Interview and Observation Guide – an Example

This IO guide is an example, provided in the context of designing a user experience for a lay person to find out how recommender system works.

Author: (your name)

Session length: 40 minutes

Participant Name:

Email:

Time/Date:

Location:

1. Introduction & Setup (5 mins)

***** Explain what you are interviewing for *****

Set up equipment to record sound.

The following can be the opening statements…

"Thank you for participating!

My name is Paul. I am a computer science master degree student at EPFL. My main interest for this interview is to understand how people think about AI technology, your expectations of how it may solve problems for you, how you think it may impact our society, and how it may cause concerns. I'll be asking you some questions and my partner, John, will be assisting me with the interview. He will be taking some notes.

We are not evaluating you or your opinions in any way.

Here is how the session is going to proceed. We'll ask you a few general questions as well as some specific ones.

(ask for consent) We will record a little video of you (replace the text if you record sound) so that I can go back and review things later and make sure we get everything right. We won't use your name in connection with the recordings or the results. The videotapes will only be used internally and never shared anywhere with anyone. If you don't like this idea, please let me know.

How does all that sound to you? Do you have any questions at this point?"

Is the place noisy for you? If so, please let me know.

2. Demographics and Background (5 mins)

***** The main goal here is to understand the user's gender, age group, marital status, education level, and most importantly their general technology usage behavior. Since these are very sensitive questions, we highly encourage you to find out the answers using observation or indirect questioning. If this is not possible, ask him/her politely.

Example questions:

Could you tell us your name and tell us a little bit about what you do?

Where did you go to school? Is your current job related to what you studied?

How often do you use your computer the last few days?

Where do you usually use your computer(s)?

How many hours per day would you say you spend on your computer?

Do you shop online? How often?

Do you use online banking systems? How often?

Do you use online system for other purposes? If so, can you specify?

Same questions for using phones

How often do you use your phone the last few days?

….

3. Main Questions (20 mins)

***** The key is to follow the funnel analogy: ask open questions first, then specific ones. *****

***** Your main goal is to probe on your users' curiosity/needs/wants/preferences/expectations/fears of AI *****

Pre-interview questions (when you contact/recruit users for an interview, you can already ask them to prepare for the interview and bring you items):

In our introduction email, we asked you to show us some articles you read about AI. Did you bring them with you? Can you show us? What do you think of these articles?

Do you read these articles often? From which news outlet (an online news site, forum, social media blogs)?

Questions during the interview.

Do you subscribe to Netflix?

Have you noticed that as you watch more and more movies, Netflix seems to be picking up your taste. Pretty soon it suggests movies you haven't watched. Do you use this feature? How often in the last week? Do you like it? Why?

(if your user doesn't use recommender system) On a Friday evening, you are looking for a movie to watch. You have only few minutes to find it. What do you do? Can you tell us how you find movie suggestions?

I heard that at Netflix, you can get movie suggestions from the system. This is one example of how AI works for end users. How do you compare this with suggestions from friends? Which one do you like more? Why?

Do you think AI can do things better than you? (this question is from our students; it's a bit threatening; below I provide another version based on my interviewing experience)

I heard that AI can do many things automatically, including playing chess with human and chatting with human. For example, they can chat with elderly people to help them with loneliness. Are there activities or tasks in your life that you would like AI to do for you? What would that be? Can you specify and tell us a bit why?

Would you listen to music created by a computer? (below I provide another version)

I heard that AI can create music or paintings of particular style, like Bach or Rembrandt. In what circumstances you'd imagine yourself listen to such music or buy such art pieces? Why or why not?

https://www.npr.org/sections/alltechconsidered/2016/04/06/473265273/a-new-rembrandt-from-the-frontiers-of-ai-and-not-the-artists-atelier

https://news.artnet.com/art-world/rutgers-artificial-intelligence-art-1019066

I am working on a visualization system that can explain how AI works behind this technology (recommender system, AI painting, music composition, emotion chatting machine). It will be ready in few weeks. Would you like to see it?

Once you see how it (recommender technology) works, you'd realize that the same technology can be used for recommending music, paintings in an online gallery, products to buy when you shop online, etc.

Can you think of other scenarios where this technology can be used?

Do you know that in order for these websites to recommend items to you, they need to learn and store your preferences. How do you feel about that?

How do you feel about privacy issues in general?

Recommender system is one example of how AI works. How do you think/feel about AI in general?

Questions from students (in other context).

Have you heard about Sophia?

What do you think of her?

Are there applications where you think humans can benefit from a robot like Sophia?

Can you give an example of something you believe has AI in it? Is it useful?

Are you interested in learning more about how AI works? Do you think that knowing more would in some way change your view on it?

Have you met someone afraid of loosing his/her job because of a system like this? (this question is very good because often people have a better time talking about a friend's fear)

Have you ever had trouble finding a movie to watch or a piece of music to listen to?

Questions from students that can be improved.

What do you think an AI could do wrong? (good question, but not enough context to probe about "wrong")

Based on what you said, I believe you know a lot about AI, what it can do and what it can create. Do you think it can harm the society in any way? Are you worried? What specific AI systems or features that worry you the most? Why?

Is there something you'd like to choose on your own? Why? (good question, but give more context)

With all these automatic movie recommendations, one can quickly feel he/she is loosing control. Do you feel that way? Do you like to balance control vs. automation? If so, what would be a good ratio? Why?

4. Tasks that ask users to "show and tell" their technology usage (2 min)

We asked you to save a few sample movie recommendations from Netflix. Did you bring them? Can you show us? Which one you think you wouldn't have found it without the recommender system? Did you tell your friends about this feature from Netflix?

5. Problems with current situations (2 min)

What is the weirdest movie the system has recommended to you? When did that happen? What was your reaction? Did the system explain to you why it recommended to you?

Have you ever had any problems with Netflix's recommender? When did it happen? Can you tell me more about that?

6. Wrap-up (4 mins)

{*needs/wants for technology*} If you could ask for a magical tool that would allow you to be free of tedious work, what would such a tool be? how would it work ? what areas would it cover ?

I've been asking you a lot of questions. Is there anything you want to ask me ?

7. Closing (2 mins)

*compensation envelope

*Thanks for all your time

*Never turn off the sound recording until the very end

*Keep making mental notes as you wrap up

When reviewing your notes for insights, some of the things you should look for are:
- Typical behavior
- Variant behavior
- Untapped desires/needs
- What people wish they could do with AI
- Problems they have
- How do people think about AI and its inner logic?