



Positioning of Clarification Features in Open Frequency and Open Narrative Questions

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Outline

- Background
- Previous Findings
- Research Questions
- Survey Methods
- Results
- Conclusion

- Open ended questions in self-administered surveys

- lack of interviewer assistance
- no predefined response options for orientation



Clarification features improve survey responses by conveying additional information

- Basic problem:

- Effects of clarification features often suffer from limited attention



Attention-enhancing efforts

Previous Findings (1/2)

Design of clarification features:

1. Accessibility:

- Respondents do not always realize their need for clarification (Kunz & Fuchs, 2012)
- Respondents are not willing to involve a lot of effort obtaining clarification features (Conrad et al., 2006; Conrad, 2007; Galesic et al., 2008; Peytchev et al., 2010)



Clarification features should be always visible

(Galesic et al., 2008; Peytchev et al., 2010).

Previous Findings (2/2)

Design of clarification features:

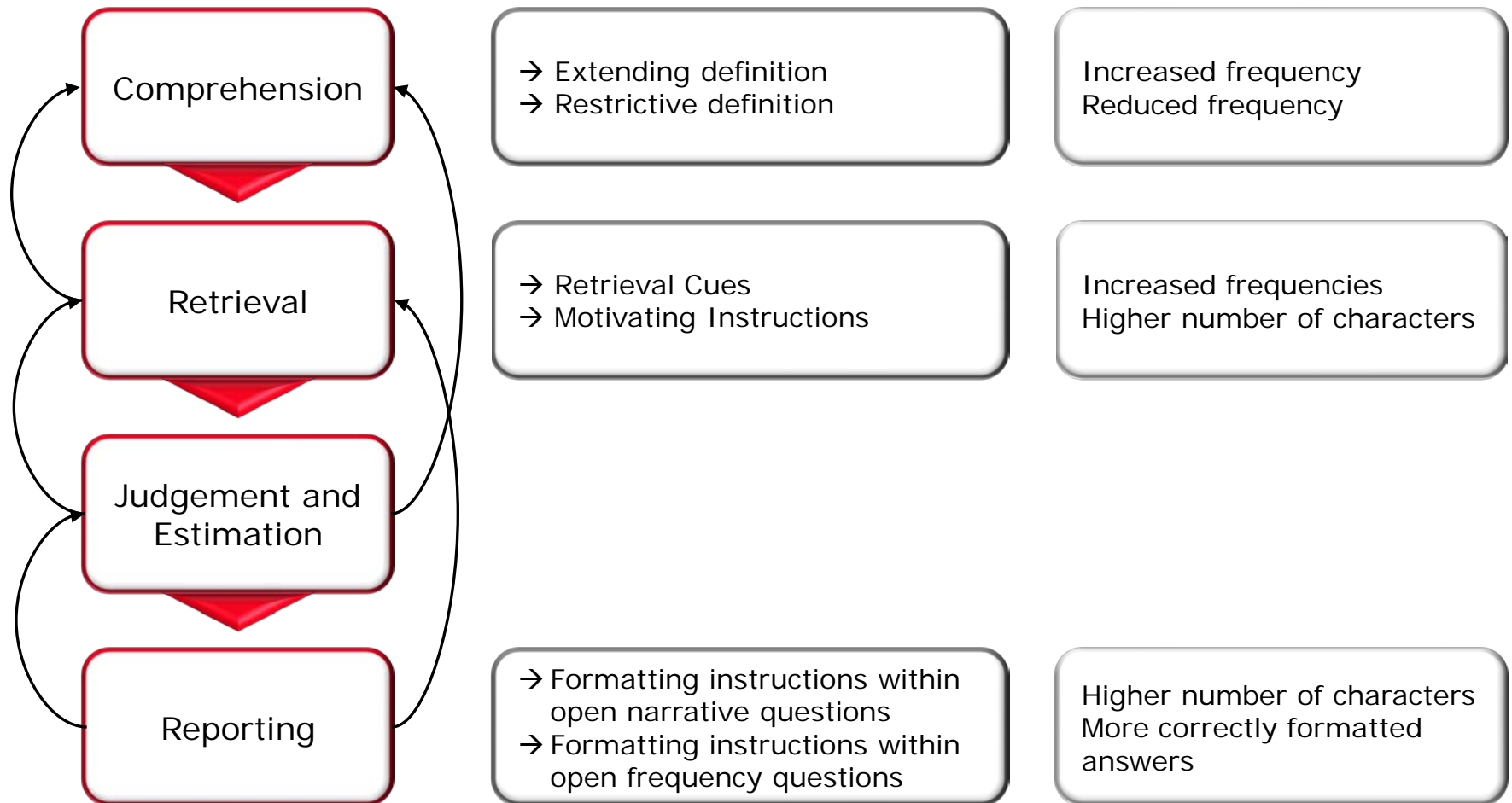
2. Position:

- Before the question (Redline, 2013)
- After the question (Christian & Dillman, 2004; Dillman, 2007; Peytchev et al., 2007)
- Clarification feature positions depend on the respective processing stage (Kunz & Fuchs, 2012)
 - Definitions for key terms, retrieval cues and motivating instructions: before the question
 - Retrieval cues, motivating and formatting instructions: after the question
 - Formatting instructions: after the answer box

Research Questions

1. Do clarification features effect survey responses of open narrative and open numeric questions?
2. Does the effect of the position of clarification features depend on the cognitive stage adressed by the instruction?

Question Answer Process



Positioning of Clarification Features



Please try to remember exactly every situation and the approximately duration, how long each situation continued. Consider this while thinking about your answer.

In which situations during the winter semester 2013/14 did you feel very stressed?

Please try to remember exactly every situation and the approximately duration, how long each situation continued. Consider this while thinking about your answer.

Please try to remember exactly every situation and the approximately duration, how long each situation continued. Consider this while thinking about your answer.

Weiter

Survey Methods

	University Applicants 2012	University Applicants 2013	Freshmen 2013/14
Field Work:	July 2012	August 2013	February 2014
Topic:	Qualification and expectation of university applicants		Satisfaction with the university and the subject of study
Response Rate:	32% (n=5,977)	40% (n=7,395)	26% (n=1,696)
Study Design:	Between subjects design with random assignment		
No. of Questions:	42	37	25

Results

Stage I: Comprehension

Extending Definition – numeric answers

Experimental condition	University Applicants 2012		University Applicants 2013	Freshmen 2013/14
	School activities	Communication with classmates	School activities	Study activities
	mean (hours)	mean (hours)	mean (hours)	mean (hours)
No Definition (CG*)	7 ^{a/b/c}	2 ^{a/b/c}	24 ^{a/b/c}	28 ^{b/c}
Before Question (EGa)	25 ^{*/b/c}	11 ^{*/b/c}	32 ^{*/b/c}	29 ^c
After Question (EGb)	35 ^{*/a}	18 ^{*/a}	40 ^{*/a}	31 [*]
After Answer Box (EGc)	32 ^{*/a}	17 ^{*/a}	40 ^{*/a}	32 ^{*/a}

Notes. ^{*/a/b/c} $p < .05$ pairwise post-hoc tests between all experimental conditions

Results

Stage I: Comprehension

Restrictive Definition – numeric answers

Experimental condition	University Applicants 2012		University Applicants 2013		Freshmen 2013/14
	Friends	Computer and Internet usage	Computer and Internet usage		Money
	mean (count)	mean (hours)	mean (hours)		mean (euros)
No Definition (CG*)	7	16 ^{a/b/c}	17 ^{a/b/c}		384 ^{a/b/c}
Before Question (EGa)	7	10 ^{*/b}	16 ^{*/b}		236 ^{*/b}
After Question (EGb)	6	9 ^{*/a}	15 ^{*/a/c}		191 ^{*/a}
After Answer Box (EGc)	6	10 [*]	16 ^{*/b}		220 [*]

Notes. ^{*/a/b/c} $p < .05$ pairwise post-hoc tests between all experimental conditions

Results

Stage II: Retrieval

Retrieval Cues – numeric and narrative answers

Experimental condition	University Applicants 2012		University Applicants 2013	Freshmen 2013/14
	Bodily impairments	Information sources	Information sources	Reasons for studying
	mean (count)	mean (count)	mean (characters)	mean (characters)
No Definition (CG*)	0.4 ^{a/b/c}	2.6 ^{a/b/c}	45 ^{a/b/c}	67 ^{b/c}
Before Question (EGa)	1.2 ^{*/b/c}	2.8 ^{*/b/c}	52 ^{*/b/c}	78 ^b
After Question (EGb)	2.2 ^{*/a}	3.1 ^{*/a}	64 ^{*/a/c}	114 ^{*/a/c}
After Answer Box (EGc)	2.4 ^{*/a}	3.0 ^{*/a}	57 ^{*/a/b}	84 ^{*/b}

Notes. ^{*/a/b/c} $p < .05$ pairwise post-hoc tests between all experimental conditions

Results

Stage II: Retrieval

Motivating Instruction – narrative answers

Experimental condition	University Applicants 2012		University Applicants 2013	Freshmen 2013/14
	Reasons for studying	Situations of stress	Situations of stress	Situations of stress
	mean (characters)	mean (characters)	mean (characters)	mean (characters)
No Definition (CG*)	128 ^{a/b/c}	86 ^{a/b/c}	88 ^{a/b/c}	70 ^{a/b/c}
Before Question (EGa)	150 ^{*/b/c}	107 ^{*/b/c}	101 ^{*/b/c}	97 ^{*/b}
After Question (EGb)	170 ^{*/a}	155 ^{*/a/c}	125 ^{*/a}	132 ^{*/a/c}
After Answer Box (EGc)	166 ^{*/a}	129 ^{*/a/b}	116 ^{*/a}	109 ^{*/b}

Notes. ^{*/a/b/c} $p < .05$ pairwise post-hoc tests between all experimental conditions

Results

Stage IV: Formatting

Formatting Instruction – numeric answers

Experimental condition	University Applicants 2012		University Applicants 2013	Freshmen 2013/14
	Extracurricular activities (time in hh:mm)	Decision to study (MM.YYYY)	Decision to study (MM.YYYY)	Extracurricular activities (time in hh:mm)
	correctly formatted (%)	correctly formatted (%)	correctly formatted (%)	correctly formatted (%)
No Definition (CG*)	0 ^{a/b/c}	3 ^{a/b/c}	24 ^{a/b/c}	0 ^{a/b/c}
Before Question (EGa)	32 ^{*/b/c}	69 ^{*/b/c}	65 ^{*/b/c}	27 ^{*/b/c}
After Question (EGb)	55 ^{*/a/c}	77 ^{*/a}	81 ^{*/a/c}	59 ^{*/a}
After Answer Box (EGc)	49 ^{*/a/b}	77 ^{*/a}	86 ^{*/a/b}	52 ^{*/a}

Notes. ^{*/a/b/c} $p < .05$ pairwise post-hoc tests between all experimental conditions

Results

Stage IV: Formatting

Formatting Instruction – narrative answer

Experimental condition	University Applicants 2012		University Applicants 2013	Freshmen 2013/14
	Study expectations	Experiences of success	Reasons for studying	Orientation for freshmen (one keyword)
	mean (characters)	mean (characters)	mean (characters)	correctly formatted (%)
No Definition (CG*)	114 ^{a/b/c}	113 ^{a/b/c}	111 ^{a/b/c}	62 ^{a/b/c}
Before Question (EGa)	164 ^{*/b}	150 ^{*/b}	184 ^{*/b/c}	81 [*]
After Question (EGb)	189 ^{*/a/c}	186 ^{*/a/c}	213 ^{*/a/c}	79 [*]
After Answer Box (EGc)	176 ^{*/b}	148 ^{*/b}	157 ^{*/a/b}	79 [*]

Notes. ^{*/a/b/c} $p < .05$ pairwise post-hoc tests between all experimental conditions

- Clarification features have a positive effect on survey responses.
- The optimal position does not depend on the cognitive stage of the question-answer process.
- **Open frequency questions:**
 - Before the question is the least effective position for each stage of the question-answer process.
- **Open narrative questions:**
 - Before the question is the least effective position of retrieval cues and motivating instructions.
 - After the answer box is the least effective position of formatting instructions.

- Visual separation of question and clarification features
 - Regardless of the position respondents can easily skip the clarification features

 differentiation to Redline (2013)

- High motivation of university applicants
 - Respondents go back to clarification features when they need it

 differentiation to Kunz and Fuchs (2012)



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Thank you.

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