The Challenges of Exporting Cognitive Interviewing

Comparative Survey Design and Implementation

March 21, 2013

Beth-Ellen Pennell
Zeina Mneimneh
Kristen Cibelli
Jennifer Kelley
Outline

• What we know…

• Challenges and recommendations (and what we still don’t know…)
  ▪ Recruitment
    • Respondent
    • Interviewer
  ▪ Training protocols
  ▪ Interviewing protocols
  ▪ Supervision
  ▪ Analysis

• Cross – national design considerations
What we know…

- Cognitive interviewing is generally accepted as an effective method in questionnaire design and testing (http://ccsg.isr.umich.edu).
- This method is not yet widely used in developing and transitional countries but its use is likely to increase in the future (Glewwe, 2005).
- Considerable challenges in the implementation of this method among different cultural and linguistic groups and in settings where an interviewing tradition does not exist.
What we know…

• Limited literature
  - Park et al., 2009
  - Goerman & Caspar, 2010
  - Pan et al., 2010
  - Miller et al., 2011

• Recent field experiences
  - Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, World Mental Health Survey (KSA)
Respondent Recruitment: Challenges

- Number of interviews?
- Iterations?
- Respondent characteristics?
- Should respondents be monolingual (target language) or bilingual?
- No interviewing tradition?
Respondent Recruitment: Lessons Learned

- Goerman & Caspar, 2010

- Rs should be monolingual (target language)
  - Bilingual Rs may compensate, thus problems may not be illuminated

- Sample composition should ‘represent’ target population

- Iterate until no new information

- Spend more time ‘teaching’ respondent the task
Interviewer Recruitment: Challenges

- Cognitive interviewing experience or substantive knowledge?
- Professional or educational background and/or experience?
- Which cognitive interviewing characteristics are inherent and which are teachable (given limited training period)?
Interviewer Recruitment: Lessons Learned

- Goerman & Caspar, 2010
  - When feasible - experienced interviewers in each language (best to conduct emergent probing)
  - Should be fully fluent in R’s preferred language, able to pick up on subtle nuances in comprehension
  - Bilingual interviewers are helpful particularly in multilingual projects
  - Research team must share the linguistic and cultural background of target population, be well-trained in these techniques and thoroughly understand the goals of the undertaking
Interviewer Recruitment: Lessons Learned

- University students in psychology, sociology, social work
- Strong verbal skills – may need to be assessed
- Look for interviewers who have “inherent” characteristics/skills as some characteristic/skills are more “teachable”
  - “Inherent”
    - Fluent in both source and target language
    - Understand cultural nuances
    - Above average interpersonal skills (i.e. recognize and respondent to both verbal and non-verbal communication cues)
  - “Teachable”
    - Neutral, nonthreatening behavior
    - Professional behavior
    - Cognitive interviewing techniques
Interviewer Training: Challenges

- How should the necessary knowledge and skills be transferred?
- What length of time is required?
- What materials are necessary?
- Can training be done remotely?
- *Lingua Franca?*
  - Train-the-trainer
  - Concurrent training
Interviewer Training: Lessons Learned

- Goerman & Caspar, 2010
  - General cognitive interview training (2-3 days)
  - Project specific interview training (1 day)
  - Linguistic and cultural sensitivity training (1-2 hours)
    - Brainstorm activity on potential scenarios
  - Practice interviews (at least ½ day, dependent on numbers)
  - Conduct interviewer training in survey language (when possible)

- KSA
  - Train at least one member (supervisor) of the team in-depth
  - Remote training worked reasonably well
  - More practice sessions
  - Iterative approach
Interviewing Protocols: Challenges

- Structure of cognitive interview?
  - Completely scripted?
  - Completely open-ended?
  - Combination of scripted probes and emergent probes?

- Recording (in both senses of the word)
  - Review? *(Lingua Franca)*
  - Analysis
Interviewing Protocols: Challenges

- Standardization versus localization?
  - Communication styles, norms
  - Social distance, power relationship
  - Languages
  - Low, middle, high income
  - Harmonization opportunities
Interviewing Protocols: Lessons Learned

• Goerman & Caspar, 2010
  ▪ Clear instructions to probe on previously identified problem questions
  ▪ Less experienced interviewers should have more scripts, more experienced interviewers should have fewer scripts
  ▪ Provide sample scripted probes for highly experienced cognitive interviewers
Interview Protocols: Lessons Learned

• Pan et al., 2010
  - Tailor introduction/communication style specific to culture, conversational norms, and research experience
  - Practice sessions
  - Provide tailored feedback to encourage respondents
Cross-national Design Considerations

- Combine pretesting techniques to create a comprehensive design plan that takes advantage of the strengths and minimizes the weaknesses of each method (www.ccsg.isr.umich.edu):
  - Focus group (problematic items and terms)
  - Expert review of source (with drafting team and translation experts)
  - Technical
  - Advance translation
  - Cognitive interviewing with iterations
  - Formal pretesting
Questions not answered…

- Information on more the operational aspects or lessons learned
- Testing of alternative approaches
- More research on:
  - How different cultural groups respond to various techniques
  - The effectiveness or appropriateness of interviewing styles (open-ended vs. scripted), types of probes, etc.
  - Interviewer effects and interviewer-respondent interaction in different cultures
  - Interviewing recruitment, monitoring and supervision
- Finding the balance between standardization and culturally appropriate implementation