

# Training Cognitive Testing Interviewers in Different Settings and Languages

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# Outline

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- ❑ Asking comparable questions
- ❑ How cognitive testing can help
- ❑ Cognitive testing of translations
- ❑ What to do in places with no experience of cognitive testing
- ❑ Recruiting and training cognitive interviewers
- ❑ Training contents
- ❑ Major obstacles
- ❑ Minimum standards
- ❑ Some examples from around the world
- ❑ Lessons learned

# Instrument Design and Cognitive Testing

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- Comparative cross-national surveys often require asking questions of samples that speak different languages
- Research within one country can also include speakers of different languages (and cultures)
- For multilingual/multicultural studies, instrument design typically occurs in English with limited consideration of cultural realities in target populations
- Translation and cognitive testing of the instrument are the steps that follow instrument design in English

# Asking Comparable Questions

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- ❑ Comparability cannot just be assumed
- ❑ Needs to be actively pursued through careful research design and assessed by gathering evidence
- ❑ Cognitive testing of translations is one way to assess:
  - ❑ how questions will work in the target language(s),
  - ❑ what types of errors are present in each language version, and
  - ❑ whether questions perform comparably across language versions.

# How Cognitive Testing Can Help

Cognitive testing will also:

- provide information about the causes of problems in question performance that can guide recommendations and point to potential remedies.
- For this reason, **failing to conduct cognitive testing in multilingual settings means that the fielded question may not perform in the new language version(s) as intended.**

# Best Practice in Comparative Research

- ❑ Cognitive testing in English
- ❑ Translation via Best Practice Methods (TRAPD Model implemented in Team/Committee Translation) in country
- ❑ Cognitive testing in target language
- ❑ Compare findings across languages
- ❑ Modify original survey instrument to smooth out differences
- ❑ Update translations

# Cognitive Testing of Translations: what do we test for?

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- ❑ **Comprehension**: are questions understood as intended?
- ❑ **Equivalence**: do questions work as intended?
- ❑ Do low education respondents **understand the translation**?
- ❑ Are there **cultural issues** in interpreting the questions or giving responses?
- ❑ Are there **alternative translations** that might work better?
- ❑ Does the **style seem right** in the interaction of the interview?

# Challenging Situations

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- No trained local researchers available
- Language barriers
- Translation
- Realities of budget and timeline

# Importance of Staff Selection

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- ❑ In the absence of experienced qualitative interviewers need to remember...
  - ❑ Cognitive interviewing is more than following an interview guide
  - ❑ Skills needed are both linguistic and qualitative research skills

# Difference in Skill Set

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## SURVEY INTERVIEWERS

- Gaining cooperation
- Reading as worded
- Minimal probing to help elicit codeable answers

## QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWERS

- No persuasion skills needed
- Good listening skills
- Analytic skills to know when need to probe further

# Contents of Training

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- ❑ What is cognitive testing? Minimal theoretical background
- ❑ Purpose of cognitive testing of instrument
- ❑ Research Ethics (consent, privacy, data security)
- ❑ Protocol review
- ❑ Practice/feedback, practice/feedback, practice/feedback, more practice/more feedback

# When Reality Hits

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- ❑ Not enough time/budget for best practice in most projects
- ❑ Translations often on the fly or done without methodological safeguards
- ❑ Cognitive testing in language by minimally trained interviewers
- ❑ Findings reviewed very quickly and superficially
- ❑ Changes must be done too fast
- ❑ Difficult QC in field and without language command

# Some Real Life Examples

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- ❑ Costa Rica: quantitative researcher, trained in advance, native speaker, together with local partner
- ❑ Ecuador: Experienced qualitative researcher, native speaker
- ❑ India / Malawi / Rwanda: experienced qualitative researcher trained, observed, and debriefed local partner
- ❑ Chile: experienced qualitative researcher trained and observed quantitative researchers
- ❑ Liberia: Experienced qualitative interviewers trained via remote webinar. Researcher in person led practice and debriefs
- ❑ Laos: Remote skype training of quant interviewers

# Cultural Sensitivity Checklist for Instruments

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- Is anything in the questions or the style of asking that might be poorly received or even offensive.
- Do any questions sound strange for the study population context.
- Would any questions be difficult for the study population to answer. Why.
- Are any questions NOT likely to elicit a full answer. If so, why.
- Are there questions that may not yield usable information or collect the intended information
- Are any questions uncomfortable for interviewers to ask.
- Is the introduction/consent/explanation of purpose of the interview presented in the best order for the local discourse style.

# Lessons Learned

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- ❑ Ideal procedures are often not possible
- ❑ You must decide what are your minimum standards must of quality in cognitive testing and adhere to them
- ❑ Training often must be done remotely
- ❑ Language barriers make this difficult
- ❑ Use a native/local researcher as co-researcher
- ❑ Observe and debrief/Practice/Observe and debrief

# Thank you for your attention!

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## Questions?

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