

Example transcription instructions

A Qualitative Exploration of Recovery from Bulimia Nervosa

Background to the Research

Bulimia is very difficult to overcome, so how and why some people manage to recover is not very well understood. The term recovery also means different things to different people; clinicians have suggested various criteria but there is currently little attention to what recovery means to those who have actually lived and experienced the recovery process.

The purpose of my research is to look at recovery from the point of view of former sufferers of bulimia. After conducting a number of in-depth interviews, I hope to yield a rich collective account of the difficulties encountered and the insights gained during the journey of recovery.

I am conducting this research as part of a PhD in the Department of Sociology at the University of London, under the supervision of Professor Jane Woodstock. My research is being funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and has been granted full ethical approval by the Research and Enterprise Office (REO) at the University of London.

Due to the sensitive nature of this research, you will be required to sign a Confidentiality Agreement which confirms you will adhere to the principles of anonymity and confidentiality and will not speak about the content or nature of the interviews to anyone apart from myself.

Theoretical Approach: Verbatim Transcription

Decisions about how transcription should be carried out are intimately connected with the type of analysis that is intended. Transcription of speech is always a compromise: greater detail gives more material for interpretation, yet too much detail can slow up the reading of the text in an artificial manner. This project requires **full verbatim transcription**. Taking a full verbatim transcription approach means that as well as preserving the actual words which were spoken, extra verbal material captured on the recording – such as the speaker's use of intonation, pauses, rhythm and hesitation – is also preserved. This keeps some of the additional meaning that was conveyed in the original interview, thereby providing contextual information as to the manner in which words were spoken. In addition, verbatim transcription requires that the character of the conversational exchange is apparent, so the words of the researcher must also be included.

General Notes

- Document should include a header on every page with the serial number of the interview on the left hand side and your name on the right hand side
- Insert page numbers at the bottom of each page, in the centre
- Use Times New Roman, font size 12, type what the interviewer says in bold and justify the text
- Identify the interviewer and the respondent separately and indicate the gender of the respondent. Use I: for the Interviewer and either F1: or M1: for the respondent depending on whether they are male or female (see attached example)
- Although I request that a record of what the interviewer says be included, the one exception to this concerns 'back channel utterances', i.e. where I can be heard in the background saying words such as "right", "yeah", "I see" or utterances such as "mmhmm" whilst the interviewee is speaking. These function to encourage the respondent to continue speaking and reassure them that they are being listened to. It is not necessary to break up the respondent's speech by including them

- Use punctuation as for normal written prose. Grammar should not be altered or “tidied up”. Do not use ‘eye spellings’ (e.g. “enuff” for ‘enough’)

Things to Include in Full

- Unfinished questions or statements that trail off – indicate these with ellipses (...), for example: “I never did understand her approach, the way she saw it, or...”
- False sentence starts
- Repeated phrases, words, statements or questions
- Discussion that continues after the interview appears to be ‘formally’ finished
- Non-lexical utterances or ‘fillers’ such as ‘umms’ and ‘errs’ and ‘uhs’
- Hesitations and Pauses – indicate these with ellipsis (...), for example: “well...recovery to me...sort of means...err...”
- To indicate an exclamation of surprise, shock or dismay, use the standard exclamation mark
- Emphases – indicate any emphasis on a word or phrase by putting it in italics

Things to Include in Brackets

- Noises in background - for example (loud banging) or (door slams) or (muffled voices)
- The tone of the respondent. Here I am happy for you to include any comments on mood, feeling, passion, emotion and paralinguistics - for example: (laughs loudly) or (mumbles slowly) or (sounds angry) or (falters slightly) or (sighs)
- Unclear words or phrases must be marked where they occur within the text by placing the word “inaudible” in brackets and in bold e.g. (inaudible). PLEASE DO NOT GUESS AT ANYTHING WHICH YOU CANNOT UNDERSTAND.

After Transcription

When you have completed transcribing an interview, please email it to me at (email address). On receipt of the transcript I will confirm that you can then delete and destroy both the interview recording and the interview transcript in all its forms of storage – e.g. CD, WAV file, Word Document.

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research project. Attached is a sample interview, indicating how I would like the interviews for this research to be transcribed¹.

If there are large parts of the recording which you cannot understand or decipher, then please contact me immediately. Likewise, if you are concerned with any aspect of the transcription or these guidelines are unclear, then please do not hesitate to contact me on (mobile number) or at (email address)

Alice Jackson

¹ The example interview is adapted from an interview by Fiona Phillips with Heather Mills, which took place on GMTV on 31 October 2007. The interview can be found in full, unaltered, in Times Online at:

http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/tv_and_radio/article2777973.ece