How can cognitive interviewing methods contribute to the development of a mixed-mode data collection system?

QUEST workshop, Granada 2011
Paper presented by Elisabeth Gulløy
2010: SN project to put LFS on the web

1. Review on how to make LFS more efficient
2. Plan LFS pilot with mixed-mode design and possible experiments
3. Develop user friendly web questionnaire for LFS (2.-7. interview round)
4. Questionnaire development to reduce instrument effects
5. Contact surface towards respondents

Part of a process to prepare Statistics Norway for mixed-mode data collection in household statistics
Why?

• Reduce costs

• Modernize data collection
Qualitative methods used in planning process

• Expert appraisal on existing 2.-7. round questionnaire
  - Identifying problematic questions

• Focus groups on information material and perceived response burden among panel respondents
  – Different age groups
  – Been in panel at least 3 times
  – Three groups

• Cognitive interviews
  – 8 interviews
  – Employed, Non-employed, self-employed
  – First listen to real CATI LFS interview, then follow up cognitively
Particularly difficult questions in the LFS

1. Are you looking for [searching for] another job?
   • Cognitively difficult
   • Socially difficult
2. Calculation of hours worked during reference week, and hours not worked
3. Do you have a permanent or temporary position?
4. How many are employed in the [business] where you are working?
5. Is it part of your duties to manage other people’s work?

• Do we need a revision of old questionnaire as well?
Findings relevant for information flow in CATI interview vs. web questionnaire

- Build up and maintain social contract between respondent and Statistics Norway
- Endless need for information about the survey – web must offer various levels, depths, …
- Respondents enjoy to receive assistance in response process
- Avoid and clear up misunderstandings
- Respondents often do "think-alouds" before they decide on response category: interviewer "reads" this, verifies understanding and sometimes re-directs respondents
- Assistance in calculations

How can we "copy" these processes in a web mode?
Findings relevant for a LFS web questionnaire

- Response burden in LFS is generally low, but more complicated for non-employed and self-employed.
- High survey tolerance for LFS, but non-employed do not really see the need.
- Respondent has a communicative need: wants to explain, make sure everything is correct.
- To give a response is a serious matter (and interviewer takes the burden off...).
- Non-employed: problems with very general questions + repeated questions when their situation is stable.
Telephone interviews and self-completion: different cognitive processes

• Telephone: respondents are "driven forward", satisficing process
• Interviewers are supportive, but sometimes do serious mistakes
• Instructions on the web: explanations needed on multiple levels
• Calculations: respondents need assistance. How do we design good calculation tools?
• Memorizing: calendar needed. How do we design smart ways of assisting memory, giving clues?
LFS questionnaire – not developed for a flexible, deregulated labour market?

• Contract labour, part-time work, home-based work, flexible work hours,…

• Self-employed have problems understanding key concepts
  – Agreed working hours, working overtime, searching for another job, part-time is full-time, away from work, holidays
  – Different understanding of division between work and private life

• Do we want to measure labour or economic activity?
Ideas for improvement of data collection process

• Serve the respondent with information throughout the panel period
  – When respondents are more experienced, they tend to be more interested, higher motivation

• New areas of focus in interviewer training
  – Discuss how interviewer behaviour affects response process
  – Discuss consequences of high tempo interviewing

• Revised information material
  – Information letter, reminders, brochures: highlight positive aspects, social contract, importance for economy, personal rewards
Possible advantages with web mode

• Goodbye high tempo interviewing: respondents get more time to think
  [For all non-employed]: Have you previously had any income-generating job, except from holiday jobs? Pensioneered respondent with long career in hotels and travel business: ”No”]

• Goodbye interviewer effects (in the web cases)

• Welcome adaptation
  – If we can make questionnaires that ”talk”

• Calculations can be better, more reliable
  – If we design a user friendly questionnaire

• But can we be a comfort towards the feeling expressed in this statement…:
Focus group participant (September, 2010):

”I want to be an interview person instead of an interview object. In a telephone interview, I am a person. Web questionnaires are impersonal and non-serious. Everything is on the web these days…”
We can not stop now! Continued cognitive testing recommended

• LFS very large survey - many particularities – concentration needed
• Testing and development of main labour types, one at a time
• Probable strategy in StatNorway: develop web solution for 2.-7. panel round only, and let respondents with changes in labour status go to CATI
• Module development of web questionnaire?

• How to solve this in practice? QUEST experiences?
• And how do we meet the problems with mode effects? THAT is another paper....