
❧ Türk Psikiyatri Dergisi ❧

Turkish Journal of Psychiatry

Letter to the Editor

ON THE TRANSLATION OF DSM-5 INTO TURKISH

Dear Editor,

It is indeed a commendable achievement of Prof. Ertuğrul Köroğlu who has translated and published in Turkish the Desk Reference to the Diagnostic Criteria from DSM-5 only several months after its publication in the United States. Prof. Dr. E. Köroğlu is a highly industrious and productive psychiatrist who also translated and published DSM-IV and DSM-IV-TR in Turkish, owns a publishing company and runs a private psychiatric hospital.

Before I proceed with the evaluation of the translation of the Desk Reference of DSM-5, I would like to emphasize that translation of any sort is hard work. It is even harder to translate a scientific work into Turkish language which has been neglected in its development as a scientific language. It would be therefore highly useful to obtain help from language consultants during such translation efforts.

In the translation of DSM-5 into Turkish the translator's special effort to translate all possible terminology into Turkish has drawn my attention. This effort becomes more obvious when one compares this current translation with the one of DSM-IV-TR. Although I highly respect this effort, one

cannot overlook the many translation errors and inconsistencies which I shall try to illustrate in the following paragraphs.

In a critical evaluation of translated texts, in case there is any doubt in the accuracy of the translation of a word or terminology, one way to find the right path is to perform a back translation (in this case from Turkish to English). Some years ago World Health Organization had required back translations of certain parts of ICD-10 before an agreement was made for its translation to Turkish.

In doing this critical review, I must confess I could only work on the important terminologies or words in the initial Classification section of the book in pages numerated with Roman numbers. Some of the problem areas are discussed in the following paragraphs. This version of my letter to the editor in English is not a complete translation of all the content of the letter written in Turkish. This is due to the peculiarities of my discussion on certain translation difficulties into Turkish which I believe will not be of much interest except for natives of the Turkish language.

- All throughout the book the critical words "*specified, unspecified*" are frequently used. These are translated with words ("tanımlanmış, tanımlanmamış") which when back translated gives a meaning of "defined, undefined". This important error is not present in the translation of DSM-IV-TR. On the other hand however, the words "*specify, specifier*" have been translated with the correct Turkish equivalents ("belirtiniz, belirleyici").
- Frequently used term "mild" has been translated with two words ("ağır olmayan") which when back translated gives a meaning of "not severe". The error is that "not severe" inevitably includes the content of both terms "mild

and moderate". In the translation of DSM-IV-TR this error is not present!

- Page X, 315.35 The word "fluency" has been translated with the right word in Turkish ("akıcılık"). This word however, can mean "fluency" in many other areas besides speech. Therefore the translation into Turkish needs to be done as "fluency in speech".
- Page XII. Schizophrenia Spectrum and other psychosis associated Disorders

The word "spectrum" has been translated with a word ("açılım") which when back translated gives a meaning of "opening, commencement, declaring open ...". It is difficult to find an exact equivalent of "spectrum" in Turkish, but the word used in the translation can hardly come close to the meaning of the word "spectrum".

- Page XVI

The translation of the word "major" as used in "major depression" or in "major neurocognitive disorder" presents a serious problem difficult to explain in English. The adjective word "major" has been translated as "yeğin" which can be found in dictionaries but which is rarely used if ever in the common flow of the Turkish language. The dictionary equivalents of the word can be back translated as "hard, severe, dominant". One can question the rationale of the word "major" used in DSM-5 and why also "minor" has not been used. As I understand the word "major" does indicate the importance, the frequency and the pertaining symptoms of a disorder, but does not specifically refer to the severity of a disorder. This is supported by the presence of specifying adjectives of "mild, moderate, severe" to indicate the severity of the disorder. Besides, to use both the word "yeğin" followed with "major" in brackets all throughout the book does not seem to be a good way of translation. Another discrepancy along this line is that while the word "depressive" is translated with the proper word, the word "depression" is kept without translation.

- 300. 4 "Persistent Depressive Disorder"(Dysthymia)

"Persistent" is translated with a word ("süregiden") which suggests chronicity rather than persistence. There are words in Turkish ("direşken, ısrarlı") to meet the meaning of persistence.

- Page XVIII. The word "corresponding" has been translated with two words ("karşı gelen") which when back translated gives a meaning of "opposing". Alternative words are discussed and proposed in my letter in Turkish.

- Page XX: "Stress" has been translated with a word ("gerginlik") which when back translated gives a meaning of "tension". Alternative words are discussed and proposed in my letter in Turkish.
- 313.89 "Disinhibited Social Engagement": The word "disinhibited" has been translated with a word ("sınırsız") which when back translated gives a meaning of "unlimited". Alternative words are discussed and proposed in my letter in Turkish.
- "Enuresis" is translated with two words ("ıdrar kaçırma") which when back translated gives a meaning of "incontinence". Alternative words are discussed and proposed in my letter in Turkish.
- Page XXIX "Disruptive" has been translated with a word ("yıkıcı") which when back translated gives a meaning of "desructive". Alternative words are discussed and proposed in my letter in Turkish.
- 291.81 The word "Withdrawal" has been translated with a word ("yoksunluk") which when back translated gives a meaning of "deprivation". Alternative words are discussed and proposed in my letter in Turkish.
- 301.7 "Antisocial" has been translated with a word ("toplumdışı") which when back translated gives a meaning of "asocial". Alternative words are are discussed and proposed in my letter in Turkish.
- "Discontinuation" is translated with a word ("bırakma") which when back translated gives a meaning of "withdrawal". Alternative word is discussed and proposed in my Letter in Turkish.
- Page XLVI "upbringing" has been translated with a word ("eğitim") which when back translated gives a meaning of "education". There is an exact equivalent of "upbringing" in Turkish ("yetiştirme").

Finally I would like to express my firm belief that the Turkish language is a highly flexible and fertile language in producing proper scientific terminology. While translating a scientific text I believe the terminologies need to be reviewed and critically discussed in detail before publication. Such translations may be important contributions to the progress of the scientific terminology in the Turkish language.

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