

Criteria for Selecting interviewees

Who has the relevant information?

Who is accessible?

Who is willing to give relevant information?

Who is most able to give the information?

Face-to-face or 'remote' interviewing?

Face-to-face

phone

email

internet

Nonverbal
information

Time-saving

Contextual
information

Money-saving

Control of
interview
situation

Maybe better acceptance
rates because interviews can
be sliced

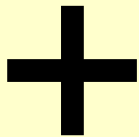
Trust-
building

Expensive
and time-
consuming

Reduced Control of interview situation

Only acoustic
information

Probably shorter answers
because they must be
written down



Two interviewers?

Advantages:

- 4 eyes and ears see and hear more
- One can check the tape recorder or write the protocol

Disadvantages:

- The communication situation changes radically!

Why should interviews be recorded and fully transcribed?

- To avoid information loss**
- To relieve the interviewee from the task of writing**
- Full data transcriptions: to avoid uncontrolled data analysis**

What do we do if an interviewee does not agree to have the interview recorded?

Ethical rules

1. Informed consent:

Participation in an investigation is voluntary.

In order to be able to decide on their participation, potential participants must be informed about

- The purpose of the investigation,
- Their role in the investigation (what is expected of them),
- Possible consequences of their participation, and
- The use that will be made of data collected from them and about them.

2. No harm must come to the participant

What can we do when informing interviewees about the research question is likely to change their answers?

Example:

Research question: Does competitive sports lead to a 'biographical closure' and this way facilitates doping?

How do we contact interviewees?

1. Initially by „snail mail“ letter; e-mail less recommended

Content of letter:

- Aim of the investigation,
- Purpose of the interview,
- Privacy protection, and
- Announcement of contact for appointment.

2. Thereafter by phone to make an appointment

Rules for conducting interviews

1. Listen actively!

- Do not interrupt

- Allow breaks (for thinking)

2. Ask flexible

3. Clarify things that you didn't understand

4. Ask about details

5. Ask short and unambiguous probing questions

6. Show competency

7. Avoid evaluations

Bureaucratic use of the interview guide (Hopf 1978)

- 1. Rushing through: Topics are not explored deeply because the interviewer wants to go through the interview quickly („Could you please *shortly* describe this procedure?“)**
- 2. Topics introduced by the interviewee are ignored.**
- 3. The structure of the interview guide is imposed on the interviewee („We will come to this later“).**

Problematic interview situations – tight-lipped interviewees

I: Ok. What happened after 2003?

2003 I came here, to ANU.

I: And you got a postdoc position again?

Another postdoc, yes.

I: This was paid by ..?

This one was again funded from the ARC Discovery grant.

I: From somebody else's grant?

From here, from the school.

I: And then I found actually that you right now, your postdoc is your own grant?

Yes, that's right.

I: so, that's about ..

March 2005 I started on my grant. Because this one was for 2 years.

[....]

I: At this stage, do you still have people who mentor you, who give you advise?

John.

I: In what way?

Well, we discuss the work. (*thinking*)

I: For example, where do you publish ..

Yes, that sort of thing, exactly.

Problematic interview situations – tight-lipped interviewees

Possible Strategies

- Use narration triggers

- Avoid dichotomous questions

- Use silence strategically

- If it is not an anxious person: Use indirect provocations

Problematic interview situations - talkative interviewees

Possible Strategies

- You are allowed to interrupt gently; use short breaks to interrupt and resuming questions
- Slowly reduce verbal and non-verbal (nodding) affirmative reactions
- If interviewee tends to divert from the subject: use informed presuming questions

Problematic interview situations - interviewees who seek assurance or who are curious

[...] That's what I think. Although I take into consideration that .. if you'd asked Mister G. [his collaborator] then the picture of the past might be a different one.

Interviewer: That's what I am going to compare later. But what you said at the end .. I talked already to Mister G. That he made a similar statement.

Problematic Interview situations - People who seek assurance/ who are curious

Possible Strategies

- Postpone the answer to questions about the interview to the time after the interview.
- If you are cautious, you may give some general information about the answers of other people.
- Always make sure that your interviewees' answers stay confidential.

Problematic interview situations - criticist

I.: What was actually the aim of your project part?

The aim of my project part was – this [research network] is somehow called „heterogenised polymers“, mor precisely „the influence of interface properties in heterogenised ..“. I don't know whether this tells you something.

I.: Well, I've already heard something about that.

If this doesn't tell you something, then you cannot ask such questions.

I.: Actually, I have a vage idea that ...

Heterogenised polymers, there are different ones. *[...long, far too detailed explanation...]*

[...]

I.: How would you classify your research (which is not so easy in the case of material scientists), is it more basic or more applied research, or both?

It is applied, it is applied, yes. By the way that's expected from a Fraunhofer Institute that we do mostly applied research. What shall I answer to such a question?

I: Well, could you tell me ..

[long explanation]

Problematic Interview situations - critics

Possible Strategies

- Never start a discussion about the interview guide during the interview, try to postpone it to the time after the interview
- Switch to the meta-level (you have certain reasons to ask this questions that you are happy to explain after the interview in more detail)

After the Interview

Make notes about everything that happened while the recorder was switched off as soon as possible after the interview.

Write a short interview report (particularly if you work in a group):

- Particularities of arranging the interview,
- Unusual aspects of the interview situation (if there were any),
- Unusual interview situations (if there were any),
- Promises made during the interview,
- Any notes you made additional to the transcript (see above).

After the Interview

Dear [Mieke],

It was a great pleasure to talk to you on Tuesday. Thanks again for your time. If you can find your VENI grant proposal – that would be very helpful.

Best wishes,

Grit

Dear Grit,

Please find my VENI proposal attached. It was fun talking to you as well and actually helpful in turning my mind to the positions that I'm applying for now.

Thanks,

[Mieke]