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?
2) Are there differences in the coverage of subfields?
3) Are there differences in the specificity of textbook subjects?

Methods

- Retrieved data on authors, publication year, type, subject, key concepts
- 1996-2000
- 2001-2005
- 2006-2010

- Research question (1):
  - Proportion of textbooks in a language community
  - Converging over time
  - Subfield coverage

- Research question (2):
  - Relative frequency of key concepts
  - Moderately correlated

- Research question (3):
  - Specialized topics

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

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
- Some differences in dominance of certain psychology subfields, however, overall, proportions of subfields rather similar (but Anglo-American textbooks distinctly more heterogeneous; quota of textbooks covering “other” subfields more than twice as large)
- Even though subfield structure is broadly similar, trends in key concepts do not clearly seem to be “imported” from Anglo-American into German textbooks

References


