

ESRA Conference 2019
Recent Developments in Question Testing
Zagreb, 19 Jul 2019



COGNITIVE OR QUALITATIVE?

QUALITATIVE PRETEST INTERVIEWS IN QUESTIONNAIRE DEVELOPMENT

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This project has received
funding from the European
Union's Horizon 2020
research and innovation
programme under grant
agreement No 676536



Federal Ministry
of Education
and Research



National Institute
on Aging

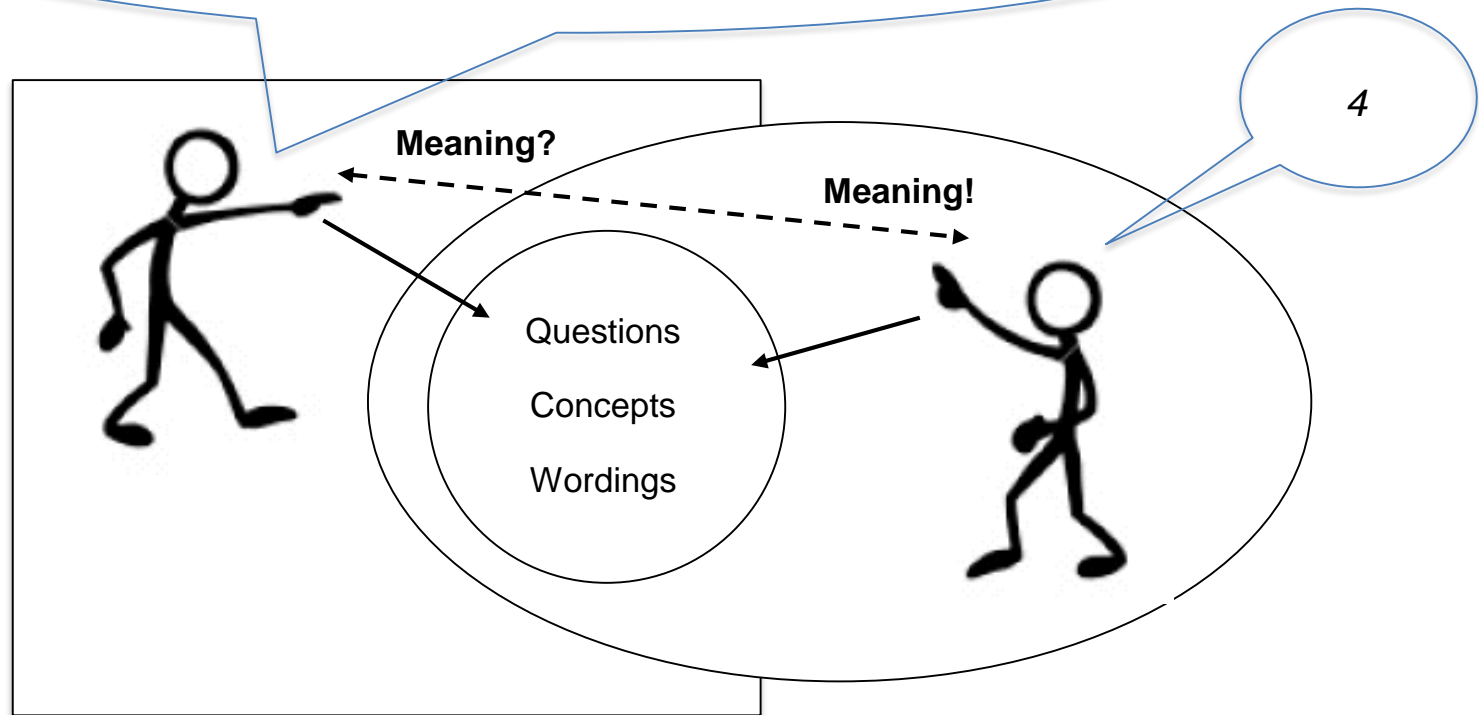
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Intersubjective Understanding

Survey question:

“On a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 means completely dissatisfied and 10 means completely satisfied, how satisfied are you with your life?”



Adapted from Reiter (2011); Prüfer/Rexroth (2005), S. 6;
SHARE Generic Questionnaire Wave 7

- **Cognitive Aspects of Survey Methodology**
 - Response process model: comprehension, retrieval, judgement, response (Tourangeau 1984)
- **Cognitive Interviews** (Willis 2005, 2015)
 - thinking-aloud and probing as tools to understand response process
- **Thinking-aloud**
 - rooted in psychological research on short-term memory and information processing (cf. Ericsson/Simon 1980)
- **Probing**
 - based on „intensive interviewing“ in US public opinion research of the 1940s (cf. Lazarsfeld 1944)
- **„Qualitative turn“**
 - Acknowledgement of additional relevant theories and „cognitive interview“ more of a „convenient label“ (Willis 2015)

- Qualitative interviewing approaches propose communication strategies for *interactive clarification of understanding*
- Could provide *consistent methodological framework* integrating probing and thinking-aloud
- Specific methodology must be *adapted to* the narrower focus of *pretest interviews* when compared to qualitative research

Problem-Centered Interviews

- Research encounter between researcher and participant to clarify meaning via *discourse and dialogue*
- Reflection and disclosure of *common knowledge and research knowledge* to facilitate intersubjective understanding
- Participants are regarded as temporary „*co-experts*“

General investigation

- Generate material
- „Active listening“

Specific investigation

- Generate understanding
- „Active understanding“

Techniques

- Non-verbal and affirmative
- Little intervention
- Request for more detail
- Request for examples
- Thematic comparisons
- Ad-hoc questions

Techniques

- Discussion
- Paraphrasing
- Comprehension questions
- Confrontation

cf. Witzel/Reiter (2012)

- More *provocative* confrontation techniques
- Evoke *opinions and justifications*

Techniques

- Internal Confrontation
- External Confrontation
- Polarization

cf. Ulrich (2019)

- Consider participant as „co-expert“ rather than „respondent“
- Aim at intersubjective understanding aligning *common knowledge and research knowledge*
- Try to clarify meaning *within the interview*

Example

- *Qualitative pretest interviews* conducted as part of the evaluation study „Berufswahl-SIEGEL“
- *Award* offered by Verein SCHULEWIRTSCHAFT e.V. for schools implementing occupation and education counseling
- *Online questionnaire*
- *Topics:* How do participating schools perceive SIEGEL, its effect in general and its impact on school development?
- *Aim:* Development of strategies and measures to improve occupation and education counseling in schools

Conducted at FernUni Hagen (Julia Schütz, Christina Buschle and Felicitas Kempf)
https://www.fernuni-hagen.de/KSW/portale/ifbm/emp_bildungsforschung/forschung/

Interview Sequence

- QPI intention:
Clarification of understanding and details on category selection
- Planned communication strategies:
Combination of Problem Centered Interview and „Category Selection Probing“ (Cognitive Interviewing)
- Survey question:
“Due to SIEGEL my willingness to participate in training in the field of occupation and educational counseling has increased.”
- Categories:
„Fully applicable“ = 1 to „Does not apply at all“ = 5
- Starting sequence defining situation, roles and directions
- Interview conducted via phone

Interview Sequence



Would you feel addressed if I included a response category that states, for example, that it has nothing to do with SIEGEL?

„Please assess the following statements.” All right.

„Due to SIEGEL my willingness to participate in training in the field of occupation and educational counseling has increased.” Uhm, is comprehensible, is answerable.

I make it “no answer”, because for me, SIEGEL generally, has a positive effect and, uhm, it is very nice. But my willingness to participate in training in this area was already high anyway. [OK.] So, for me that would be a thing of “no answer”.

Yes or, for example, I just thought, if you, uhm, somehow make „no answer“, that a field would pop up “Why not? Was the willingness already high anyway, or are there too few trainings in this area in the first place?” That you would maybe include that option in addition.

Um. Exactly.

Be able to give reasons

Yes, OK.

Recent and next Steps



- Published outline of idea in Bethmann/Buschle/Reiter (2019)
- Working on journal manuscript including first examples
- Course on QPIs in questionnaire development at LMU Munich
- Project sketch for SHARE QP Lab

Pass by at our booth



References



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