



Setting up the Cognitive Interview Task for non-English Speaking Participants: Exploratory Research in the U.S. context

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Research Goals

- 1) Review of literature on 3M issues related to communication and survey pretesting
- 2) Discussion of exploratory research into the cognitive interview introduction for non-English speakers in the U.S using two projects including 3 languages:
 - Spanish
 - Chinese
 - Korean

The Cognitive Interview: A Definition

- Cognitive interviews: One-on-one interviews to evaluate whether respondents interpret, comprehend and respond to survey questions as intended.
- Typical interview segments
 - Introduction
 - Informed consent
 - Instructions: e.g. think aloud
 - Administer survey instrument
 - Debriefing/probes
 - Payment/receipt form



Literature Review: Differences in communication style

- Views of self and effect on communication
 - Western cultures independent
 - Eastern cultures interdependent
 - (Markus & Kitayama, 1991)
- Hall (1976) low vs. high context framework for explaining sociolinguistic differences
 - Low context: Relying on facts of the message (English)
 - High context: Relying on context and interpersonal cues (Chinese and Korean) (Hall & Hall, 1987)

Literature review: Cognitive Interviews in the 3M context

- Difficulty applying standard cognitive interview methods to different populations
 - (Goerman 2007; Miller, 2003; Pan 2004; Park, Sha, and Olmsted 2015)
- Difficulty with providing adequate answers to probes
 - (Coronado & Earle, 2002; Kissam et al. 1993; Pan, 2004; Pasick, et al. 2001)
- Communication norms of English and Western cultures
 - (Pan et al. 2010)
- Rs' tendency not to provide adequate answers to probing questions in Nepal and China
 - (Kelley et al, 2015a)

Study 1: Spanish Cognitive Interviews

Goerman (2006)

- 48 exploratory interviews with monolingual Spanish speakers
 - Mexican origin
- U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI) instrument
- Education level
 - 35 less than a High School
 - 13 High School or greater
- Gender 42 women, 6 men
- Age range: 24 -74 (Average = 46)
- 2 bilingual interviewers

Spanish Cognitive Interviews – Cont'd

- Study examined the effects of two interviewing techniques:
 - 1) standard interviews (28)
 - 2) experimental interviews (20)
- Common to both interview types:
 - Interviewer first discussed interview process.
 - Reason for doing the interview
 - Confidentiality
 - Reasons for tape recording

Standard interviews: Spanish

Prior to interview

- Interviewers greeted R briefly, introduce self, shake hands.
- minimal small talk.

Common segment

Practice (think aloud)

- Rs asked to practice talking out loud while deciding how to answer “How many windows are there in your home?”
- Discussed interview procedure and explained it is not a test.

Main interview

- Interviewer reads probes as worded on the protocol
 - reword them only if R had difficulty understanding

Experimental interviews: Spanish

Prior to interview: Rapport building

- Interviewer waited outside or greeted R in the hallway, offered to shake hands (Some Rs initiated kiss on the cheek)
- Engaged in small talk, providing information about self/family background/job

Common Segment

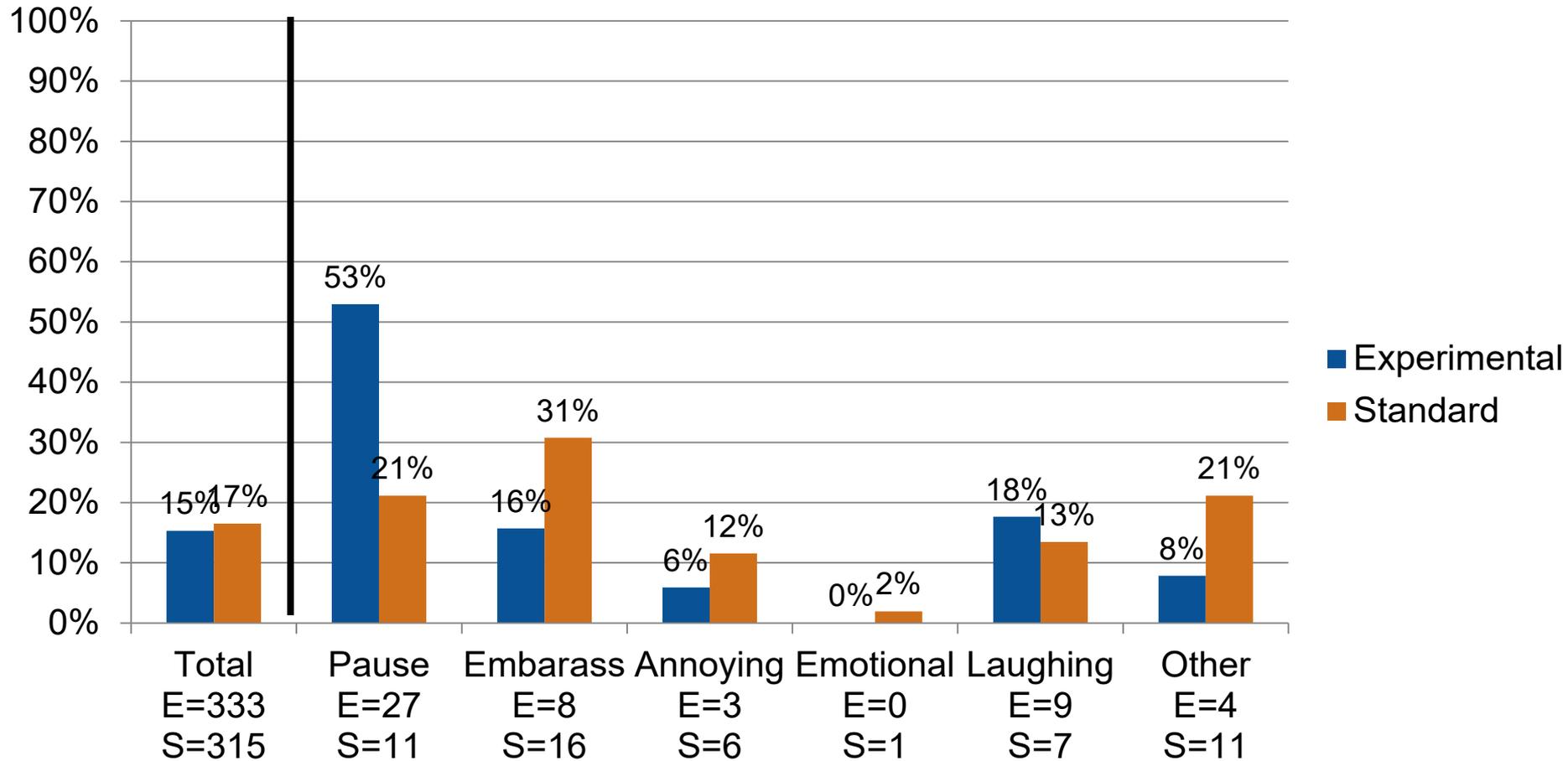
Practice

- Interviewer demonstrated think-aloud and gave other probe examples
- Discussed interview procedure/purpose

Main interview

- Freedom for interviewers to reword the probes and more explanations

Results: Overall Discomfort



Study 2: Chinese/Korean cognitive interviews

- 258 cognitive interviews with monolingual respondents
 - 129 Chinese speakers
 - 129 Korean speakers
- U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) Language Assistance Guide (LAG)
- Materials tested in 6 rounds
- Interview sites: Illinois, North Carolina, Washington D.C.
- Rs varied by education level, gender, immigration year, and age

Introductory Practice Type 1

Initial practice for Round 1 of testing:

- Think aloud practice with how many windows question
- Optional probes that interviewer could read
 - How did you come up with that answer?
 - What do you think they mean by the term window?
 - What is this question asking in your own words?

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Interview issues/results

- Rs' comments were often very brief
- Rs often confused between survey Qs and cognitive interview probes
- Think-aloud practice quite unnatural

Introductory Practice Type 2

Revised practice Rounds 2 and 3:

- Number of windows think aloud replaced with
 - “What is your favorite season?” think aloud practice
- New statement: “What we want to do here is not to collect information about you. Instead, we want to get a better idea of how our questions are working, and if they are easily understood.”
- Required probes, not optional

Introductory Practice Type 2

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 - “What is your favorite season?” think aloud practice
- New statement: “What we want to do here is not to collect information about you. Instead, we want to get a better idea of how our questions are working, and if they are easily understood.”
- Required probes, not optional

Interview issues/results

- Eliminated confusion between survey questions and cognitive interview probes
- Realized that practice session did not match types of probes actually asked in interview

Introductory Practice Type 3

Revised practice Rounds 4-6

- Practice question on paper
- Sample question with embedded translation error
- Practice probes matched interview probes
 - ➔ Goal for Rs to understand that the survey questions maybe flawed and that they were being asked to explain their interpretation
- Reiterated no right or wrong answer
- Encouragement “you’re doing great!”

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Results:

Interviewers felt that changes improved experience and interview quality.

Discussion

- High v. low context cultures revisited
- Applying same procedures in low context cultures: English interviews, an anecdote.
- Need to develop introductions that consider usual communication strategies of different language speakers: “adaptation” as opposed to “translation” of protocols
- Prior understanding and familiarity with task, helps Rs understand probing questions and feel more comfortable with describing their thoughts and opinions

Limitations

Study 1: Lack variation gender, education level

Study 2: Not set up as methodological experiment

- Many variations in procedure. Difficult to quantify which factors had effects on interview outcomes
- Expanded introductory approach increases interview time and may cause R to think and talk in advance about topics to be covered in the interview

Recommendations for Future Research

Future Research:

- Comparison of different introductory approaches across cultures and languages
- Control for demographic characteristics such as education level
- More research across national boundaries



More Information

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Disclaimer:

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