A proposal of best practices for conducting cognitive interviewing in cross-cultural/national surveys

José L. Padilla (University of Granada, Spain, jpadilla@ugr.es)
Outline contents

- Why do we need “guidelines” or “best practices”?

- Guidelines available
  - What about the CSDI guidelines?

- Lessons learned from the Comparative Cognitive Workgroup project

- A proposal of guidelines to perform cognitive interviewing in cross cultural / national surveys
  - How to implement the project?
Aims

• To convince “Quest Group” to adopt the project of delivering “Guidelines” to perform cognitive interviewing in cross-cultural/national survey projects.

• To show how we could conduct this project.

• To raise issues and comments about the opportunity, the appropriateness of a “Quest Group” Guidelines.
Some initial “questions”... and answers

• Who had the idea?
  ✓ Kristen Miller, Rory Fitzgerald, Stephanie Wilson,…

• When did they start thinking about the “Guidelines” project?
  ✓ While performing the Comparative Cognitive Workgroup Project

• Guidelines? Best practices? Standards?
  ✓ Definitely, ... Guidelines seen as “General Principles”!!

• Is it a valuable project?
Why do we need “guidelines”? 

There is a constant growing in the number of papers about cognitive pre-test methods.

Why do we need “guidelines”? (2)

- There is a huge dispersion and big “role” of public institution not devoted mainly to research.

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Why do we need “guidelines”? (& 3)

• There will be an increasing demand of pretesting, mostly cognitive interviewing studies or projects.

• Technical literature is scant and scattered through journals, conference, technical reports, etc.

• There are lots of key aspects under debate: aims, kinds of probing, strategy of data analysis, etc.

• Serious concerns about that future practices could be far from ideal.
Example of the “state-of-art”

EDSIM translation and testing methodology reporting (1st part) (On social integration and disability)

1. What kind of pre-test was it?
   Multiple answers are allowed
   □ simple testing
   □ cognitive testing
   □ behaviour coding
   □ special probing
   □ expert panel
   □ other, please specify _
Guidelines available

• Among the most cited professional guidelines:

  ✓ The Comparative Survey Design and Implementation (CSDI) guidelines http://ccsg.isr.umich.edu
Guidelines available: The CSDI guidelines

- Purpose: to develop and promote internationally recognized guidelines that highlight best practice for the conduct of comparative survey research across cultures and countries.

- The CSDI guidelines intend to cover all aspects of the survey lifecycle in 15 chapters.

- Each guideline consist of “goal”, “rationale” and “procedural steps” and “lessons learned”.
What about CI in the CSDI guidelines?

PRETESTING GUIDELINES

1. Identify aims and choose the suitable pre-test design.

2. Combine pretesting techniques for a comprehensive design.

3. Train and hire staff members.

4. Conduct the pre-test in the same mode as the survey.
What about CI in the CSDI guidelines?

PRETESTING GUIDELINES

5. Conduct the pre-test with the same target population.

6. Pre-test the instrument in each country and in each language.

7. Evaluate the results of pre-test.

8. Fully document the pre-testing protocol and findings.
Weaknesses in the CSDI guidelines

• Useful as a general framework but without specific recommendations for conducting pre-testing, especially, using CI.

• No linked to previous phases in cross cultural/national survey: Adaptation and Translation phases.

• No grouped in meaningful categories as “Goals”, “Planning / Designing”, “Analysis” or “Documentation”.
Lessons learned from CCWG Project

Some “tips” about the project

• It was a coordinated, multinational effort to develop an evidence-based methodology for testing survey questions lead by Kristen and Rory.

• To learn about the methodological aspects that can undermine the comparability of cross-national cognitive testing projects.

• The coalition consisted of Budapest Initiative, the European Social Survey, and representatives from 7 different countries (6 languages)
Lessons learned from CCWG Project

Some “tips” about the project (& 2)

• The protocol consisted of two sections: a BI component (health topics), and an ESS component (social attitudes).
• It was semi-structured, consisting of the test questions (12 for ESS and 23 for BI), followed by a few general pre-scripted probe questions.
• 135 interviewed were conducted.
• A conjoint analysis was carried out by using bullet points, charting, ... a very coordinated and systematic approach.
Lessons learned from CCWG Project

• **Lesson 1**: Conceptual issues. All participant should have a deep and shared understanding of key concepts like “conceptual equivalence” and “functional equivalence”.
  
  • Keep in mind the scheme: Indicators > (latent) Constructs > (theoretical) Concepts (Harkness, Moler and Van de Vijver (2003)).

• **Lesson 2**: Involvement in “translation phase”. A close connection between translation and pre-testing is needed.
  
  • “Pre-tester” should be present during the translation phase (“Adjudication phase in a committee translation design”).
Lessons learned from CCWG Project (2)

• **Lesson 3**: Methodological issues. Pay attention to aspect can undermine comparability: different sample sizes and composition, heterogeneous training interviewers, ... , and, specially, A COMMON PROTOCOL!!

• **Lesson 4**: Analysis. To get a good answer to “What is a cognitive interviewing finding?”, develop a conjoint analysis using a typology of sources of errors (e.g., Fitzgerald et al 2009), common charting, a multi-layer approach (Miller for BI questions), different waves, etc.
How to implement the project?

- After writing a “draft”, gathering comments and suggestions from experts by means of a Delphi method.

- The Delphi may be considered as a method for structuring a group communication process.

- It is an iterative process in which “experts” taking part have to give their opinion anonymously about a subject more than once.

- Participants receive controlled feedback between rounds by means of a group statistical response.
How to implement the project? (& 2)

A QUEST leading group → A group of writers → Guidelines document

First Round → Second Round

Delphi method

A final Guidelines
Conclusions

- It is a viable and valuable project.
- It could make QUEST much more visible.
- It is not a time-consuming project (not costly, IT UGR resources, etc.).
- So, let’s go down to writing “Guidelines” (committees, dates, etc.)
Thank you for your attention

jpadilla@ugr.es