Tips for Doing Surveys

I. What are some strengths and weaknesses of using surveys for community research?

II. Things to Consider:

A. Prepare written objectives for the survey. The more specific the objective, the better. From there, write specific survey items for each element. E.g., Objective: What are the language needs of the community? Specify in terms of: defining “language,” “needs,” “community.”

B. Identify the accessible population. This helps to reduce sampling bias.

C. Design a survey that could provide some benefit to the chosen population. Decide in advance how potential benefits could be accessed.

D. Prepare a timeline. From drafting the survey objectives and question items, conducting a literature review, revising, and disseminating the survey to compiling, reporting, and disseminating the results.

E. Writing Survey Items:

1. Each item should ask a single question. E.g., Occupational status:
   - Full-time employment
   - Part-time employment
   - Full-time student
   - Part-time student
   - Unemployed
   - Retired
   - Not a student

2. Write specific information requests. E.g., On average, how many times do you write in Chinese during the week?
   - 0-3 times
   - 4-6 times
   - 7-9 times
   - 10 or more times

3. Use open-ended questions sparingly. These may be appropriate when exploring new topics. E.g., Experience with speaking Vietnamese?

4. Ask about demographic information sparingly. Avoid questions that could be intrusive into respondents’ privacy.