

Bridging the gap between researchers and respondents

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Background

The financial inclusion space

Stakeholders

Big business

Financial inclusion surveys

Data integrity

When the numbers do not make sense...

- Triangulate
- Do more analysis
- Scrutinise the sample. Maybe the explanation is somewhere in how the sample was structured
- If still not able to figure out what is going on...
... rationalise

What about the questions?

The gap between... researchers and target audience



The first study

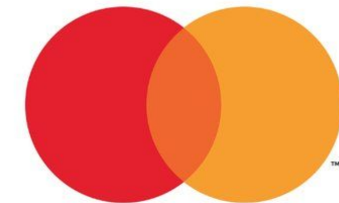
i2i Facility: ToR to test an SMS questionnaire

Use cognitive interviewing to ensure that the survey questionnaire captures what i2i was trying to measure and is easy for ordinary people to understand and respond to

“...techniques to study the manner in which target audiences understand, mentally process and respond to the materials represented with a special emphasis on potential breakdowns in this process” (Willis 2004)

CRC and the Plain Language Institute commissioned to do the study

BILL &
MELINDA
GATES
foundation



mastercard
foundation

Cognitive action research: A methodology to improve data integrity

Cognitive interviewing

Added insights from:

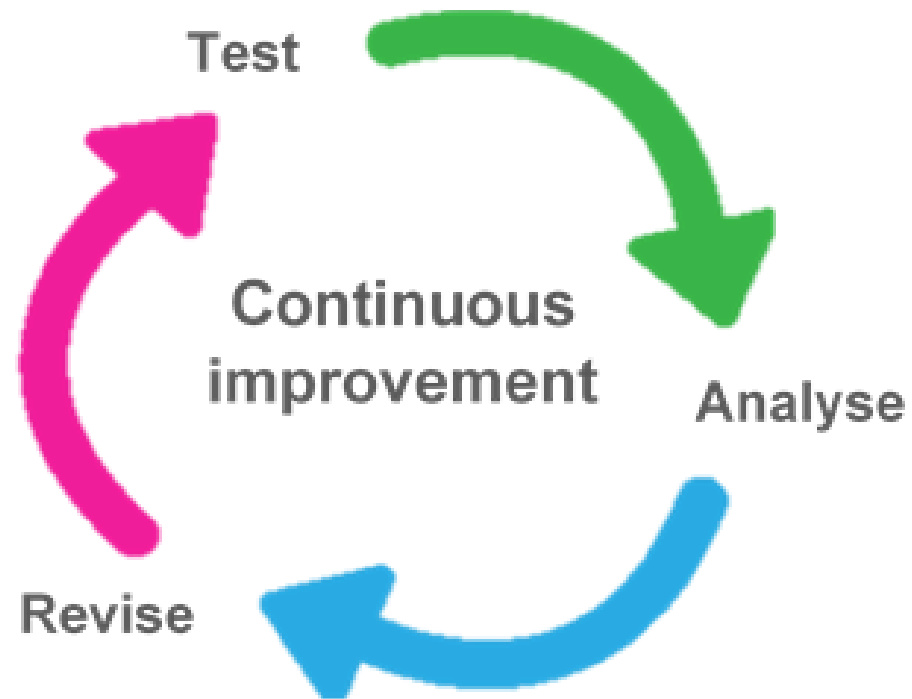
- Qualitative interviewing methods
- Action research
- Plain Language
- English as a foreign language (EFL) reading-processing strategies

The survey questionnaire

Pretty straightforward. How difficult can it be?

- *How many people are living in this household?*
- *How many children between the ages of 6 and 12 are there in your household?*
- *In your whole life, for how long have you had a mobile phone?*
- *Does any member of your household work for a private company?*
- *Have you ever used a bank or a post office bank?*

Action research: five rounds of testing



Sampling

i2i found in other SMS surveys that most EFL speakers choose to complete such surveys in English.

For this reason, the questionnaire was tested in English only.

- EFL speakers from several African countries
- Living in South Africa
- Basic English reading and conversation skills

Flow of the interview

Informal chat

Completed the SMS questionnaire without assistance

Before the cognitive interview...

- Emphasised the importance of respondent's role and input (participatory action research)

During probing, each survey question was discussed separately.

We will give you a handout at the end to illustrate how different realities lead to inappropriate answering.



Analysis

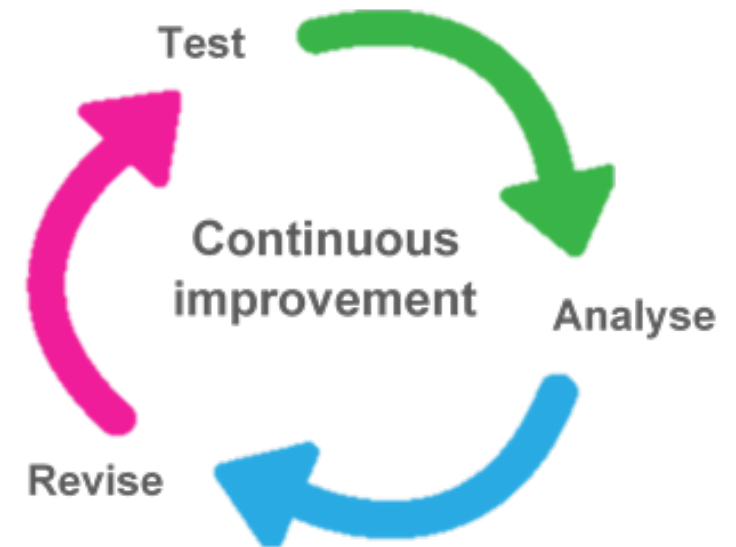
Debrief session with interviewers after each round

Reasoning behind answers was unpacked in detail

Structural, logic, semantic and respondent task issues identified and analysed

Two types of inappropriate responses were identified:

- Responses that result from total or partial incomprehension
- Responses that result from a mismatch between the respondent's interpretation of the questions and the interpretation intended by the questionnaire designer



Example

Objective: number of children of school-going age in the household	Respondents' interpretations
<p>How many children between the ages of 6 and 12 are living in your household?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) 12) 23) 34) 45) 56) 67) 78) 8 or more children9) No children of these ages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Counted all the children; did not read “between the ages of 6 and 12”• Misinterpreted “between 6 and 12”• Gave multiple answers by marking the ages of the children• Unsure which children should be considered. Siblings also regarded as children.• Did not know the ages of the children <p>Across all the rounds, only half of the respondents answered this question correctly.</p>

Revision

At the end of each round of interviews, the survey questionnaire was revised for the next round.

Plain Language tools and techniques were useful to address some of the issues that the analysis identified

Some questions were deconstructed; some were deleted; some were added

Interaction with client to make sure that the questionnaire still addresses the objectives



Barriers to appropriate answering

We will give you a handout at the end to give you an idea of the type of issues that respondents had with questions.

These findings and the framework for analysis could be useful to integrate in standards for Plain Language.



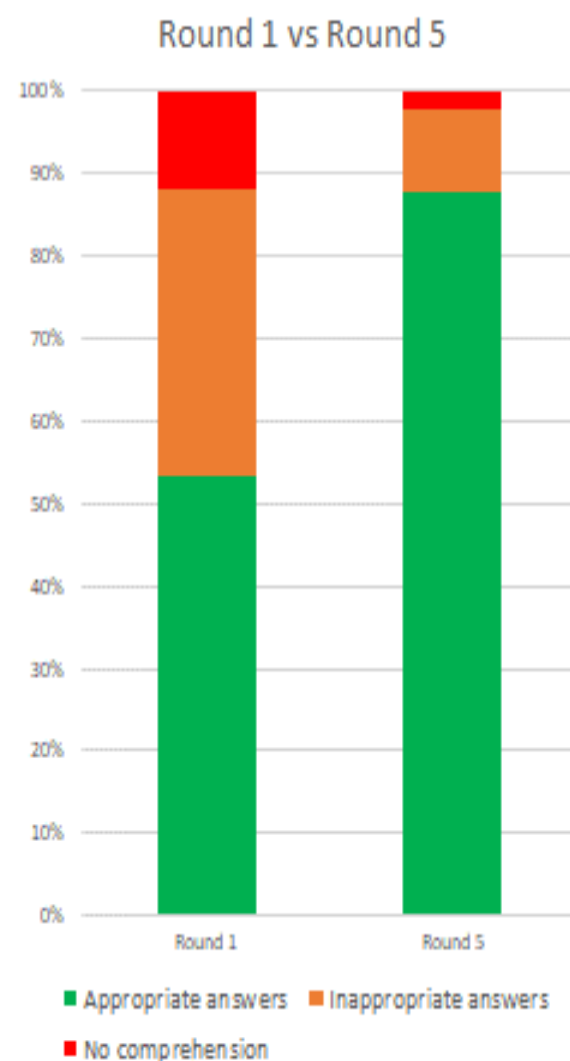
The impact of the research

The methodology of cognitive action research that the study has applied reduces the risk that inappropriate answering holds for data integrity.

The reduction in inappropriate answering was quite dramatic, as is evident in the chart on the next slide.

From high risk to
low risk

	Round 1	Round 5
% Appropriate answers	53,47%	87,88%
% Inappropriate answers	34,65%	10,10%
% No comprehension	11,88%	2,02%



Implication

If this was an actual survey with a sample size of a few thousand, it would have meant that a large financial investment resulted in half of the responses being inappropriate or arbitrary.

More importantly, had the results of the original survey been used for strategic decision-making, policymakers and other stakeholders might have based these decisions on data without integrity.

The risk associated with this is immense.

Way forward

Several studies since the first one followed

In commercial and development space

Methodology is continuously being improved