Interviewing for Usability

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Uses of Interviews in Usability

- **EARLY: User and task analysis**
  - ✤ About current activity
  - ✤ Ask about preferences, perceived needs
  - ✤ Evaluation of available tools, services⋯
  - ✤ Including: contextual interviews
    - ✤ Watch them do their work, activity and ask about it

- **MIDDLE: Usability assessment at various stages of development** *(formative evaluation)*
  - ✤ Ask them about usability issues
  - ✤ Interview them before and after they use a prototype
  - ✤ Ask them about a product that they are using

- **END: app is up and running** *(summative evaluation)*

Interviewing: Process Overview

✤ Goals

✤ [Selection of methods]

✤ Selection of respondents

    ✤ Recruitment – how you find them

✤ Content and flow

✤ Question formulation

✤ The interview!

    ✤ Logistics

✤ Analyzing the data

Goals

✤ What do you need to know?

✤ From whom?

   ✤ *Must be qualified to answer*

✤ How do you ask?

   ✤ Conceptualization & operationalization

   ✤ Validity and reliability

      ✤ Recollection and self-reporting

      ✤ Measurement & operationalization

RANDOM ORDER) (ASKED OF A RANDOM SUBSAMPLE OF VOTERS)

Which is more important to you in choosing a candidate for president – their personal qualities such as experience and leadership ability, or the positions they take on specific issues? (ASKED OF A RANDOM SUBSAMPLE OF VOTERS)

How do you feel about Barack Obama choosing Joe Biden as his vice presidential running mate. Does Obama's choice of Biden make you more inclined or less inclined to vote for the Democratic Party ticket, or does it have no effect on how you will vote?

How do you feel about John McCain choosing Sarah Palin as his vice presidential running mate. Does McCain's choice of Palin make you more inclined or less inclined to vote for the Republican Party ticket, or does it have no effect on how you will vote?

Which Vice Presidential candidate, Joe Biden or Sarah Palin, do you think would make a better President?

Types of interviews

✤ Unstructured, open-ended

  ✤ Useful when you're not sure what you want or when what you need is complex

  ✤ May be very time-consuming; indirect

  ✤ May have to go back later

  ✤ Still need a list of topics you want to be sure to cover

✤ Semi-structured – don't be obsessive about structure if it interferes with the interview

  ✤ Ordered list of topics, suggested wording, specific formulation of at least some questions

  ✤ Systematic, inclusive

✤ Structured

  ✤ Systematic, comparable results

  ✤ Specific wording of questions

Structured or semi-structured?

✤ Structured

✤ *Specific* wording and ordering of questions

✤ Useful for quantitative data

✤ Example: public opinion polls

✤ Semi-structured

✤ General list of topics and questions

✤ Wording specified as needed to ensure validity and reliability

✤ Order may vary in response to subject

✤ Example: most usability interviews

Structured: Field Poll on Election

✤ If the presidential election were being held today, for whom would you vote -- the Republican Party ticket of John McCain and Sarah Palin, the Democratic Party ticket of Barack Obama and Joe Biden, or a candidate from another party?

✤ Would you describe yourself as very enthusiastic, somewhat enthusiastic or not enthusiastic about the candidacy of (Barack Obama) (John McCain)?

✤ IF OTHER CANDIDATE: Which of four other presidential candidates on the California ballot would you vote for – Bob Barr, Libertarian party; Ralph Nader, Peace and Freedom Party; Alan Keyes, American Independent Party; or Cynthia McKinney, Green Party?

✤ Which is more important to you in choosing a candidate for president – their personal qualities such as experience and leadership ability, or the positions they take on specific issues?

✤ Which Vice Presidential candidate, Joe Biden or Sarah Palin, do you think would make a better President?

Preparing for the Interview

Locating, identifying respondents

- *Ask people for suggestions*
  - **"Snowballing"**
  - **"Follow the actors" – they will lead you to others**
    - ✤ But probably to people like themselves
- ***Pre-qualify via phone or email***

✤ Look at org charts and the like

✤ Know that some interviews will be throwaways

✤ Be open to the unexpected

✤ Look for different views

✤ Be cautious:

  ✤ Managers vs. front-line employees

  ✤ Those whom *they* think you need to talk with

  ✤ People with axes to grind

Logistics

- ***You are asking them to do you a favor and give you their valuable time***

✤ Contact them ahead of time

✤ Purpose of study, why them, what you want to know

✤ Scheduling – be flexible; be respectful of their time; be clear how long you need

✤ Convenient *for them*

✤ NOT too many in one day (your attention is limited)

- *Do your homework*

- *End on time* (unless they say OK to do otherwise)

✤ Thank them afterward

Logistics, more

- BRING:
  - Consent & release form(s)
    - Signed copies for you, plus copies for them to keep
- START WITH:
  - Explanation of research
  - Explanation of confidentiality
- YOU:
  - 2 interviewers sometimes
  - Questioner; note-taker
  - Taping (video, audio) – and still photos (3rd person)
    - What will be done with the tape
    - *Offer to turn it off*
  - *__Make sure everything works, have back-ups__*
  - Take judicious – i.e., few -- notes during interview, if you're the interviewer
    - Key issues, themes
    - Qns to ask later
- Detailed notes of your own ASAP

Protect your data!

✤ Label tapes/files well!

✤ Keep *detailed records* of who was interviewed, when, where, by whom, their contact info, where your files are…

    ✤ I use spreadsheet

✤ Keep track of your transcriptions and notes

• **Be obsessive about data – hard to know what you will need later –** and don't expect to remember later

✤ Meet confidentiality requirements

Where to Interview

✤ Your place

    ✤ Neutral, non-invasive

    ✤ Intimidating?

    ✤ Have the tech you need, set up how you want

✤ Their place

    ✤ See their setting, materials, etc.

    ✤ Intrusive? Convenient for them? Interruptions? Confidentiality?

More than one person at a time?

- YES:
  - Couple re family photos
  - Friends re their exchange of photos
  - *Where the synergy between them will be useful*
- NO:
  - Boss and subordinate(s)
  - *Where they are likely to influence one another in ways that will interfere with your study*
- Sometimes you can't avoid it
  - Get them to talk with one another, not you
  - OR end the formal interview, get rid of the unwanted person, then continue informally

The Interview

✤ Establish interview partnership

   ✤ "participant" not "subject"

   ✤ Interviewer as "respectful student"

   ✤ A conversation, not an interrogation

      ✤ You are human, too – establish rapport without biasing their responses

✤ Repeat goals of project and why them

   ✤ "Negative" responses are sought, too!

✤ Confirm confidentiality

Gaining Trust

✣ Be honest

✣ Be interested

• *Judicious* self-disclosure

✣ Be sympathetic – but not artificially so

    ✣ And not in a way that makes you a partisan in disputes

✣ Depersonalize conflicts, problems

✣ LISTEN; ask questions for clarification, but also know when to keep silent

✣ Be willing to show your ignorance when necessary

• *How you talk about others to them is how they assume you will talk about them to others*

Content: *they must be qualified to answer*

✤ Respondents' characteristics – demographics, experience, training…(survey/form?)

✤ Respondents' opinions, preferences, understandings, reasoning, opinions, feelings…

> ✤ *In your opinion, do you think Sarah Palen is qualified to be Vice President?*

✤ History

✤ Recollection of behavior

> ✤ Strengths, problems with self-reports

> ✤ "Critical incident technique"

✤ Reactions ("*Try this and tell me …*")

✤ Hypotheticals (*"If you had to vote for Palen or Biden – not for McCain or Obama…"*)

Interview structure

✤ Easy questions first: History, background

✤ Specific to general OR

✤ General to specific

• *But* let them lead the transitions if possible
– let them follow their train of thought

    ✤ But not so that you lose needed info

✤ Focus on areas where they have most to contribute

✤ End with something easy and congenial

• *Ask them – anything else?*

Ex: photos (general to specific, and chronological)

✤ Background

 ✤ Early photo practices: cameras, content, disposition of photos, archiving

✤ Current

 ✤ Technology – cameras, computers, websites

 ✤ Content – kinds/subjects of photos [art vs social?]

 ✤ Uses of photos – self and other; communication, memory, self-expression, self-representation; other?

 ✤ Archiving

 ✤ Photo sharing – how? Photo sharing sites?

✤ Flickr

 ✤ Why joined, when*

 ✤ Other sharing sites? How shared photos before/otherwise?

 ✤ Which photos get uploaded and why [all? Selected? Which, why?]

 ✤ Tagging – which, why, for whom

 ✤ Sharing - which, why, with whom

Ex: Flickr, specific to general

✤   Flickr

✤   Other social networking sites with images: Facebook, MySpace

✤   Other social networking/online presence

  ✤   Blogging, personal website⋯

✤   Other media for communication/socializing

  ✤   Email, texting, phone

✤   Socializing and communication more generally

  ✤   F2f, group events, visits to distant friends⋯

Ex: specific to general

✤   Cameraphone

    ✤   How long, what kinds of images, what they do with them

✤   Photography generally

    ✤   Now: What cameras, what kinds of images, what they do with them

    ✤   Editing software, e.g. photoshop?

    ✤   History?

✤   Images/visual arts

    ✤   Media, training, experience…

Developing questions

✤ Your question/goal - the problem are you investigating

✤ Breadth, density of info needed

✤ What people can, will tell you

✤ Understanding from previous work, study, lit, experience

✤ Pilot research

  ✤ Understanding develops throughout the study

  ✤ Don't really know what's going to happen in interviews until you get started

✤ What will give substance to report

  ✤ Story line, narrative, chronology

  ✤ Explanations, causality

  – **Quotes, anecdotes are useful illustrations**

✤ Be (somewhat) willing to go where interviewee wants to go

Asking good questions

- Open-ended, neutral
- Non-defensive, non-offensive
- Some possibilities for difficult questions:
  - Devil's advocate
    - People who don't like X say that…
  - Paint a scenario
    - If you were going to x, what would you do…
  - Point to others (but don't break confidentiality)
    - Some people have described this as…while others say…How would you describe this?
  - Point to events
    - At the last meeting, there was a debate about…
    - I noticed that you…

Asking Good Questions

✤ Match respondents' language

✤ Match respondents' behavior, models of their work, their world

  ✤ *"How do you engage in conversational repair?"*

✤ Singular questions – i.e., NOT double-barreled

  ✤ *Do you order online? What do you order?*

✤ Clarity

✤ Watch the assumptions

  ✤ *Who are you going to vote for in Nov?* (non-citizen?)

Helping them answer
(mostly from Weiss p. 75)

✤ *Wait time* (i.e., silence!): Let them think before answering, finish a thought before you jump in

✤ Probes: asking them to:

  ✤ Clarify

  ✤ Extend (what next)

  ✤ Fill in detail

  ✤ Identify the actors

  ✤ Explore inner events: cognitive and emotional

  ✤ Make indications explicit ("you're laughing about that"…)

✤ Quoting, paraphrasing, reflective listening

  ✤ "It sounds like you were upset about that"

  ✤ "Let me be sure I understand; you are saying that.."

  ✤ " 'more real' " ? (quoting them)

✤ Giving support and recognition responses

  ✤ "this is really helpful…" (NOT "I agree")

  ✤ "You're not the only person to have told us this."

Questions that incite a lengthy response

- ✤ "walk me through"
- ✤ "help me to understand"
- ✤ "tell me (more) about"
- ✤ "talk about xx…"
- ✤ "what was happening"
- ✤ "What were you thinking" (maybe)
- ✤ "Why?" sometimes

Markers!

- ✤ Respondent corrects your statement

- ✤ They hint at emotions

- ✤ They indicate something else going on

  - ✤ "Of course, that was before I got sick"

  - ✤ "That was before my gender reassignment"

  - ✤ "Of course, I wouldn't want just *anyone* to see that photo."

- ✤ They circle back to a topic

Closing

✤ *Thank them*

✤ Anything else I should have asked? Anything more you think I should know?

✤ How to reach them, how they can reach you

✤ What you're going to do with the results

✤ Time frame

✤ *The going-out-the-door comment*

Audiography, photography, videography

✤ Both still and video images often useful
  - ✤ Your own records
  - ✤ Presentations, reporting

✤ Audio? Can combine with still images, and use quotes

- *Take the time to get good sound & images*

✤ Ask permission – again and again

✤ Ask permission for close-ups of belongings – anything that might be sensitive

  - ✤ Better too often than not often enough

Audio/videotaping

✤ Test everything – need good quality image and sound

✤ Interviewer needs to keep quiet! Limit the "uh-huhs"

   ✤ Use non-verbal rather than verbal encouragement

Taping and transcribing

✤ Audiotaping: almost always!

✤ Videotaping: MAYBE

   ✤ More intrusive

   ✤ More complex logistics

✤ Transcriptions? Several choices:

   ✤ Descriptions, summaries of key points from each interview

   ✤ Paraphrasing, detailed narrative but not verbatim

   ✤ Verbatim transcripts

      ✤ Illustrative quotes – "constipated cameraphones"

      ✤ New, different topics

      ✤ Articulate statements

Notes on interviews:
Some practical advice

✤ Use full terms/phrases, correctly spelled

  ✤ For searching, summarizing x interviews

✤ Clarify summary/transcript as needed

  ✤ For others

  ✤ For yourself, later

✤ Keep DETAILED notes

  ✤ Who was interviewed

  ✤ When, by whom

  ✤ Video, audio – done? Files are where? Filenames?

  ✤ Type of interview (if relevant)

  ✤ Releases?

Summarizing Interview Data

✤ By person
- ✤ Narrative - chronologically
- ✤ By theme
  - ✤ Easier for reader to absorb
  - ✤ Highlights key points
  - ✤ Helps to >> summarization across respondents

✤ Thematically – summarized x respondents
- ✤ Top x themes, problems, suggestions, whatever
- ✤ Often useful in your notes to identity who said what, who fell into which group
  - ✤ "X was identified as a key point by a,b,c, while Y was named by e,f,g, and h."