

The Cross-Cultural use of the Kirton Adaption- Innovation Inventory: A Further Exploration

Ray Clapp, Ph.D.

Visiting Professor, University of Hertfordshire, UK
Research Fellow, Occupational Research Centre, UK

Vorapot Ruckthum, Ph.D.

Lecturer, Graduate School of Business
Assumption University of Thailand

Abstract

English language measures such as the bipolar scale of cognitive style (Kirton, 2005) are not easily understood by people within diverse cultures and languages where English is spoken as a second language. Particularly the scoring of opposites when many items represent each end of the dimensional continuum and where items that represent one of the poles are reverse scored to produce the final score. Understanding can be improved by using a translation of item meaning into the target language. However, a more efficient method is the use of items with bipolar scoring scales to resolve the problem of accurate recognition and scoring of opposites while at the same time eliminating the scoring anchor and any associated social desirability contamination.

Keywords : bipolar scales, translation, negative items

Introduction

Cognitive style (Kirton, 1976) is the preference for the way in which individuals construct their mental models using predominantly either adaptive or innovative thinking which in turn determines the way structure is used (be it permeable or fragmented), (Kelly, 1963) to form individual concepts. While some structure is ever present else we do not function, the more adaptive individuals prefer the more permeable form that has easy consensual agreement while the more innovative individual, less concerned with consensual agreement, prefers a looser more fragmented structure. This preference for the different forms of structural thinking is independent of capacity or level of the individual and is described by Kirton (1976; 2005; 2011) in his theory of cognitive style. The theory describes a style continuum that is bipolar and is determined by individual preferences where an individual at one end is concerned with efficiency and rule/group conformity (Adaption). While at the other end, an individual is more concerned with originality (Innovation) and is indifferent to (even unaware of) rules and group conformity. The two poles of the bipolar adaption-innovation creative style continuum with their different preferences offer a link to transactional / transformational styles associated with Leadership (Bass, 1998), Values (Swartz, 1999) and Complexity Theory (Stacey, 2000). These preferences have also been related to the personality domain through the dimensions of intuitive/sensing (Myers, & McCauley, 1985, Tefft, 1990) as well as the open/closed-minded (Costa & McCrea 1992; Von Wittich, 2011) and has shown to be stable over many years (Clapp, 1993).