

# Anglo-American and German psychology textbooks: Bibliometric comparisons on publication types, translations, sub-disciplines, target groups, and publication trends

Textbooks play a key role in psychology teaching. Just as teacher behavior differs between cultures (Hofstede, 1986), textbook style and contents can be expected to vary.

Using a **quantitative, bibliometric approach**, we investigated cultural differences in the teaching of psychology by comparing psychology textbooks published in English- vs. German-speaking regions with respect to the following research questions:

- 1) What is the **overall quota of textbooks in book publications** in general? Do the samples differ in the **coverage of subfields**?
- 2) Is there evidence of (ongoing) „**americanization**“ of **topical contents** in German textbooks (cf. van Strien, 1997)?
- 3) Are there differences in the **specificity of textbook subjects**?

## Methods

- Retrieved data on authors, publication year, type, subject, key concepts (Gallagher Tuleya, 2007), & translation status of **first edition textbooks published between 1987 and 2010** from two literature databases:
  - **German sample („Ge“)**: N = 1058, German-language books only; source: **PSYNDEX** (mostly German, minor proportions of Austrian-, Switzerland-based publications)
  - **English sample („En“)**: N = 2240, English-language books only; source: **PsycINFO** (mostly US, minor proportions of UK, Canada, Australia-based publications)
- Additionally, coded textbooks' subject as „general“ or „specific“ based on the subject classification data from the literature databases

## Results

- **8.2 % translations in Ge** (but decreasing strongly over time), **only 0.4 % in En**; translations excluded in further analyses to focus on cultural characteristics ( $N_{Ge} = 971$ ;  $N_{En} = 2232$ )
- **Research question (1):**
  - **Proportion of textbooks** in En more than three times that of Ge at the outset, but **converging over time** at 4-5 % (**Fig. 1**)
  - **Subfield coverage (Fig. 2):** In Ge, Clinical & IO psychology as well as Psychodiagnostics more dominant, in En: Social Psychology and Methods (also, much higher proportion of books not belonging to any of the subfields in Fig. 2: 21 % in En vs. 9 % in Ge); Clin. Psy. in general very pervasive and rising continually
- **Research question (2):**
  - **Relative frequency of key concepts** of English and German textbooks **moderately correlated**:  $r(1631) = .47^{**}$
  - **However, changes** in relative frequency **not correlated at all**,  $r(2370) = .02$  for parallel changes, or  $r(1902) = .00$  for lagged changes (**Fig. 3**)
- **Research question (3):**
  - **Specialized topics** clearly and constantly **more frequent in Ge** (**Fig. 4**)
  - Other indicators of specialization (number of coauthors, quota of edited books) suggest more specialization in En, but are much less straightforward to interpret

## Discussion

- **Teaching literature** appears to have been **recognized as important in its own right in German-speaking psychology** (rising quota in book publications, decreasing number of translations)
- Reasons for drop in Anglo-American textbooks unclear, possibly market saturation (only 1st edition textbooks considered here!)
- Some differences in dominance of certain psychology subfields, however, overall, proportions of subfields rather similar (but Anglo-American textbooks distinctly more heterogenous: quota of textbooks covering „other“ subfields more than twice as large)
- Even though subfield structure is broadly similar, **trends in key concepts do not currently seem to be „imported“** from Anglo-American into German textbooks
- Higher proportion of specific-subject textbooks in German sample highlights earlier criticisms of a **lack of introductory, more accessible German-language textbooks** (Fell et al., 2011)

## References

Fell, C., Schui, G., & Krampen, G. (2011). Lehliteratur und Literatur über das Lehren in der Psychologie des deutschsprachigen Raums: Ein bibliometrischer Überblick. [Teaching literature in the German-speaking region]. In M. Krämer, S. Preiser, & K. Brusdeylins (Eds.), *Psychologiedidaktik und Evaluation VIII*. Aachen: Shaker.

Gallagher Tuleya, L. (2007). *Thesaurus of psychological index terms* (11<sup>th</sup> ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

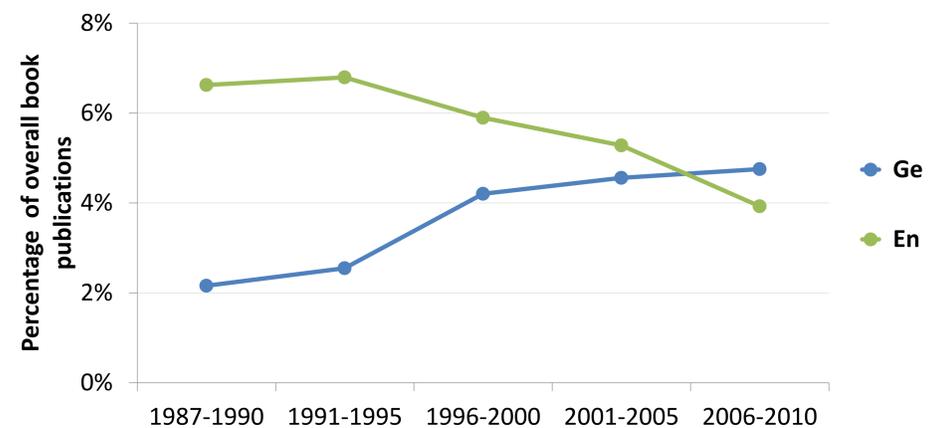


Fig. 1: Percentage of textbooks (1st edition only, no translations) in overall book publications, by language community and time period

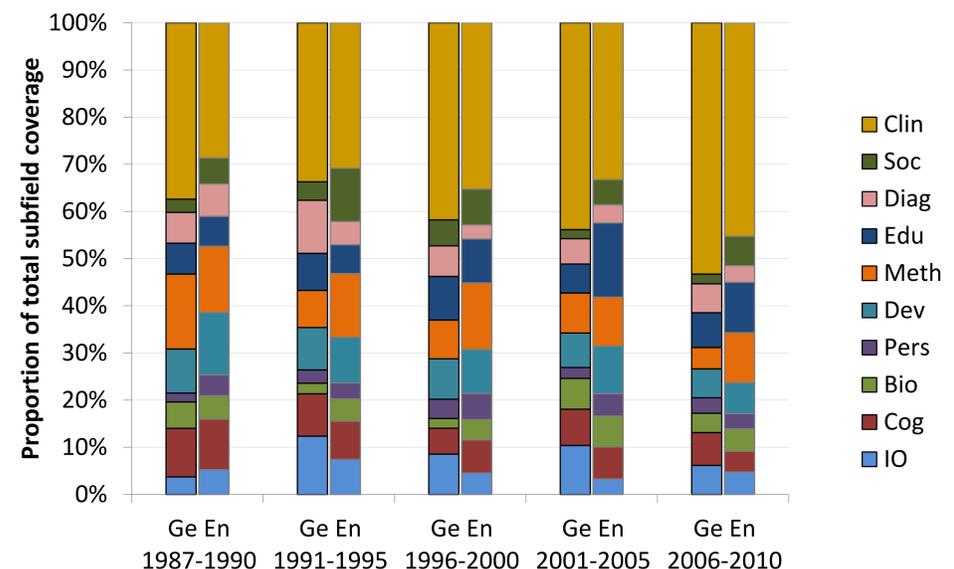


Fig. 2: Relative weight of psychology subfields in textbook subjects, by language community and time period (textbooks classified as „Other subfield“ excluded)

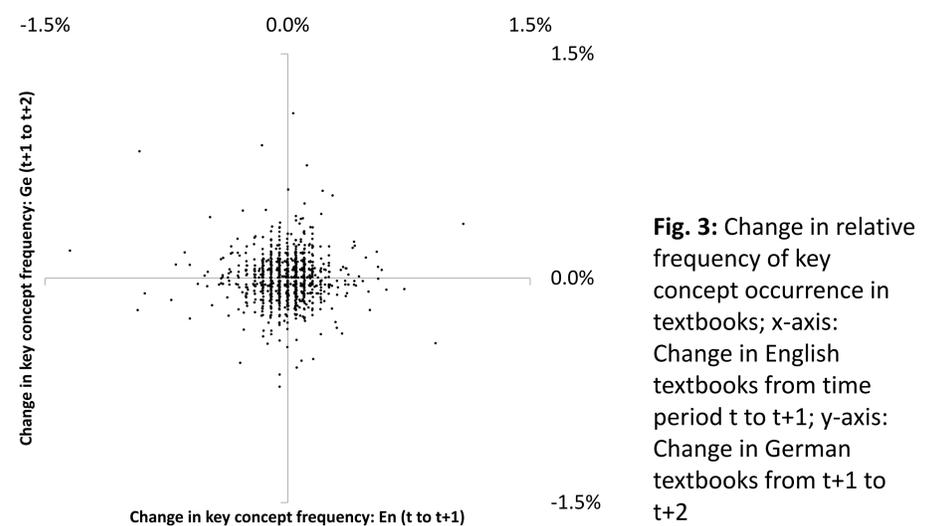


Fig. 3: Change in relative frequency of key concept occurrence in textbooks; x-axis: Change in English textbooks from time period t to t+1; y-axis: Change in German textbooks from t+1 to t+2

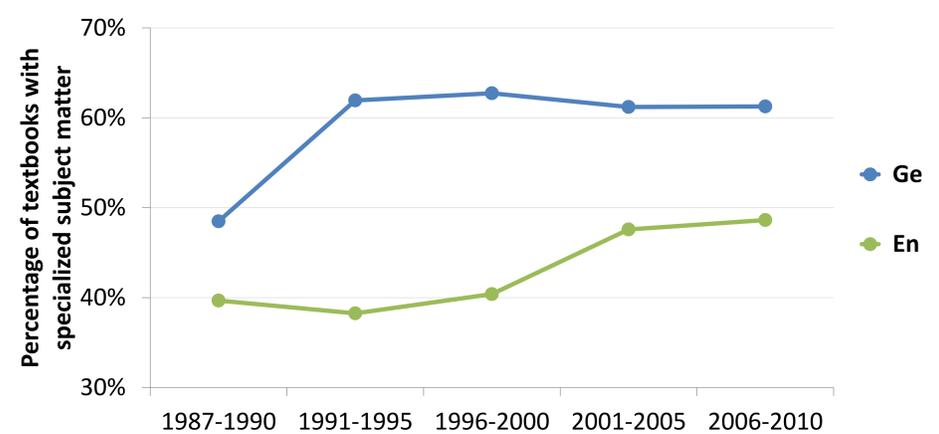


Fig. 4: Quota of textbooks covering specialized as opposed to general subjects (e.g., „Clinical Hypnosis“ vs. „Clinical Psychology“) by language community and time period

Hofstede, G. (1986). Cultural differences in teaching and learning. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 10, 301-320.

van Strien, P. J. (1997). The American „colonization“ of northwest European social psychology after World War II. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 33, 349-363.