

Interviews: Qualitative Data Generation

University of Brno

Draft proposal of the course

Short biography

Alenka Jelen is a senior lecturer and a researcher of communication theory, public affairs and public relations at the University of Central Lancashire. She is ECREA (European Communication Research and Education Association) Executive Board member and Secretary of the Bureau/Board, and a vice-chair of YECREA (the ECREA Young Scholar Network). Her current research interest is in political and communication studies with a special focus on influence patterns and interactions between political institutions and the media, and qualitative research methods, particularly (expert) interviews and framing analysis.

Short outline

Qualitative interviews are a frequently used in social research, yet tend to be perceived as an unproblematic method that uncovers psychological or social realities and simply extracts the information. Consequently interviews tend to lack critical understanding and under-theorise its data. To overcome this, the course aims to: (1) introduce theoretical underpinnings of interviews and (2) provide training in practical data generation and management process.

Theoretical discussion introduces scholarly traditions and paradigms, methodological underpinnings, and ethical considerations surrounding interview research. Field preparation strategies and techniques, including sampling, gaining access, designing a topic guide, framing questions, and thinking through enquiry strategies are thoroughly examined. Interview is – just as any other form of social interaction – influenced by socio-demographic and personal characteristics, culture, gender, power, etc., which have a potential to influence the type of information revealed and knowledge communicated. Another important factor to consider in terms of influencing data generation is the use of technology in recording and storing interview data. If these factors are acknowledged, carefully considered, and systematically managed, the data generation process can be significantly enhanced. Different approaches to interview data management are briefly addressed. Guidelines and implications of transcribing or ‘translating’ the generated data from speech to text will be discussed. Strengths, risks and limitations of interview research as well as the concepts of validity, reliability and generalisability and their different understandings in qualitative and quantitative tradition will be discussed. Special emphasis of the course is on the data generation process and development of interview skills through practical experience of preparing and conducting ‘real life’ interviews.

Day-to-day schedule

	Topic(s)	Details
Day 1	Introduction to the course: Qualitative interviews as a social research method	<p>Lecture</p> <p>Aims and overview of the course Understanding interview: definitions, philosophical, theoretical and methodological principles Historical developments of interview research Interviewer as a miner or a traveller? Roles, functions, and different forms of interviews</p> <p>Workshop</p> <p>Introduction of the participants World cafe discussion</p> <p>Assignment</p> <p>Short essay: Interview as a research method (approx. 1,000 words)</p>
Day 2	Field preparation strategies: Sampling, gaining access and designing questions	<p>Lecture</p> <p>Sampling strategies Gaining access Interview ethics: informed consent and 'interview contract' Designing a topic guide and framing interview questions The stages of the interview Key qualities of the interviewer</p> <p>Workshop</p> <p>Gaining access Designing a topic guide</p>
Day 3	<i>Conducting interviews</i>	<i>Conducting interviews</i>
Day 4	The art of interviewing	<p>Lecture</p> <p>Factors of influence Strategies of achieving breadth and depth Interviewer-interviewee relationship, trust and openness Technological practicalities: recording and storing generated data From speech to text: transcribing interviews The role of supporting materials (diaries, field notes, memos)</p> <p>Practical exercise</p> <p>Conducting in-class interview</p>

		<p>Discussion: the interview experience</p> <p>Assignment Interview transcript</p>
Day 5	Critical reflection on interview research in theory and practice: what comes out of your data?	<p>Lecture Data management strategies Ethical theories, codes and considerations in qualitative interviewing Transactional theory in interviewing: what kind of ‘truths’ do you get? Validity and reliability Advantages, risks and limitations</p> <p>Group discussion Critical evaluation: assessing the data and assessing the self Ethical dilemmas and discussion Open questions and feedback</p>

Reading list

	Recommended readings
Day 1	<p>Fontana and Frey (in Denzin and Lincoln), 2005, Chapter 27 (695-728) The Interview: From Neutral Stance to Political Involvement</p> <p>Legard, Keegan and Ward (in Ritchie and Lewis), 2003, Chapter 6 (138-169) In-depth Interviews</p> <p>Gubrium and Holstein, 2001, Chapter 1 (3-32) From the Individual Interview to the Interview Society</p> <p>Platt (in Gubrium and Holstein). 2001, Chapter 2 (33-54) The History of the Interview</p>
Day 2	<p>Ritchie, Lewis and Elam (in Ritchie and Lewis), 2003, Chapter 4 (77-108) Designing and Selecting Samples</p> <p>Arthur and Nazroo (in Ritchie and Lewis) , 2003, Chapter 5 (109-137) Designing Fieldwork Strategies and Materials</p> <p>Dexter, 2006, Chapter 2 (31-71) Suggestions for Getting, Conducting and Recording an Interview</p> <p>Mason, 2002, Chapter 1&2 (13-47) Designing Qualitative Research</p>
Day 3	N/A

Day 4	<p>Kvale and Brinkmann, 2008, Chapter 10 (177-188) Transcribing Interviews</p> <p>Richards, 2005, Part II (65-121) Working with the Data</p>
Day 5	<p>Silverman, 2005, Chapter 14 (209-226) Quality in Qualitative Research</p> <p>Lewis and Ritchie (in Ritchie and Lewis), 2003 Chapter 10 (263-286) Generalising from Qualitative Research</p> <p>Christians (in Denzin and Lincoln), 2005, Chapter 6 (139-164) Ethics and politics in qualitative research</p> <p>Dexter, 2006, Chapter 6 (115-131) Toward a Transactional Theory of Interviewing: Self-Assessment in the Interview Process</p>

Literature

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Briggs, C.L. (2001): 'Interviewing, Power/Knowledge, and Social Inequality' In: J.F. Gubrium & J.A. Holstein eds. *Handbook of Interview Research*, 2nd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications: 911-922.

Christians, C.G. (2005): 'Ethics and politics in qualitative research'. In: N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln, eds. *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA, London: Sage.: 139-164.

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- Kvale, S. & Brinkmann, S. (2008): *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*, 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, London, Singapore: Sage.
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