

Questionnaires in Second Language Research

Construction,
Administration,
and Processing



Zoltán Dörnyei

Contents

INTRODUCTION 1

1 QUESTIONNAIRES IN SECOND LANGUAGE RESEARCH 3

- 1.1 What are 'questionnaires' and what do they measure? 5
 - 1.1.1 What a questionnaire is not 6
 - 1.1.2 What do questionnaires measure? 8
- 1.2 Why use questionnaires and why not? 9
 - 1.2.1 Advantages 9
 - 1.2.2 Disadvantages 10
- 1.3 Questionnaires in quantitative and qualitative research 14

2 CONSTRUCTING THE QUESTIONNAIRE 16

- 2.1 General features 17
 - 2.1.1 Length 17
 - 2.1.2 Layout 19
 - 2.1.3 Sensitive topics and anonymity 21
- 2.2 The main parts of a questionnaire 25
 - 2.2.1 Title 25
 - 2.2.2 Instructions 26
 - 2.2.3 Questionnaire items 28
 - 2.2.4 Additional information 29
 - 2.2.5 Final 'thank you' 30
- 2.3 Questionnaire content and multi-item scales 31
 - 2.3.1 Appropriate sampling of the content 31
 - 2.3.2 Using multi-item scales 32
- 2.4 'Closed-ended' questionnaire items 35
 - 2.4.1 Rating scales 36

- 2.4.2 Multiple-choice items 43
- 2.4.3 Rank order items 44
- 2.4.4 Numeric items 46
- 2.4.5 Checklists 46
- 2.5 Open-ended questions 47
 - 2.5.1 Specific open questions 48
 - 2.5.2 Clarification questions 48
 - 2.5.3 Sentence completion items 49
 - 2.5.4 Short-answer questions 49
- 2.6 How to write good items 50
 - 2.6.1 Drawing up an 'item pool' 51
 - 2.6.2 Rules about item wording 52
 - 2.6.3 Writing sensitive items 57
- 2.7 Grouping and ordering items 59
- 2.8 Computer programs for constructing questionnaires 62
- 2.9 Piloting the questionnaire and conducting item analysis 63
 - 2.9.1 Initial piloting of the item pool 66
 - 2.9.2 Final piloting ('dress rehearsal') 67
 - 2.9.3 Item analysis 68

3 ADMINISTERING THE QUESTIONNAIRE 70

- 3.1 Selecting the sample 70
 - 3.1.1 Sampling procedures 70
 - 3.1.2 How large should the sample be? 73
 - 3.1.3 The problem of respondent self-selection 75
- 3.2 Main types of questionnaire administration 76
 - 3.2.1 Administration by mail 77
 - 3.2.2 One-to-one administration 81
 - 3.2.3 Group administration 82
- 3.3 Strategies to increase the quality and quantity of participant response 83
 - 3.3.1 Advance notice 84
 - 3.3.2 Attitudes conveyed by teachers, parents, and other authority figures 85
 - 3.3.3 Respectable sponsorship 85

- 3.3.4 The behavior of the survey administrator 86
- 3.3.5 Communicating the purpose and significance of the survey 86
- 3.3.6 Emphasizing confidentiality 88
- 3.3.7 Questionnaire instructions 89
- 3.3.8 The style and layout of the questionnaire 89
- 3.3.9 Promising feedback on the results 90
- 3.4 Questionnaire administration, confidentiality, and other ethical issues 91
 - 3.4.1 Basic ethical principles of data collection 91
 - 3.4.2 Obtaining parental consent for children 93
 - 3.4.3 Strategies for getting around anonymity 93

4 PROCESSING QUESTIONNAIRE DATA 96

- 4.1 Coding questionnaire data 97
 - 4.1.1 First things first: Identification code and 'Research Logbook' 97
 - 4.1.2 The coding frame and the codebook 98
- 4.2 Entering the data into a computer file 101
- 4.3 Processing closed questions 103
 - 4.3.1 Data cleaning 104
 - 4.3.2 Data manipulation 105
 - 4.3.3 Reducing the number of variables in the questionnaire 107
 - 4.3.4 Main types of questionnaire data 109
 - 4.3.5 Examining the reliability and validity of the data 110
 - 4.3.6 Statistical procedures to analyze data 114
- 4.4 Content analysis of open-ended questions 116
- 4.5 Computer programs for processing questionnaire data 118
- 4.6 Summarizing and reporting questionnaire data 119
 - 4.6.1 General guidelines 119
 - 4.6.2 Technical information to accompany survey results 122
 - 4.6.3 Reader-friendly data presentation methods 125

- 4.7 Complementing questionnaire data with other
information 128

CONCLUSION AND CHECKLIST 132

REFERENCES 137

**APPENDIX: SELECTED LIST OF PUBLISHED L2
QUESTIONNAIRES 144**

AUTHOR INDEX 150

SUBJECT INDEX 153