frame analysis, which attends to how the interviewer and participant flexibly shift back and forth through a variety of roles vis-à-vis one another across the interview. Relative to this latter, and adding to techniques that I introduced in Chapter 3, I give detailed descriptions of four important discursive devices for specifically cultural analysis: recruitment-to-role, script formulation, narratives, and reported speech. Finally, I characterize the interview itself as an intercultural encounter, rich with cultural enactments that facilitate cross-cultural comparisons by the analyst.

In **Chapter 10**, demonstration cases are drawn from the Alzheimer's Beliefs Study. In this chapter, I provide extensive interpretations of excerpts from interviews with an African American woman (in English), a Mexican American man (in Spanish), and a refugee from the former Soviet Union (in Russian). In each case, I show how the frames analysis is used to locate moments in which interviewer and participant shift and negotiate their "research" and "cultural" roles, and I demonstrate the use of the linguistic and discursive devices introduced in the previous chapters to reveal how interviewer and participant enact, articulate, presume, and justify their cultural and social scientific worlds. With this admittedly selective material, I draw out cultural differences between the ethnic groups of the Alzheimer's Beliefs Study.

In **Chapter 11**, I draw the final synthesis in the volume by asking again the two key questions in mixed methods cross-cultural research, but applied now to the discourse-centered framework that I developed throughout the work. These questions are: *How are qualitative and quantitative data integrated in a discourse centered-framework?* and *How are cross-cultural comparisons made with integrated data?* I answer the first question by showing how the discourse-centered framework draws together the two levels of discourse (societal-distributed and individual-interactive) via the coordination of methods (the quantitative cross-cultural survey and the qualitative interactional interview) to produce integrated accounts of cultural life. I answer the second question by articulating a variationist approach to cultural difference, according to which the researcher searches for variations in the integrated data and analyzes them through a series of steps. These include looking for participant accounts for

them (implicit or explicit) in the interactional data or articulating researcher accounts (based on other ethnographies, history, or other cross-cultural literature), and then characterizing variations as idiosyncratic, temporary, pancultural, or culturally unique. Specifically, I introduce and explain the use of joint display tables as a useful tool for identifying and comparing such cross-cultural variations. I end the chapter by offering some suggestions for reporting and representing the language(s) of the project in publications about the research.

My aim throughout the volume is to articulate alternative methods of analyzing multilingual interview and survey data that will enable cross-cultural researchers to plumb more sensitively the subtle cross-cultural differences and similarities in their data. The book will have been successful if I have persuaded the reader that a discourse-centered approach to integrating mixed methods data serves ultimately as a workable and thoughtful framework for drawing systematic cross-cultural comparisons.

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