

How to Interview

Discussion Section 4

Interviews: advantages

- Quick and easy to conduct
- Get quick feedback on a range of ideas
- Can get person's initial reaction to an idea
- Can get detailed information from a person

Interviews: disadvantages

- Often takes place away from natural setting
- The wording of questions or interviewer "body language" can bias answers
- Recall problems
- High probability of
 - false positives: user thought something would be an issue but it wasn't
 - missed problems: user didn't catch an issuebecause users may not have a clear idea of how technology will be used
- Can miss details if question creator does not know what issues to draw out

Interviews: minimize disadvantages

- Type of interview
 - Contextual Inquiry occurs in natural setting
- Question selection and wording
 - Biasing answers: no leading questions; ask truly open-ended questions
 - Recall, false positives & missed problems: ask user to walk through *concrete examples*
 - Missed details: pilot interview & revise questions
- Participant selection
 - False positives & missed problems: talk to several people

Interviewing Steps

- Project goal statement
- Interview guide: questions, ordering
- Recruiting participants
- Conducting the interview
- Analysis

Project Goal Statement

- What is the goal of the project?
 - “Build an easy-to-use email interface for elderly people with no computer experience.”
 - What do you want to learn from users that will help you accomplish this?
 - Current communication:
 - who, how, frequency (the baseline tasks to support)
 - limitations (the tasks your system can improve)
 - What *problems* keeps them from using technology now?
 - What would enable them to overcome these *problems*?
- Use these to create your interview guide

Interview Guide

- Question wording and ordering
- After pilot interview, think about project goal & revise by asking how well:
 - your questions,
 - how you asked them, and
 - how the respondent answeredhelped you learn what you need to accomplish the goal?
- What could you change to improve your results?

Question Wording: 7 rules

- Ask truly open-ended questions
- Avoid dichotomous questions
- Ask singular questions
- Stay neutral
- Understand respondent's language
- “Why” questions – take care
- Presupposition questions = good

Ask truly open-ended questions

- Do not presuppose anything about the interviewee's response, opinion, or feelings
- Bad = "How **satisfied** are you with the frequency of your current contact with your grandchildren?"
- Good = "How **do feel about** the frequency of your current contact with your grandchildren?"

Avoid dichotomous questions

- Dichotomous: a grammatical structure that suggests a yes or no answer
- Bad = "Are you satisfied with writing letters?"
- Good = "How do you feel about writing letters?"
 - Probe: "Why do you feel [insert response]."

Ask singular questions

- No more than one idea should be contained in a single question
- Bad = "How well do you know and like the your email program?"
- Good =
 1. "How well do you know your email program?"
 2. "How do you feel about your email program?"

Stay neutral

- Respondent must be able to tell you anything w/o getting your favor or disfavor
 - Bad = "I'm so glad you answered that way – it makes me feel really good."
- Ways to accomplish neutrality:
 - Illustrative examples questions: say you've heard it all – good & bad – by listing example answers from others showing you aren't interested in the sensational, just respondent's actual experience
 - Illustrative extremes questions: give examples only of extremes
 - No leading questions!
 - Bad = "We've been hearing a lot of really positive comments about the program. So what is your assessment?"
 - How does this question lead?

Understand respondent's language

- Find out the special terms commonly used by people in their setting or among their colleagues to talk about a setting, activities, or other aspects of life
- Use this language, not other terms

“Why” questions – take care

- “Why” questions are problematic because they...
 - Presuppose things happen for a reason & the respondent knows the reason
 - Require respondents to make analytical & deductive inferences – hard

“Why” questions – how to use

- “Why” can give many types of responses (“*Why do you want to learn email?*”):
 - programmatic (“*Because it takes place at a convenient time.*”)
 - personality (“*Because I’m a joiner.*”)
 - information (“*Because a friend told me about it.*”)
 - social influence (“*Because my priest thought it would be good for me.*”)
 - economic (“*Because it was inexpensive.*”)
 - outcomes (“*Because I wanted to learn about the things they’re teaching in the program.*”)
 - personal motivation (“*Because God directed me to join.*”)
 - philosophical (“*Because it was there.*”)
- Decide before the interview which of these types is valuable to your goals.
- Word question to isolate that type
 - Social influence example: “*What other people, if any, motivate you to want to learn email?*”

Presupposition questions = good

- Assumes respondent has something to say, increasing likelihood that respondent will say something
- Good = “What is the most important experience you had in the program?”
 - Assumes person has had an important experience
- Bad = “Have you had any experiences in the program that you would call important?”
 - Dichotomous (yes/no) question



- Project goal statement
- Interview guide: questions, **ordering**
- Recruiting participants
- Conducting the interview
- Analysis

Question Ordering

- Begin with demographic info
 - Age, education, occupation, or other info relevant to your project
- Some info may logically go first
 - E.g., before asking elderly how they'd like to change their current means of communication, ask what current comm. methods are
- Ask most important questions first
 - Pick the questions that will give you the most important info and be sure to ask them
- Narrow down question guide:
 - You may only have time for a few key questions

Recruiting Participants

- Varies based on who users are
- Usually, get an even mix of male & female
- Target a demographic to some degree
 - If all participants are drastically different, your results will be drastically different for each: what will you build?
 - Elderly email system: all participants 60+ years, educated, minimal computer literacy, have close family, write letters



- Project goal statement
- Interview guide: questions, ordering
- Recruiting participants
- **Conducting the interview**
- Analysis

Conducting the Interview

- Try to minimize generalization
 - Keep respondent talking about a concrete situation
 - If you hear words like, “*we would always...*” “*I tend to...*,” ask for an example
- Maintain control of the interview
 - Know your goals and what you want to learn
 - Assess the quality of respondent’s comments
 - Direct the conversation appropriately

Conducting the Interview

- Rapport: show respect for respondents so what they say is important because of who is saying it; you will not judge them for the content
- Give reinforcement or feedback to respondents to let them know the interview is being fulfilled

Conducting the Interview

- Transitions between questions & question prefaces help prevent confusion
- Probe questions are used to get more in-depth information about a topic
 - who, what, where, when questions
 - asking for more elaboration.
- Marker: a respondent’s passing reference to an important event or feeling
 - You may not see why it’s important, but respondent thought it important enough to mention
 - Pay attention to “markers” and probe for more info

Conducting the Interview

- Minimize the amount you talk
 - Especially don’t let your opinions affect what the respondent will say
- Avoid forming a hypothesis & pushing respondent to give you information about it
 - Think about your hypothesis more openly



Conducting the Interview

- Final question: allow respondent to give you information you might not have thought to ask
 - “Anything you care to add?”
 - “What should I have asked you that I didn’t think to ask?”



References

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