Language Research at the U.S. Census Bureau in Preparation for the 2020 Census: Looking Across Modes and Languages

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United States Census Bureau

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Census Bureau language research

- Many yearly Census tests leading up to each Decennial Census

- Decennial Language Team

  - Language research and planning

  - Pretesting of non-English survey instruments and supporting materials

2015 Census Language Research Contract

■ Pretesting and other language research in preparation for the 2020 Census

	CAPI	Paper	Internet	Materials, messaging
Expert review		C, K, V, R, A		C, K, V, R, A
Cognitive interviews	S, E	S, C, K, V, R, A, E		
Usability testing			S, E	
Focus groups				S, C, K, V, R, A, E

Languages: Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Russian, Arabic, English

Outline of Talk

Pretesting methods employed

- Cognitive testing
    - Interviewer administered instruments
    - Paper questionnaires
- Usability testing
- Focus groups

Findings Common to All Pretesting Methods

- Comprehension of terminology
- English and Spanish: sequential testing of modes. Eg. Home equity loan
  - préstamos sobre el valor líquido de la propiedad
    (loans on the liquid value of the property)
  - préstamo con la propiedad como garantía
    (loans with the property as a guarantee)
- Other languages: Iterative testing in one mode
  - Terminology issues
    - Vietnamese: counting unit v. housing unit
    - Arabic: sleep overnight v. napping

Cognitive testing: interviewer administered instruments

- 2015 Nonresponse Followup (NRFU) testing

- Languages: English and Spanish

- Questions and interview probes read verbally to respondents

- 1 round of testing: 59 respondents:
  - 20 English
  - 19 Spanish
  - 20 bilingual (Spanish/English)

Findings: CAPI, Interviewer Administered

- Whether respondents heard or processed instructions

    Example: Race instruction

- "I'm going to read you a list of categories. <u>You may choose one or more</u>. Are you White; Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish; Black or African American; Asian; American Indian or Alaska Native; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander; or Some other race or origin?"

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Cognitive testing: paper questionnaires

- 2015 test: paper form pretesting

  - Languages: English and Spanish

  - 101 interviews: 2 rounds of interviews

    - Round 1: 20 English, 21 Spanish

    - Round 2: 30 English, 30 Spanish

- 2016 and beyond: paper form pretesting

  - Languages: Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Russian, Arabic

  - 150 interviews: 2 rounds of 15 per language

Findings: Paper Testing

- Unique to paper form testing:
  - Not noticing/understanding written instructions of various types
  - Example: Baby instruction
    - *Please report babies as age 0 when the child is less than 1 year old.*
    - *Escriba 0 para los bebés que tengan menos de un año de edad.*

    - Spanish recommendation: "For babies less than 1 year old, do not enter the age in months. Just write 0."

Usability testing

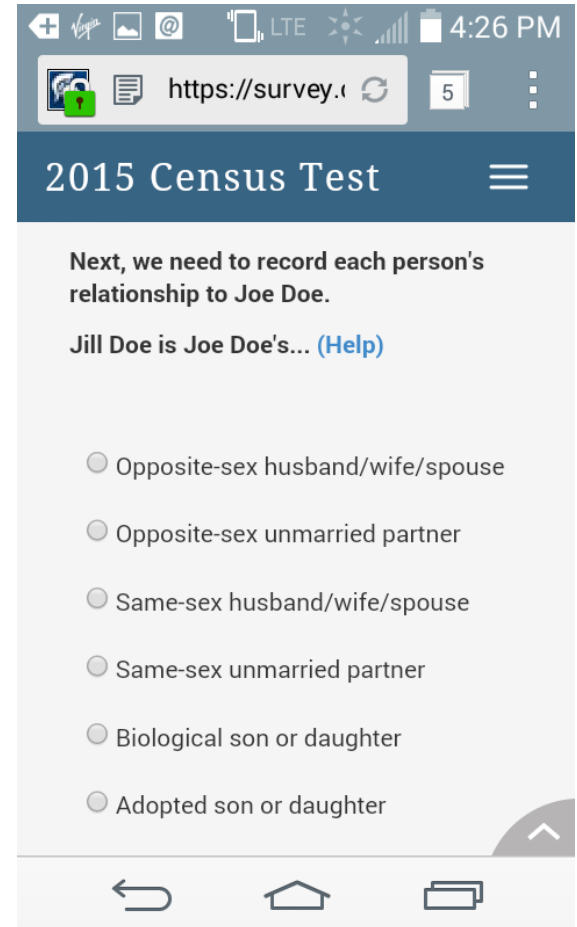2015 Census Test preparation:

- Two "mini-rounds": Total 89 interviews
  - Round 1: 25 English and 28 Spanish
  - Round 2: 20 English, 16 Spanish

2015 National Content Test preparation:

- One round of 77 interviews
  - 43 English and 34 Spanish

Findings: Usability testing

- Long questions requiring scrolling
  - Issue of names remaining only on first screen

- Name boxes, Writing full name including last name in first name box labeled "nombre"

Focus groups

- 30 focus groups
  - 4 each in English, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Russian, Arabic
  - 6 Spanish (extra groups to include Puerto Rican respondents)

Findings: Focus Groups

- Videos to observe doorstep interactions
    - Discussion of draft messages to encourage non-English speakers to participate in the Census
    - Suggestions of other approaches/messages
- Group interaction about variety of Census Bureau materials
    - Retesting some key terms in questionnaires
    - Looking at letters and other materials

Future Research/Next Steps

- Continual new language research/pretesting leading up to 2020

- Expanded to include Chinese and Korean internet instruments

- Future research on messaging for use to encourage participation of non-English speakers

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