



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

Seminar 2 for Doctoral Students

Topic: Undertaking Individual Interviews

Dr Eleni Koutsogeorgou
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Trawsnewid Addysg; Trawsnewid Bywydau
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Seminar Structure

- Purpose of interviews
- Types of interviews
- Directions for conducting interviews
- Ethical approval
- Process of semi-structured interviews
- Field notes
- Interview transcripts
- Activity.

Introduction

- The interviewer's role is to help participants unravel this stock of knowledge and to discern patterns across various respondents.
- In social research, qualitative interviews – semi-standardized or open interviews – are very widely used.
- In the context of quantitative research projects they are used predominantly in the preparation of standardized data collection and the development of data collection tools.

Source: Flick, U., von Kardorff, E., & Steinke, I. (2004).

Semi-structured Interviews

- In semi-structured (guided) interviews the interviewer shows a pathway of the discussion to the interviewee, to collect information on specific topics
- Semi-structured interviews can be considered as a series of unstructured (or 'open') micro-interviews (Cardano, 2011).

Semi-structured Interviews

- In semi-structured interviews, the interview guide includes several topical areas of the issues explored in the study, and during these interviews the target of the interviewer is to use several types of questions in order "to reconstruct the interviewee's subjective theory about the issue under study" (Flick, 2009, p. 156).

Focused Interview

- After a uniform stimulus (a film, a radio broadcast, etc.) is presented, its impact on the interviewee is studied using an interview guide.
- During the design of the interview guide and the conducting of the interview itself, use the following four criteria:
 - non-direction
 - specificity
 - range, and
 - the depth and personal context shown by the interviewee.

Source: Flick, U. (2009).

Semi-Standardized Interview

- This knowledge includes assumptions that are explicit and immediate and which interviewees can express spontaneously in answering an open question.
- These are complemented by implicit assumptions. In order to articulate these, the interviewees must be supported by methodological aids. They are used to reconstruct the interviewee's subjective theory about the issue under study.

Source: Flick, U. (2009).

Problem-Centered Interview

- This is characterized by three central criteria:
- 1) problem centering (i.e., the researchers orientation to a relevant social problem)
- 2) object orientation (i.e., that methods are developed or modified with respect to an object of research); and finally
- 3) process orientation in the research process and in the understanding of the object of research.

Source: Flick, U. (2009).

Expert Interview

- In contrast to biographical interviews, here the interviewees are of less interest as a (whole) person than their capacities as experts for a certain field of activity.



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Source: Flick, U. (2009).

Ethnographic Interview

- In the context of ethnographic field research, participant observation is mainly used. In applying it, however, interviews also play a part.
- A particular problem is how to shape conversations arising in the field into interviews in which the unfolding of the others specific experiences is aligned with the issue of the research in a systematic way.
- It is best to think of ethnographic interviews as a series of friendly conversations into which the researcher slowly introduces new elements to assist informants to respond as informants. Exclusive use of these new ethnographic elements, or introducing them too quickly, will make interviews become like a formal interrogation.

Source: Flick, U. (2009).

Directions for Conducting Interviews

- 1) Explain the framework to your subject in good time
- 2) Create a good atmosphere in the interview
- 3) Give your counterpart room to open up
- 4) Give the 'drama' an opportunity to develop
- 5) In the interview do not attempt to discover theoretical ideas but the life-world of your counterpart.

Source: Flick, U., von Kardorff, E., & Steinke, I. (2004).

Key Points for Evaluating Questions in Interviews

1) Why do you ask this specific question?

- What is its theoretical relevance?
- What is the link to the research question?

2) For what reason do you ask this question?

- What is the substantial dimension of this question?

3) Why did you formulate the question in this way (and not differently)?

- Is the question easy to understand?
- Is the question unambiguous?
- Is the question productive?

4) Why did you position this question (or block of questions) at this specific place in the interview guide?

- How does it fit into the rough and detailed structure of the interview guide?
- How is the distribution of types of question spread across the interview guide?
- What is the relation between single questions?

Source: pp.170-171, Flick, U. (2009).

Exploratory interviews

- Exploratory interviews can be conducted in preparation phase of the research, in order to define areas of the study in terms of research design, sample characteristics, issues of recruitment of participants, etc.
- Such interviews can be with experts/professionals who have had long-term professional experience on the topic in question.

Tools and schedule of interviews

- The researcher should have an interview guide/topics for discussion – in the case of semi-structured interviews in qualitative research. In that case, this interview guide could be based on previous tools used in other studies, or developed by the researcher.
- All interviews should be audio or video-recorded with the participants' permission, for the researcher to be able to do the transcription of interviews.

Ethical approval

- Ensure all steps for ethical approval of the research have been completed, before embarking on the fieldwork.
- <https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/research/research-ethics/>

Anonymity of participants

- Each participant should be given a pseudonym, to safeguard anonymity of participants.
- Should ensure anonymity and protect the identity of participants.
- Do not take any photos of participants without their recorded permission.
- Do not print or publish any photos of participants without legal considerations and their written consent.

Process of a semi-structured interview (1/3)

- The exact chronological order of the interview schedule can be the following:
- 1st) Each interview starts with introductions and stating the researcher's affiliation. The interview environment should be appropriate and could offer refreshments (i.e. water and biscuits) to create a cozy atmosphere.
- 2nd) Then you state the aim and purpose of the study and ask confirmation from the interviewee if they have understood it.

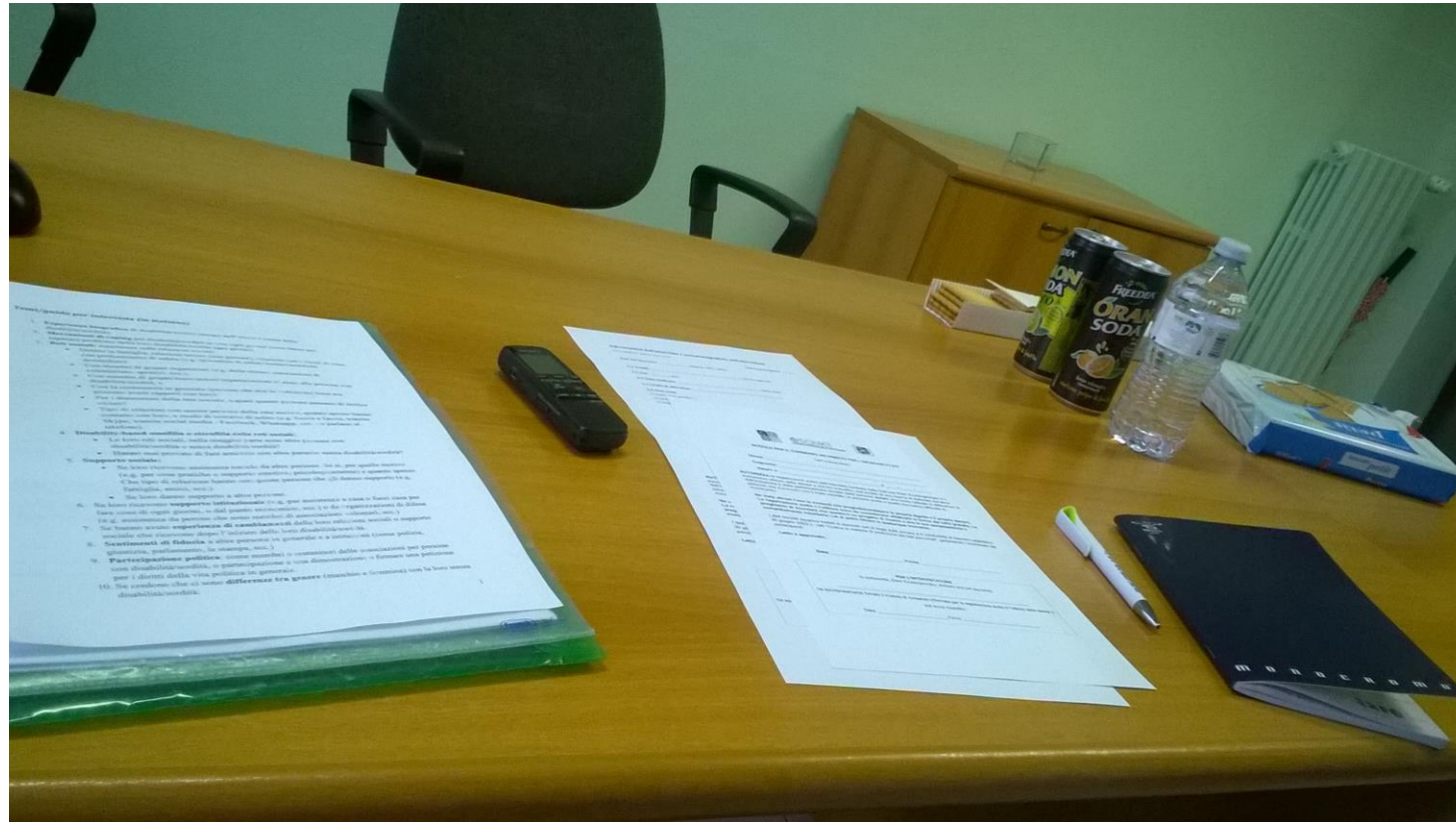
Process of a semi-structured interview (2/3)

- 3rd) Ask the interviewee to read carefully and sign two printed copies of the informed consent form, if they agree. Once the interviewee signs them then you can sign them too. The interviewee should have one copy, and the interviewers the second one.
- 4th) Before initiating the audio or video-recording of the interview, can ask the interviewee about any sociodemographic questions (e.g. age, gender, level of education, marital status, employment status, etc.)

Process of a semi-structured interview (3/3)

- 5th) Before each audio or video-recording can test the device to ensure that it is working properly, and the volume of the voice of the interviewee and the position of the recorded is appropriate for the interview to be registered.
- 6th) Then the recorded interview can start, following the order of topics included in the interview guide (list of topics/questions).
- 7th) Once the interview is completed, should thank the interviewee for their time and sharing their experiences/perception with you. In some studies, a financial incentive (e.g. voucher, bus ticket) can be offered to participants, but is not necessary.

Interview environment



Explaining and Probing Questions

- During interviews, questions can be repeated or reframed in order to ensure understanding of participants, if necessary, without altering their meaning.
- General and specific probing and prompting during interviews can be used as well, such as by asking for further details or explanations on some of the topics, asking for examples or a clearer answer on the question, or – whenever necessary – redirecting interviewees back to the research questions whenever they went off topic, or simply nodding so as to encourage them to continue talking.
- Should not be asking any leading questions or influence the interviewee in their responses. Should have a neutral attitude, without showing if you agree with their statements or not, but nodding often can help to show that you are paying attention to what they are saying.

Field notes

- The traditional medium for documentation in qualitative research has been the researcher's notes, or else field notes, which in the case of interviews should contain the essentials of the interviewee's answers and information regarding the proceeding of the interview (Flick, 2009).
- Field notes can include participants' non-verbal and facial characteristics, as well as attitude or anything else that makes an impression during interviews to the interviewer and could be valuable for the interpretation of findings (e.g. off-the-record comments, facial expressions of interviewees on specific responses or other non-verbal signs during interviews).

Interview transcripts

- All interviews recorded should be transcribed verbatim; meaning word-by-word transfer into text of what was said during the interview.
- This is a time-consuming process, but essential for the researcher to familiarize themselves with the data, and initial coding/themes can start to emerge during transcription of interviews.
- All files with participant information should be stored in a locked place or encrypted (in the case of electronic files) – data management is **very important** when conducting any research.

Activity

- For the next 10 minutes, consider what type(s) of interview you would choose for conducting a qualitative research on the following topic:
- *The impact of Covid-19 on local hospitality businesses in London.*
- Share your thoughts.

Conclusion

- Interviews are a common method of qualitative research for data collection.
- The type of interview to be employed in the research depends on the topic of study.
- In semi-structured interviews, should have an interview guide.
- Ethical considerations and approval are essential before starting fieldwork and meeting interviewees.

References

- Cardano, M. (2011). *La ricerca qualitativa*. Bologna: Mulino.
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Thank you

Any questions?

Dr Eleni Koutsogeorgou

e.koutsogeorgou@uwtsd.ac.uk