Research Methods in Linguistics
1302740

Lecture (4)
Surveys and interviews
1. To understand why surveys are popular
2. To describe the types of surveys
3. To discover the advantages and disadvantages of the various types of survey research
4. To gain insight into the factors that determine the choice of particular survey methods
5. To learn the types of errors in survey research.
data from a relatively relaxed, conversational interview might yield information on stigmatized language features that are resistant to elicitation via grammaticality judgment tasks; conversely, sociolinguists can use grammaticality judgment tasks to distinguish accidental gaps from genuine ungrammaticality

- Get lots of structured information from lots of people.
- Simplify and standardize data collection.
- Use statistics to make predictions.
- Find out about things that can not be observed. Such as: Judgments, Thoughts, Emotions, Intentions, Attitudes
Why Survey?

- The Need to Know Why
  There generally is a critical need to have some idea about why people do or do not do something.
  - Likes, dislikes, attitudes, behaviors, influences

- The Need to Know How
  Also it is often necessary to understand the process language users go through before taking some verbal action.

- The Need to Know Who
  Information on age, ethnicity, occupation, social background, education, and other social (or cultural) factors is necessary to the identification and definition of linguistic variables.
Typically, *individuals* are the ‘units of analysis’.

Individuals, referred to as *respondents*, provide data by responding to questions.

The ‘research instrument’ used to gather data is often referred to as a *questionnaire*.

Questionnaires/‘Interview schedules’:
- collect standardised information.
- are used to elicit information to be used in analyses.
The earliest surveys were designed to elicit a range of language forms – lexical, phonological, and grammatical – from across a wide geographic range, thereby obtaining a picture of language variation across space.

- Dialectology is related to sociolinguistics where both concerned with recording “real language.”
- Traditional dialectology
  - Linguistic archaeology?
    - Preserving older stages of the language
    - Preserving traditional, rural dialects
1. Please pronounce the following words: mail, still/steel, pull/pool, full/fool
2. Does the u in student sound like the oo in too or the u in use
3. After Bill had _____ (bought) the computer, he realized he'd made a mistake
4. Which is better: Who am I talking to? / To whom am I talking?
5. What do you call the thing you rent from the video store (movie, show, video)
6. Have you ever had a near death experience? Tell me about it.
7. What kinds of games did you play as a child?
8. What do people here say funny?
9. What do you think about the Utah accent?
10. Tell me about your worst day.
REGIONAL DIALECTOLOGY
THE OUTCOME....
SURVEY METHODS

SELF-ADMINISTERED QUESTIONNAIRES

PAPER QUESTIONNAIRES
- MAIL
- IN-PERSON DROP-OFF
- INSERTS
- FAX

ELECTRONIC QUESTIONNAIRES
- E-MAIL
- INTERNET WEB SITE
- KIOSK

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In–home (face–to–face) interview

An interview takes place in the respondent's home or, in special situations, within the respondent’s work environment (in–office)

Mall–intercept (face–to–face) interview

The interviewer stops shoppers in a mall and elicit information.

(long distance) Telephone interview

Question and answer exchanges that are conducted via telephone technology

(long distance) Computer–assisted telephone interview (CATI)

An integrated telephone and computer system in which the interviewer reads the questions from a computer screen and enters respondents’ answers directly into the computer program
### Direct mail survey
A self-administered questionnaire that is delivered to selected respondents and returned to the researcher by mail.

### Mail panel survey
A questionnaire sent to a group of individuals who have agreed in advance to participate.

### Drop-off surveys
A self-administered questionnaire that a representative of the researcher hand-delivers to selected respondents; the completed surveys are returned by mail or picked up by the representative.
Fax survey: A self-administered questionnaire that is sent to the selected subject by fax.

Email survey: A self-administered data collection technique in which the survey is delivered to and returned from the respondent by email.

Internet survey: A self-administered questionnaire that is placed on a World Wide web site for prospective subjects to read and complete.
Advantages

- Can arouse and keep interest
- Can build rapport and enlist cooperation
- Ask complex questions
- Can use visual and other aids
- Clarify misunderstandings
- High degree of flexibility
- Probe for more complete answers
- Do not need an explicit or current list of households or individuals
Disadvantages

- Bias of Interviewer
- Response Bias
  - Embarrassing/personal questions
- Time Requirements
- Cost Per Completed Interview Is High.
- A trained staff of interviewers that is geographically near the sample is needed.
- The total data collection period is likely to be longer than for most procedures.
the Important Aspects of Telephone Interviewing

- Selecting telephone numbers
  - Pre specified list
  - A directory
  - Random dialing procedure
    - Random digit dialing
    - Systematic random digit dialing (SRDD)
- The introduction
- When to call
- Call reports
TELEPHONE INTERVIEWING

Advantages

- Central location, under supervision, at own hours
- More interviews can be conducted in a given time
  - Travelling time is saved
- More hours of the day are productive
- Repeated call backs at lower cost
- Lower administrative costs/ Lower cost per completed interview
- Less sample bias
- Better access to certain populations
- Shorter data collection periods
Limitations and Disadvantages

- Inability to employ visual aids or complex tasks
- Can't be longer than 5-10 min. or they get boring
- Amount of data that can be collected is relatively less
- A capable interviewer essential
- Sample bias -- Not all people have phones, or are not listed
- Possibly less appropriate for personal or sensitive questions if no prior contact
INCREASING PHONE SURVEY RESPONSE

- Call at a convenient time (Weekdays 7-9 PM, Saturday afternoon)
- Have a nice *pleasant* introduction
- State how long it will take.
- Keep the survey short
Respondent Reads Survey Questions and Records Answers Without Assistance

Direct Mail Survey
Questionnaire is distributed to and returned from respondents via the postal service.

Mail Panel Survey
Selected group of individuals that have made an advance agreement to participate in a series of direct mail surveys.

Drop Off Survey
Questionnaires are left with respondent to be completed at a later time and returned to the researcher.
MAIL SURVEYS

Advantages

- Relatively low cost
- Reliable answers as no inhibiting intermediary
- Survey answered at respondents discretion
- Can be accomplished with minimal staff and facilities.
- Provides access to widely dispersed samples.
- Respondents have time to give thoughtful answers, look up records, or consult others.
Disadvantages

- No control over whom the respondent consults before answering the questions
- The identity of the respondent is inadequately controlled
- The speed of the response can't be monitored
- No control on the order in which the questions are exposed or answered
- Especially careful questionnaire design is needed.
- Open questions usually are not useful.
- Good reading and writing skills are needed by respondents.
- The interviewer is not present to exercise quality control with respect to answering all questions, meeting questions objectives, or the quality of answers provided.
Disadvantages (Contd.):

- The respondent may not clearly understand the question and no opportunity to clarify
- No long questionnaires
- Subject to availability of a mailing list
- Response rate is generally poor
- Number of problems such as obsolescence, omissions, duplications, etc.
- Ineffective as a way of enlisting cooperation.
- Need for good mailing addresses for sample.
The interviewer can explain the study, answer questions, and designate a respondent.

Response rates tend to be like those of personal interview studies.

There is more opportunity to give thoughtful answers and consult records.

Costs about as much as personal interviews.

A field staff is required.
Advantages

- Relatively low cost
- Can be accomplished with minimal staff and facilities
- Provides access to widely dispersed samples.
- Respondents have time to give thoughtful answers.
- Local faxes are free.
- Administrative costs are fixed.
- It is fast.
- List management is easy.
- Can send and receive by computer.
Disadvantages

- Higher fixed costs for computer/fax equipment, multiple phone lines.
- Cost varies by time on line, time of day, distance, and telephone carrier.
- Currently limited to organizational populations.
- Loss of anonymity.
Advantages

- The advantages of interviewer administration (in contrast to mail surveys).
- Smaller staff needed,
- High-speed,
- Instantaneous data access
- Cost efficient,
- Automatic data entry
- Multimedia stimuli
- Easy to update
- Ability to reach a lot of people
Advantages

- Surveys can be unobtrusively included with a general site
- Pre-screening of respondents
- Possible tracking
- No geographic boundaries
- Supervision and quality control potentially better.
- Likely better response rate from a list sample than from mail
- Use a branching or skip pattern
Disadvantages

• Internet users are not representative of the population as a whole (strong sample bias)

• Strong selection bias for respondents who are not pre-screened

• Security/privacy issues

• Unrestricted: anyone can complete the questionnaire

• Fully self-selecting
The questionnaire is prepared like a simple E-mail message, and is sent to a list of known E-mail addresses. The respondent fills in the answers, and E-mails the form plus replies back to the research organization.
CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING CHOICE OF PARTICULAR SURVEY METHODS

Sample Criteria: Ability to reach and get responses from the desired sample (right type of people and “adequate” sample size).

Information Criteria: Ability to get the desired information from respondents.
- Need to Expose Respondents to Various Stimuli or Perform Certain Specialized Tasks e.g. Taste tests, product concept and prototype tests, ad tests, card sorts, etc.
- Length of Questionnaire
- Degree of Structure of the Questionnaire

Administrative Criteria:
- time for data collection and analysis
- Interviewer control
- Budget
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Personal</th>
<th>Mail/Self Report</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speed of data collection</strong></td>
<td>Moderate to fast</td>
<td>No control over return of questionnaire</td>
<td>Very fast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Geographic flexibility</strong></td>
<td>Limited to moderate</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Respondent cooperation</strong></td>
<td>Excellent except in shopping malls</td>
<td>Moderate – poorly designed questionnaires have poor response rates</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Versatility of questioning</strong></td>
<td>Very versatile</td>
<td>Highly standardized format</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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## Advantages & Disadvantages of Survey Methods

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Questionnaire length</strong></td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>Varies depending on incentive</td>
<td>Moderate/Short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Respondent misunderstanding</strong></td>
<td>Lowest</td>
<td>Highest</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interviewer influence</strong></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supervision of interviewers</strong></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anonymity of respondent</strong></td>
<td>Low in face-to-face situations</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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### Advantages & Disadvantages of Survey Methods

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<tr>
<td><strong>Ease of callback or follow-up</strong></td>
<td>Difficult</td>
<td>Easy, but takes time</td>
<td>Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cost</strong></td>
<td>Highest</td>
<td>Lowest</td>
<td>Low to moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Special features</strong></td>
<td>Visual materials may be shown or demonstrated; extended probing possible</td>
<td>Respondents may answer questions at own convenience; has time to reflect on answers</td>
<td>Field and supervision of data collection are simplified; quite adaptable to computer technology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: These reflect typical situations. For example, an elaborate mail survey may be far more expensive than a short interview, but this is generally not the case.
INTERVIEWS
IN LINGUISTIC RESEARCH
CRITICISMS OF TRADITIONAL DIALECTOLOGY

Representativeness
- Location
  - Rural only
- Social factors
  - NORMs
- Sample size
  - 1-2 informants per locality
- Context
  - Relatively formal
- Survey methods
  - Questionnaires and interviews

Ability to explain variation
- Dialect mixture
  - Co-existence of one or more dialect in a single area
- Free variation
  - Random use of alternative forms
FROM DIALECTOLOGY TO VARIATIONIST LINGUISTICS

Representativeness

- Location
  - Urban (and rural)
- Social factors
  - Social class, age, gender, ethnicity
- Sample size
  - Representative sampling
- Context
  - Different social styles
- Survey methods
  - Informal interviews/"naturally occurring speech"

Ability to explain variation

- Structured heterogeneity
  - Systematic variation based on social differentiation
  - Requires us to measure relative differences in language use
The “attention to speech” model
- Determined by: type of speech activity, subject matter (danger of death story), paralinguistic channel cues...

Labov’s early work (1966):
- Sociolinguistic interviews
- Conversational speech
  - Casual style
  - Careful style
Reading
  - Reading style (of a passage)
  - Reading of minimal pair word lists

The more attention was paid to speech, the more formal the style
LABOV’S “VERNACULAR PRINCIPLE”

“The style which is most regular in its structure and in its relation to the evolution of the language is the vernacular, in which the minimum attention is paid to speech”
(1972b: 112)

- For instance, speakers’ vowel systems in casual speech seemed to give a truer picture of language change in progress than more careful speech styles

- This principle led to a research focus on the “vernacular”
THE SOCIO LINGUISTIC INTERVIEWS

a. What it is/when to use them

- is a loosely structured interview designed to yield large quantities of speech from interviewees that is as casual and natural as possible, with the most "natural," "vernacular" speech
- Interviews consist of open ended questions

Example interviews:
50 percent’s use of African American speech in rap and interviews
Labov’s examination of /r/-dropping in NYC
Examination of African American speech in middle class white males (blackinese)
THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC INTERVIEWS

b. How to use them (example studies using this method)

- Try to create questions that elicit the linguistic feature you are looking for
- Try to get participants to forget that they are part of a research study
- A really good interviewer usually just has to ask one or two questions
THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC INTERVIEWS

Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages

- If ask specific questions-- easy to elicit what you want
- Every subject gets the same questions (compared to trying to hear same pronunciation or construction in all subjects in spontaneous speech)

Disadvantages

- Observer’s paradox
- People’s beliefs about what they do often don’t coincide with their behavior. People think they say X more or less often than they really do. Stigmatized regionalisms/ethnolect (Labov’s /r/-less study)
- People may tell you what you want to hear (MTC motivation study)
- People may sometimes lie and researchers are sometimes biased
- Mismatch between researcher and subjects (e.g. African-American children and white, male, middle-aged researcher)
THE ‘OBSERVER’S PARADOX’

Solution 1

- ‘Various devices which divert attention away from speech’
- ‘This can be done in various intervals and breaks which are so defined that the subject unconsciously assumes that he is not at the moment being interviewed’

(Labov 1972: 92)
Solution 2

- The ‘danger of death’ question: ‘Have you ever been in a situation in which you were in serious danger of being killed?’
- ‘Often he becomes involved in the narration to the extent that…signs of emotional tension appear’ (1972: 92)
1. Identify linguistic feature(s) that vary
2. Sample the community.
3. Get data—interview with reading; rapid and anonymous, etc.
4. Count occurrences AND non-occurrences of the variable.
5. Code for linguistic factors.
6. Select meaningful social units.
7. Find statistical correlations between occurrence of the variable and social units (age, class, etc.)
8. Describe observed patterns.
UNDERSTANDING A SPEECH COMMUNITY (LABOV 1966)

- Labov (1966) New York City
  - Goal: to show systematic variation based on
    - Social class
    - Attention paid to speech
    - Linguistic context on a variant
- Pilot study: NYC department stores
  - Studying the incoming prestige use of postvocalic
STUDYING SOCIAL STATUS...

- Social class status based on prestige of department stores
Eliciting tokens of /r/

A: “Where is ….?”
B: “On the fourth floor.”
A: “Excuse me?”
B: “The fourth floor.”

Token of (r) before a consonant
Token of (r) word finally

Unconscious response
Careful articulation (more attention paid to speech)
NYC RESULTS

More /r/ in more statusful department stores

Fig. 2.1. Overall stratification of (r) by store. Shaded area = % all (r-1); unshaded area = % some (r-1); % no (r-1) not shown. N = total number of cases.
NYC RESULTS

More /r/ in more careful speech styles

Fig. 2.2 Percentage of all (r-1) by store for four positions. (S = M = Macy’s, K = Kleins.)
Members of a speech community share social evaluation of variables

- Variables used according to place in the hierarchy
  - Use is stratified by social class status
- All speakers are conscious of community prestige norms
  - Speech shifts to prestige norms when it is being observed
Language attitudes are actually the feelings people have about their own language or the languages of others, and further defined, as an individual’s psychological construction regarding their own language and/or the languages of others (see Crystal in Şimşek et al. 2007: 1).
“Ultimately attitudes to language reflect attitudes to the users and the uses of language…”

“The is nothing intrinsically beautiful or correct about any particular sound.”

“They develop attitudes towards languages which reflect their views about those who speak the languages, and the contexts and functions with which they are associated.”
EXAMPLES OF STRONG VIEWS TOWARDS LANGUAGES

- Language riots in Belgium and India
- Getting rid of English road signs in Wales
- Change in attitudes towards English and French in Quebec
- Long delay in developing a script for written Somali because of competing prestige forms (Roman vs. Arabic alphabets)
to rate the speakers on various measures, usually along a so-called *semantic differential* scale:

- more intelligent
- more industrious
- more self-confident
- more determined
- more communicative effectiveness
- more social status
- more general pleasantness
- often taken more seriously
- more persuasive
The Matched-Guise Test is a sociolinguistic experimental technique used to determine the true feelings of an individual or community towards a specific language, dialect, or accent.

This experiment was first introduced by Lambert in 1960s to determine attitudes.
In this technique experimental candidates are listening to apparently different speakers representing guises in two or more languages and evaluating those speakers across various traits including body height, good looks, leadership, sense of humor, intelligence, religiousness, self-confidence, dependability, kindness, ambition, sociability, character, and likability (Stefanowitsch 2005)
According to Reagan (2002: 47f.), and from an American point of view, the fundamental factors which determine a language’s attitude are the following six factors:

(1) the size of the language’s speaker community;
(2) the geographic spread of the language (including its use as a second language, or lingua franca);
(3) whether the language constitutes a heritage language in the local American setting;
(4) whether the language is a language of wider communication;
(5) whether the language has an established and recognised literary/written tradition; and
(6) whether the language is a “living” or “dead” language.