

# Analysis of Multiple-choice Propositions in Secondary School English Tests

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**Abstract:** *Multiple choice questions are a common question type used in current secondary school English tests. Multiple choice questions can test students' completion of multiple learning tasks such as vocabulary, grammar, and listening. Multiple choice questions have the advantages of effectively testing students' learning ability, wide coverage, convenient and efficient use, etc., and occupy an important position in daily secondary school English tests. To this end, this study will analyze the proposition system of multiple-choice questions in the current secondary school English test, make use of the strengths and avoid the weaknesses, and provide design principles and recommendation for the proposition system.*

**Keywords:** Multiple-choice questions; Proposition; Secondary English test.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Multiple choice questions are one of the most widely used questions in current secondary school English tests. Liu Runqing has mentioned in the language test that multiple-choice questions can be applied to all aspects of the language proficiency test. [1] Because multiple-choice questions can improve the objectivity and accuracy of marking papers, they are popular with many teachers. However, we must also know that although multiple-choice questions have their irreplaceable advantages, they also have inherent disadvantages not be ignored. To this end, after carefully studying the propositional principles and methods of multiple-choice questions, the teachers should propose effective design methods and improvement principles, eliminate the shortcomings, and improve the reliability and validity of multiple-choice questions. The thick line in the graph indicates the time interval in which the mutation of the keyword occurred; Begin and End represent the start and end time of the mutation; Strength represents the intensity of the mutation of the keyword, the higher the intensity, the more influential the keyword is in the corresponding time interval of the research field.

## 2. OVERVIEW

the keyword clustering has a Q-value of 0.4309 and an S-value of 0.8149, indicating that the clustering is reasonable and significant[5]. There are eight keywords clustered in the figure, in the order of #0 translation strategy, #1 translator, #2 subjectivity, #3 translation, #4 intersubjectivity, #5 hermeneutics, #6 reader, #7 ideology, and #8 literary translation. The above eight keywords are classified according to different research directions in the study of translator subjectivity, and their main research directions can be divided into the embodiment of translator subjectivity in literary works by translators and the interpretation of translator subjectivity from a certain theoretical perspective.

In the first category, the translator's subjectivity in literary works is embodied in three main aspects: poetry translation, prose translation and novel translation. Taking the English translation of ancient poems as an example, Jin Shengxi and Lin Zhengjun attempt to reveal the cognitive mechanism of translators' subjectivity, and analyze and discover the process of constructing translators' subjectivity and its connotations[6]. Through the analysis of the translation of the Tulenkirche, Lin Juanfang found that some of the translations were mistranslations or even "defective translations", but they were all the result of the translator's self-consciousness in incorporating the translation subject while respecting the original work [7]. Taking Sun Zhili's translation of The Old Man and the Sea as an example, Yuan Rong suggests that the translator's own spiritual subject constitutes a complete system that influences and constrains translation activities, deepening and promoting the study of translation theory[8]. Zhou Chunyue takes young Bajin's translation stance and translation impulses as the subject of his study, and uses comparative analysis to discover the contradictions between what he says and what he does, thus revealing that the translator's subjectivity is gradually established through the intertwined interaction of personal choice and historical evolution[9]. Liu Yingjiao points out that the subjectivity factors of translators are divided into individual subjectivity factors of translators and social subjectivity factors of translators. After studying the full English translation of Dream of the Red Chamber, it is found that the individual subjectivity factors of translators

Hawks and Yang Xianyi in terms of bilingual linguistic and cultural competence and attitudes towards *Dream of the Red Chamber*, the translation career and the English translation of *Dream of the Red Chamber*, as well as the social subjectivity factors in terms of patron purpose, poetic form and translation strategies, all differ to different degrees [10].

In the second category, the subjectivity of translators is mainly interpreted from different perspectives based on a certain theory, mainly including traditional translation theories such as acceptance aesthetics, translation purposology, feminist theory, hermeneutic theory, etc. With the development of interdisciplinary translation studies, some scholars have also creatively introduced theories from other disciplines to study the subjectivity of translators.

Tong Tingting discusses the translator's subjectivity in literary translation from the hermeneutic perspective in terms of acceptance of the original text, active understanding, and choice of translation strategies[11]. Chen Weihong discusses the importance of manifesting the translator's subjectivity from feminist translation theory, and how the translator's subjectivity is manifested[12]. Wang Yujuan, on the other hand, creatively combines purposive and conformist theories, discusses how to choose translation strategies, and analyses the impact of the translator's subjectivity on the different choices of translation strategies[13]. Relying on philosophical hermeneutic theory, Qian Jiaying stands at the height of intersubjectivity and re-examines translator subjectivity, arguing for the return of the translator subject and its intersubjective existence, emphasizing that translator subjectivity is manifested in the dialogue of intersubjectivity[14]. Tian Xia uses the theory of possible worlds in cognitive poetics to analyze the possible worlds in which the subjectivity of translators in the era of cultural globalization can achieve cultural pluralism when "Chinese culture goes abroad" [15].

Qiu Hemin uses postcolonial theory to reveal the role of translators' subjectivity in the "arena and testing ground of postcolonial contexts"[16]. Tu Guoyuan uses Bourdieu's sociological theory of "habitus" as an entry point to examine the choice of material by the modern Chinese translator Ma Junwu [17]. Jia Ru uses Lico's reflective hermeneutics as a lens to study the subjectivity of the translator, suggesting that the translator should correct his or her attitude in translation, accept the "test of difference", turn passivity into subjective initiative, and actively resolve the "conflict of interpretation"[18]. Mou Jia and Zhou Guijun explore the influence of translators' historical perceptions on the choice of translation content, the use of translation strategies, and the audience and effects of translation from the perspective of communication from Lasswell's communication model[19]. Based on a cultural anthropological perspective, Zhang Hong uses the translation of the *Book of Filial Piety* as an example to explore why the subjectivity of the translator should be reflected, providing a new perspective for the study of English translations of Chinese cultural texts[20].

Therefore, research on translator subjectivity has focused on the study of the translator's personal subjectivity in literary translations and the interpretation and analysis of translator subjectivity from a certain theoretical perspective. It can be predicted that in the future, research on translators themselves will focus on such great translators as Ge Haowen and Xu Yuanchong, while the theoretical perspective of research will shift to the emerging translation theories and interdisciplinary theories, such as "ecological translation study", "Multimodal translation study", communication science and sociological theories, etc.

### **2.1. Definition of multiple-choice questions**

Multiple choice questions are questions from which the subject is asked to choose the correct answer. Multiple choice questions usually have only one answer, so they are also called one choice questions. Multiple choice questions are widely used in vocabulary, grammar, listening, reading and other question types. Multiple choice questions can be used to measure students' understanding and memory retention of knowledge, usually used for input-based knowledge. With the development of English education in China's secondary schools, the role of English testing in guiding teaching has become increasingly prominent, and multiple-choice questions occupy an irreplaceable and guiding position in English testing, so understanding the design principles of multiple-choice questions is the basic quality that qualified teachers should have.

### **2.2. Advantages of multiple-choice questions**

For a country, the coverage of sports has great significance in maintaining international relations and shaping the national image[1]. From Feb. 4 to 20, 2022, the 2022 Winter Olympics (Beijing 2022) was held in Beijing, China. During this period, sports reports were crucial in shaping China's national image. As China's national external

newspaper, China Daily is an important window to view China. Its coverage of Beijing 2022 can also reflect its role in constructing the country's image.

Through the discourse analysis of China Daily's national image construction in the news report of Beijing 2022, the characteristics of the discourse strategies of Chinese official news media in the construction of national image can be revealed. Relevant advice can be given to the national media to help them better display the country's image, and provide a certain reference to enhance the country's international discourse power.

For the methodology, this research adopts the research method of combining critical discourse analysis and Corpse-driven study. Through the combination of these two methods, the discourse strategy of the text can be analysed and revealed.

#### 2.2.1.High reliability

Test reliability refers to the degree of reliability and consistency of the test results of a question. A multiple-choice question has a high reliability because it only examines one knowledge point, eliminates the interference of other external factors to the greatest extent, covers a wide range of test points, and has many samples.

#### 2.2.2.Easy implementation

The method of multiple-choice questions is usually to directly select the correct option, or directly fill in the answer card, so its answer method is simple, the marking work is convenient, and the overall implementation is more efficient and economical than subjective questions.

#### 2.2.3.Clear test point

Each multiple-choice question only tests one language point, so that subjects can easily understand and discover the purpose of the test and improve the efficiency of answering questions.

#### 2.2.4.Wide coverage

In most English tests, a test paper usually contains dozens or even hundreds of objective multiple-choice questions, and its examination content can include vocabulary, grammar, reading and other question types, so its coverage is wide and the amount of examination is large.

### 2.3.Disadvantages of multiple-choice questions

#### 2.3.1.Inability to test productive language skills

Often multiple-choice questions are used to test comprehension and memory of receptive language skills in the listening and reading types. However, these type questions cannot measure productive language skills such as speaking and writing, therefore, there is still a gap between the actual test type and desirable test achievement.

#### 2.3.2.Guessable answers

Since the answer skill of multiple-choice questions is to fill in the options directly and sometimes randomly, candidates can use some guessing skills or free and random selection to answer questions without understanding and analyzing the language knowledge test points. But the teacher has no way of knowing whether the candidate's answer was chosen through careful thought or random guessing. Wu Li'an found that multiple-choice questions often induce unfounded speculation, and it often occurs that subjects chose the correct answer with the wrong reason. [2]

#### 2.3.3.Difficult proposition process

The proposition process for multiple-choice questions is a difficult and tough problem. Hughes said that multiple-choice questions are the one of hardest and most time-consuming test type, and high-quality multiple-choice questions are difficult to design. [5] Pan Zhixin also said that producing a set of high-quality test papers generally takes professionals a year to ensure that all quality indicators are met. [3]

#### 2.3.4.Harmful backlash effects

The misinformation in the options will, to some extent, be a question for the victim to question what they already know. Moreover, a large number of multiple-choice training questions will cause subjects to focus part of their attention on finding and training the answering skills of this question type, neglecting the cultivation of language skill and thinking quality, resulting in high scores but low ability.

### 3. DESIGN

#### 3.1.Design principles for multiple-choice questions

There are many ways to design multiple-choice questions, and the teacher's choice of the appropriate proposition method has a guiding effect on the design of the question. Lu Ziwen mentioned that multiple-choice questions have the advantages of objective and convenient scoring, convenient statistical analysis, and have a wide range of applications, etc. [4] Lin Xia from Wuhan University, Tu Guoyuan from Ningbo University and He Fang from Hengyang Normal University, have the most research results on translator subjectivity, with as many as seven articles. More papers co-authored by Lin Xia from Wuhan University and Li Huifang from Hohai University focus on the translation of film subtitles from the perspective of translator subjectivity, arguing that the choice of translation strategies for English film subtitles should reflect the translator's subjectivity and intention. Other scholars have basically not launched cross-institutional collaborative research, but mostly co-authored papers by scholars from the same institution or unit. The co-authored papers by scholars from different research institutions are conducive to promoting the development of academic research in this field and broadening the scope of research in this field. Therefore, scholars conducting research on the subjectivity of translators in China need to strengthen academic exchanges and cooperation.

In this chapter, I will describe some of the design principles commonly used in multiple-choice propositions.

##### 3.1.1.Unique correct answer

This principle seems to be easy to implement, but it is difficult to design, for which requires the subject designer to have rich language knowledge and propositional skills.

##### 3.1.2.Appropriate context

Appropriate context should be provided in the question stem to ensure that there is no ambiguity in the question stem. However, the context cues should not be too much to prevent candidates from guessing the answers, and not too limitation to hinder the candidates' answers. The content of this question can be both use speculation and interpretation of past facts, so if both B and D are correct, candidates will be confused about the answers.

##### 3.1.3.Balanced option length

The length of the options should be balanced, otherwise it may give the test taker some hints. For example, if all three options are shorter and the remaining one is longer, candidates will tend to exclude the longer option outright.

##### 3.1.4.Consistent option generics

The options given in the exam should first ensure that the generics are consistent, such as consistent parts of speech, consistent grammar points, etc. In this question, it is clear that option A is different from the other three options, so candidates will exclude option A directly.

#### 3.2.Recommended improvements of multiple-choice design

Despite its inherent drawbacks, multiple-choice questions are still an efficient and convenient way to test. Therefore, when designing multiple-choice questions, one can refer to the following methods.

##### 3.2.1.Questions stem propositional principle

The following principles can be followed in the reasonable design of the test questions:

- (1) Do not set a blank space at the beginning of the stem sentence.
- (2) The design should be concise and clear.
- (3) The language should be close to the reality of society and student life, embody the humanistic spirit, and have a sense of reality.
- (4) The context is appropriately set. Too little context is not enough to establish artistic conception, and too much context will provide grammatical or semantic implications.

### 3.2.2. Ways to improve the intrusiveness of options

When designing multiple-choice questions, the teacher should not arbitrarily design irrelevant options, the distractors should be highly disturbing, and the students should not be able to easily see the answer without effort, and should mobilize students' thinking and knowledge. Common ways to increase the distractions are:

- (1) Design distractions with mistakes that students often make in their learning.
- (2) Design with a narrative that students do not rigorously learn in their learning.
- (3) Note that the length and wording of the distractors should be similar to the correct answer.
- (4) Maintain similarity between options.
- (5) By comparing and analyzing mother tongues and foreign languages, the options for mother tongues to have a negative migration effect on foreign languages were identified.

### 3.3. Trial Making

In order to ensure the quality of the test paper, the teacher needs to do a trial after the design of the test paper is designed. The age, thinking level, and knowledge level of the person who chooses to do the test should be similar to the student being examined, and the subjective judgment of the teacher cannot be relied on alone to define the applicability and difficulty of the test questions. After the students conduct the test, the teacher shall count the results of the candidate, analyze the error rate and reasons of each question, and adjust the test question or re-proposition in time. This ensures that each test item is positively correlated with the overall score, improving the validity and reliability of the entire paper.

## 4. CONCLUSION

Multiple choice is the most commonly used question type in various types of exams, occupies an irreplaceable position, and is beloved by secondary education teachers. Although multiple-choice questions have particularly inherently disadvantageous and cannot fully detect students' language ability, however, if the teacher can carry forward the advantages of multiple choice, ensure the reliability and validity of the test, and abandon its drawbacks through careful questions and trial work, and promote the strengths and avoid the weaknesses. Then, multiple-choice questions will effectively measure student learning outcomes, help teachers teach, and promote student learning.

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