

〈研究ノート〉

アンケート調査—質問事項の翻訳に関する一考察

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The Effect of Translating Survey Questions

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要 旨 アンケート調査のデータに基づく研究は、これまで多種の分野で行われ、外国語学教育の分野も例外ではない。アンケートによるデータ収集をする際、より正確なデータを得るという理由で研究者の中には、そのアンケート解答者の母語に訳し調査を行うケースも少なくない。本稿では、英語で書かれたアンケートを日本語に訳し調査することで、日本人英語学習者からより正確なデータを得ることが可能かを考察した。又、英語とその日本語訳とのアンケートの解答に差異が生じた場合、何がその要因になりうるのかを考察してみた。一試みとして、Hyland (1994) の研究 (日本人学生の学習スタイル) の中で、実際に使用された英語のアンケートとその日本語訳版を、本学の三年生65名に解答してもらった。その結果、解答した約半数の学生が英語と日本語のアンケートに異なる解答をした。その要因として考えられるのは、英語と日本語の持つ言語的特質、翻訳がもたらす微妙な影響、さらにはアンケート調査そのものが持つ特異性などが影響をし、このような差異が生じたものと推測されるが、これらの要因については今後より綿密な研究が必要とされる。

Survey research has been used by researchers in fields such as politics, economics, sociology and education. According to Cohen and Manion (1985), surveys are the most commonly used descriptive method in educational research. In foreign language teaching, survey research is also often conducted to investigate a group's characteristics, learning style preferences, attitudes, levels of motivation, etc. When surveys are conducted, there are several not-to-be-overlooked issues involved in constructing adequate and useful survey questions (see Ary 1990, Brown 1995, Johnson 1992 and Nunan 1992). One of the issues exists in translating survey questions from one language to another. Some researchers in foreign language teaching use translated questionnaires to make sure their respondents understand and answer the questions they ask. The intention is good but this translating effort might not guarantee more "accurate" results. In this paper, I will explore: (1) whether a translated questionnaire in Japanese assesses the same variables as the original English version; and (2) if survey participants answer the same question differently in Japanese and English, what might have influenced them to do so.

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Method

Subjects

The participants in this study were two groups of juniors (20–22 years old) of Bunka Women's University. The one group consisted of 23 students majoring in intercultural studies and taking an English reading class at the time of the study. The other participants were a mixed group of 42 students majoring in intercultural studies or English and English literature, but they were all enrolled in the English teacher-training program. They generally shared quite similar backgrounds in English education, that is, 6 years of high-school English before they entered the university, and since then they had been taking more or less similar English language classes for about three years. In the fall of 1995, they all experienced one-month homestay in the United States. Right after they came back to Japan, they took the TOEIC at the end of October. Their results were as follows: the mean of the students' scores in the reading group was 461 and the mean of the students' scores of the teacher-training group was 451. After the test, they participated in this study, in November, 1995.

Materials

Reid's (1987) perceptual learning style preference questionnaire (see Appendix A and B) was used. The questionnaire consists of randomly arranged sets of five statements on each preference—there are 6 different learning style preferences: visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile, group and individual. The questionnaire was validated by Reid by the split-half method and correlation analysis of an original set of 60 statements. The background information items were slightly amended by Hyland (1994) and me to make it more relevant to Japanese learners. In this study, Hyland's translated questionnaire statements in Japanese (see Appendix C) were used, but I re-translated four of them, (Statement 5, 11, 12 and 26) since these translated statements might be misleading for the participants of this study. The clarity of the re-translated statements were checked by three teachers of Japanese as a second language. The literal meanings of the four English statements were explained orally to the teachers, and then they checked the re-translated statements in Japanese. After the clarity and appropriateness of the statements were confirmed, they were back-translated by a bilingual, and the original statements in English and the back-translated ones were checked to see if they were the same.

Procedures

In order to reduce the possibility that the participants might remember their answers to the statements, the survey was conducted with a one-week interval between the two versions of the study. The first group consisting of the 43 students taking the teacher-training program was given at random either the English or the Japanese version of the questionnaire: 20 questionnaires in English and 23 in Japanese were distributed. Before they started answering the questionnaire, they were reminded that they should respond to each statement quickly without too much thought and try not

to change the responses they chose. This was actually written in the directions of the questionnaire, but I made it clear. The majority of the students who answered the Japanese version finished much earlier (less than 7 to 8 minutes) than those who answered the English version (more than 10 to 12 minutes). A week later each of the students responded to the other version. The similar phenomenon in terms of time that they needed to complete the questionnaires was observed.

The other group consisting of 27 students was all given the same English version first, then a week later the Japanese version. This group took at least 15 minutes to finish answering the English version but was able to finish the Japanese version in much less time, about 7 to 8 minutes.

Analyses/Results

Since it took two weeks to complete the two versions of the questionnaire in this study, there were several students who were unable to attend both of the versions. The attendance rate of the teacher-training group was quite high, 93 percent, but an 87 percent was achieved by the reading group. Those 65 (42+23) respondents' answers were analyzed as follows.

First, each student's 30 answers were checked to see if the student answered differently in the Japanese and English version; that is, if she marked different items on the Likert Scale—"strongly agree" to "strongly disagree"—in English and Japanese for the same statement. Then mismatched answers were tallied for each statement and sorted in the two groups. Table 1 shows the top five mismatched answers and the correspondent questionnaire statements.

Having tallied and sorted all the answers to the 30 statements, I discovered that about half of the 65 participants answered the same questionnaire statements differently in English and Japanese. There might be several factors to explain this discrepancy. One of them may be due to the participants' lack of reading comprehension ability to complete this type of questionnaire in English—

Table 1 The Top Five Mismatched Answers in English and Japanese Teacher-Training Group (42 students)

Questionnaire Statements	Mismatched Answers
7: When someone tells me how to do something in class I learn it better.	31(74%)
9: I remember things I have heard in class better than things I have read.	30(71%)
21: I enjoy working on an assignment with two or three classmates.	28(67%)
15: I enjoy learning in class by doing experiments.	27(64%)
10: When I read instructions, I remember them better.	26(62%)

Reading Group (23 students)

Questionnaire Statements	Mismatched Answers
10: When I read instructions, I remember them better.	16(70%)
14: I learn more when I make something for a class project.	16(70%)
27: In class, I learn better when I work alone.	16(70%)
3: I get more work done when I work with others.	15(65%)
24: I learn better by reading than by listening to someone.	15(65%)

the directions instructed the participants to respond to each statement quickly without too much thought. Both groups took about twice as much time when they read and answered the English version. I personally think that in terms of time they needed, it was quite natural since they were second language learners. However, considering the fact that they had to push them through to answer the questions quickly in English, they might have responded to some of the questions incorrectly. This, however, does not mean to say that the responses of the Japanese version were more reflective of what the respondents meant because it was not certain if the translation of the questionnaire truly represented the English version. It is almost impossible to translate one language to another without losing some degree of information. In short, if these data were used to assess Japanese language learners' learning style preferences, reliable conclusions could not be drawn. Nevertheless, Hyland (1994) tried to understand Japanese students, in terms of learning style preferences and used both versions of the questionnaire for his study. He concluded that "Japanese students do not favor any major learning style, but instead reveal preferences for a cluster of minor learning modalities: tactile, kinesthetic, and auditory" (p. 55).

In order to demonstrate how dangerous it is to use these data, I have selected the top five questionnaire statements which showed the most discrepancy (Table 2). I arrived at these by calculating the difference between the answers in Japanese and English for each Likert Scale item, and then totaling them for each statement. By looking only at the discrepancy, we can learn that calculating these results into figures, (strongly agree 5 to strongly disagree 1), would not give us reliable nor meaningful findings.

Table 2 The Top Five Most Discrepant Statements
Teacher-Training Group (42 students)

statement	strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	strongly disagree
	Japanese/English	Japanese/English	Japanese/English	Japanese/English	Japanese/English
7	5/4	24/14	11/17	1/7	1/7
25	5/3	21/11	9/16	6/10	1/2
10	4/2	17/8	18/21	3/11	0/0
15	10/13	26/15	5/10	1/4	0/0
17	5/1	17/11	13/15	4/12	3/3

Note. Questionnaire Statement 7: When someone tells me how to do something in class, I learn it better. Q.S. 25: I enjoy making something for a class project. Q.S.10: When I read instructions, I remember them better. Q.S.15: I enjoy learning in class by doing experiments. Q.S.17: I learn better in class when the teacher gives lecture.

Reading Group (23 students)

statement	strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	strongly disagree
	Japanese/English	Japanese/English	Japanese/English	Japanese/English	Japanese/English
14	1/1	7/15	8/7	6/0	1/0
24	0/1	3/5	11/3	8/12	1/2
16	5/1	12/11	2/7	3/4	1/0
6	2/6	4/4	11/5	6/7	0/1
17	1/0	10/16	8/5	4/2	0/0

Note. Questionnaire Statement 14: I learn more when I make something for a class project. Q.S. 24: I learn better by reading than by listening to someone. Q.S. 16: I learn better when I make drawings as I study. Q.S. 6: I learn better by reading what the teacher writes on the board. Q.S. 17: I learn better in class when the teacher gives lecture.

The above results indicate a great discrepancy in English and Japanese. Consequently, the next logical question is what might have caused this phenomenon. Is this due to the linguistic ability of the participants? The following (Table 3) shows six sample students' answers to the questionnaire statements and their TOEIC scores. I have selected three students from each group—two students who attained the highest TOEIC scores, two students who attained average scores and two who got the lowest scores.

Table 3 TOEIC Scores and Discrepancy

Student	Listening	Reading	Total	Mismatched Answers
Student A	425	265	690	19 out of 30
Student B	375	310	685	12 out of 30
Student C	200	260	460	13 out of 30
Student D	210	240	450	21 out of 30
Student E	210	110	320	21 out of 30
Student F	195	125	320	19 out of 30

Student B had the fewest mismatched answers, 12 out of 30 and her TOEIC reading score was the highest, 310, but this would not allow us to conclude that reading ability in English was the most crucial element in answering these questionnaire statements more “accurately” in English. Because Student F who had the lowest reading score, 125, produced the same number of mismatched answers, 19 as Student A who made the second highest reading score, 265. It does not seem clear here why those two students who had a 140-point difference in the reading part of the test created the same number of mismatched answers. There could be other factors that might have influenced this incomprehensible result beside reading proficiency in English.

To show to what degree those 6 sample students answered differently in English and Japanese, I have picked completely opposite responses that they made, for example answering “agree” in En-

glish but “disagree” in Japanese for some reason. The following are the results.

Table 4 Opposite Answers

<i>Student A (TOEIC 690)/Student B (TOEIC 685)</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Japanese</i>
Q.S. 6: I learn better by reading what the teacher writes on the board.	disagree	agree
Q.S. 26: I learn best in class when I can participate in related activities.	strongly agree	disagree
Q.S. 8: When I do things in class, I learn better.	agree	disagree
Q.S. 16: I learn better when I make drawings as I study.	disagree	agree
Q.S. 27: In class, I learn better when I work alone.	disagree	agree
<i>Student C (TOEIC 460)/Student D (TOEIC 450)</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Japanese</i>
Q.S. 26: I learn best in class when I can participate in related activities.	agree	disagree
Q.S. 4: I learn more when I study with others.	agree	disagree
Q.S. 20: I learn better in class when I listen to someone.	agree	disagree
Q.S. 24: I learn better by reading than by listening to someone.	disagree	agree
<i>Student F (TOEIC 320)</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Japanese</i>
Q.S. 20: I learn better in class when I listen to someone.	disagree	agree

Note. Student E (TOEIC 320) did not produce any completely opposite answer.

How could these completely opposite answers be analyzed and explained? It is obvious that the respondents interpreted the above statements differently in English and Japanese or maybe simply misinterpreted. According to Ary (1990) “A disadvantage of the questionnaire is the possibility of misinterpretation of the questions by the respondents” (p. 421). The same thing could be said about translated questions in surveys. Since it is almost impossible to translate everything exactly from English into Japanese, the researcher has to admit some loss of information through translation. Nida points out that:

The question of untranslatability has too often been discussed in terms of absolute rather than relative equivalence. If one is to insist that translation must involve no loss of communication whatsoever, then obviously not only translating but all communication is impossible. No communication, whether intralingual, interlingual, or intersemiotic, can occur without some loss of information.

(as cited in Brannen, 1994, p. 14)

One must decide whether to use the original version of survey questions or the translated one: the researcher must weigh the loss of information in both versions. If the questionnaire in English might be too difficult for the respondents to understand and answer, the translated version could be appropriate. However, the researcher still needs to thoroughly examine his respondents before starting his survey to decide which version is best for the respondents so that he/she can obtain the

most adequate data from them. It seems crucial to assess what type of respondents the researcher has and find the best questionnaire for them rather than simply translating survey questions from one language to another.

There is another way to look at all the results, that is, the very high discrepancy in this study. This discrepancy may be partially a result of the effect of both languages. It is possible that the respondents became less “Japanese” when they read the questionnaire statements in English. Less “Japanese” is an ambiguous term but what I mean here is that the respondents may have not responded to the statements in the way they usually answered in Japanese. Also each language environment triggers different reflexes, responses, memories, etc. In short, in many ways, people are quite different depending on the language they are engaged in at a given time. The following study might explain what less “Japanese” means more clearly. Ervin-Tripp’s (1964) study illustrates that Japanese might respond to the same question differently in English and Japanese. In her study, the informants heard (and read) the first half of the sentence. The same Japanese woman’s responses in both languages are cited below:

1. WHEN MY WISHES CONFLICT WITH MY FAMILY. . .
(Japanese) it is a time of great unhappiness.
(English) I do what I want.
2. I WILL PROBABLY BECOME. . .
(Japanese) a housewife.
(English) a teacher.
3. REAL FRIENDS SHOULD. . .
(Japanese) help each other.
(English) be very frank. (p. 96)

Ervin-Tripp (1964) discovered that “when the sentences were weighted by their frequency in the American and Japanese monolingual comparison groups, the bilingual women’s sentences were significantly less ‘Japanese’ in content when the women spoke English.” According to the author, “this change in content could not be simulated by women who did not change language but were instructed to give ‘typical Japanese’ or ‘typical American’ answers at the two sessions. Thus, the change in the association and the sentence completions is an effect of language, not of self-instruction or set” (p. 96).

Her study illustrates Japanese possibly change their replies to the same question depending on the language, English or Japanese, they use. (This characteristic of Japanese seems very deep and complex; therefore, it is beyond description in this paper. However, further study is definitely worth pursuing.) In other words, a researcher who decides to translate English survey questions into Japanese needs to keep in mind at least two things: (1) the nature of English and Japanese, and (2) translatability–loss of information.

Conclusion

Clearly, there were differences between the questionnaire results in English and Japanese. The high discrepancy in this study warns us that the researcher should not simply consider translation as the answer to help the respondent understand the questionnaire better. Furthermore, the researcher ought to know that even original survey questions can be misinterpreted by the respondents. It is worth remembering that if surveys are to be effective and successful, the researcher needs to weigh all factors which might affect the survey result.

Further Research

The mismatched answers found in this study require that researchers investigate the following:

1. If language learners are asked about their learning style preferences twice in a short time period, will they answer differently even in their native language? (Since the discrepancy rate was very high in this study, I wonder if respondents give different answers to the same question even if they were asked twice in their native language in a short time period, in a week or so.)
2. It would be worth exploring other crucial variables such as those illustrated in the Ervin-Tripp's study of the bilingual Japanese woman that may account for discrepancy between the answers of a questionnaire in English and Japanese.

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Appendix A
Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire

Name _____ Age _____ Male/Female _____

Place of Study: High School _____ year _____

University _____ year _____

What is your major field? _____

How long have you studied English in Japan? _____

Have you ever studied English overseas? _____

If yes, for how long? _____

Have you ever been taught by a foreign teacher? _____

If yes, for how long? _____

Directions:

People learn in many different ways. For example, some people learn mainly with their eyes (visual learners) or with their ears (auditory learners); some people prefer to learn by experience and/or “hands-on” tasks (kinesthetic or tactile learners); some people learn better when they work alone, while others prefer to work in groups. This questionnaire has been designed to help you identify the way(s) you learn best—the way(s) you prefer to learn.

Read each statement below. Please respond to the statements AS THEY APPLY TO YOUR STUDY OF ENGLISH. Decide whether you strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, or strongly disagree. Mark an X in the appropriate column.

Please respond to each statement quickly without too much thought. Try not to change your responses after you choose them. Please use a pen to mark your choices.

Appendix B
Questionnaire Statements

	strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	strongly disagree
1. When the teacher tells me the instructions, I understand better.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. I prefer to learn by doing something in class.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. I get more work done when I work with others.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. I learn more when I study with a group.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. In class, I learn best when I study with others.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. I learn better by reading what the teacher writes on the board.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. When someone tells me how to do something in class, I learn it better.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. When I do things in class, I learn better.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
9. I remember things I have heard in class better than things I have read.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
10. When I read instructions, I remember them better.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
11. I learn more when I can make a model of something.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
12. I understand better when I read instructions.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
13. When I study alone, I remember things better.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
14. I learn more when I make something for a class project.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
15. I enjoy learning in class by doing experiments.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
16. I learn better when I make drawings as I study.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
17. I learn better in class when the teacher gives a lecture.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
18. When I work alone, I learn better.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
19. I understand things better in class when I participate in role playing.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
20. I learn better in class when I listen to someone.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
21. I enjoy working on an assignment with two or three classmates.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
22. When I build something, I remember what I have learned better.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
23. I prefer to study with others.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
24. I learn better by reading than by listening to someone.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
25. I enjoy making something for a class project.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
26. I learn best in class when I can participate in related activities.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
27. In class, I learn better when I work alone.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
28. I prefer working on projects by myself.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
29. I learn more by reading textbooks than by listening to lectures.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
30. I prefer to work by myself.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Appendix C

アンケート

アンケート調査一質問事項の翻訳に関する一考察

強く思う そう思う どちらでもない そう思わない 強く思う
 そう思う そう思う どちらでもない そう思わない 強く思う

1. 先生がやり方を説明してくれるとわかりやすい。
2. クラスでなにかをやりがりながら学習するのが好きである。
3. ほかの学生と一緒になにかをやることが能率的に学習できる。
4. グループ学習のほうに効果的に学べる。
5. 授業の中で、ほかの学生と一緒に学習する時が、一番良く学べる。
6. 先生が黒板に書いたものを読むほうが、良く学べる。
7. クラスで誰かにやり方を教えてもらうほうが、良く学べる。
8. クラスでなにかをやると良く学べる。
9. クラスで聞いた事のほうが、読んだことよりも良く覚えている。
10. 読んだときのほうが説明を良く覚えている。
11. なにかを学習する時、そのモデルを作ったほうが効果的に学べる。
12. 説明を読んだほうが良く理解できる。
13. 一人で学習するほうが物事を良く覚えられる。
14. クラスの課題でなにかを作成するほうが良く学べる。
15. クラスで何か実験しながら学習するのが好きだ。
16. 図などを描きながら勉強するほうが良く学べる。
17. 先生が講義をするほうが良く学べる。
18. 一人でやるほうが良く学べる。
19. クラスでロールプレイをやるほうが良く物事が理解できる。
20. クラスで誰かの話を聞くほうが良く学べる。
21. 2, 3人のクラスメートと一緒にひとつのアサインメントをやるのが好きだ。
22. 何かを作ると、学習したこと良く覚えている。
23. ほかの学生と一緒に勉強するほうが好きだ。
24. 人のいうことを聞くより、読むほうがよく学べる。
25. クラスの課題として何かを作成するのが好きだ。
26. クラスで、授業の内容と関連のある学習活動 (class activities) に参加すると、一番良く学べる。
27. クラスでは一人のほうが良く学べる。
28. 一人で課題に取り組むほうが好きだ。
29. 講義を聞くより教科書を読んだほうが良く学べる。
30. 一人で勉強するほうが好きだ。