

Contextual Transcriptions

You might be wondering why we are going to transcribe our interviews word for word. And yes, I agree that is something to be curious about. Though it may seem impractical and that it would take a lot of time and effort, this is something we do as researchers in business.

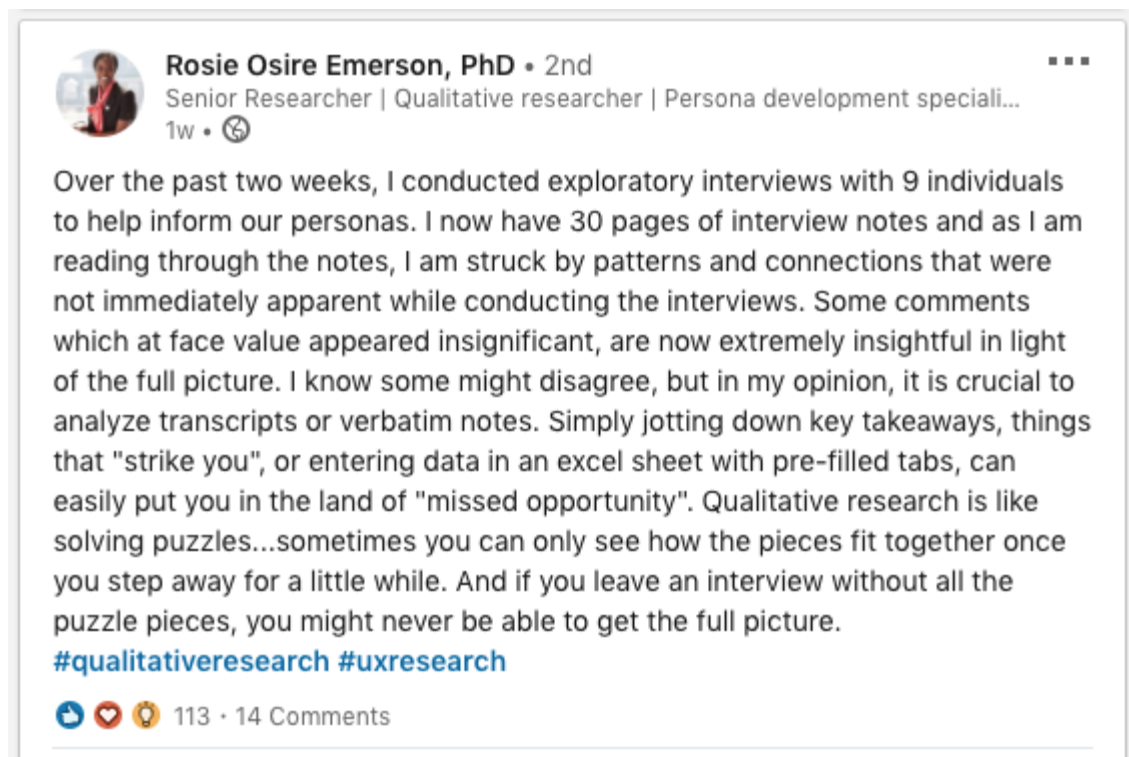
Why?

One word, “**verbatim**”.

Verbatims

Verbatims are word for word direct quotes from your interviews. These are POWERFUL. We will learn more about this as we put together our results and recommendations.

However, that is not the only reason. There are things that may seem incredibly insignificant to you as you’re conducting and transcribing the interview that become a part of a larger pattern once you see all of the interview transcriptions together for your group. These are things that are very easily missed if you do not have everything word for word. Here is a post I recently saw from a fellow researcher on LinkedIn.



Transcript of the screenshot:

“Over the past two weeks, I conducted exploratory interviews with 9 individuals to help inform our personas. I now have 30 pages of interview notes and as I am reading through the notes, I am struck by patterns and connections that were not immediately apparent while conducting the interviews. Some comments which at face value appeared insignificant, are now extremely insightful in light of the full picture. I know some might disagree, but in my opinion, it is crucial to analyze transcripts or verbatim notes. Simply jotting down key takeaways, things that “strike you”, or entering data in an excel sheet with pre-filled tabs, can easily put you in the land of “missed opportunity”. Qualitative research is like solving puzzles...sometimes you can only see how the pieces fit together once you step away for a little while. And if you leave an interview without all the puzzle pieces, you might never be able to get the full picture.”

So yes, while this may seem like an extra burden right now, it will definitely pay off.

Contextual

Second point we come to is the “contextual” part of the transcriptions. What do I mean by that? Since we are completing this work in groups, but we will be conducting our interviews individually, we will need to add context to the transcripts to help those who weren’t there for the interview really understand the context in which things were stated. This way you won’t have to watch 8 other videos to get all the data you need.

In anthropology, we call this “thick description” (thank you Geertz!). What does that mean? Well, if you were to do an interview in a location of your interviewee’s choosing then that location, everything happening during the interview, and the interviewee themselves would all be participants in the interview and they all play a part in understanding the information provided throughout it. While these interviews we are conducting now are remote, in the future, it is suggested that you do interviews on location as often as possible and to use that location as a part of your interview data. Important takeaway: observations during interviews are key insights that we don’t want to lose.

While the conversation is going on, you should take notes (see our other reading for the week) which include things you find interesting at the time as well as context for them. This will help you later as you will want to refer back to things while conducting your analysis and synthesis. You may also want to take notes on the transcription you critique as this will be one of your groupmate’s and it will be data you will need to review again during the analysis and synthesis stage. Might as well knock out two tasks at the same time!

It’s also good to provide a summary at the top of your transcription so that those reading it have some understanding of what to expect as far as the data goes.

The following page will provide you with an example of what I am looking for.

GM Interview One

March 5, 2009

Age: Over 40

Nationality: Hispanic

Marital Status/Children: Married with one son

Employment: Manager

Pseudonym: Gentleman

My Impressions:

My interview was conversational, with the gentleman I interviewed doing most of the talking which felt good. His family had GM vehicles when he lived at home, and he had good memories of those. He now drives a company owned GM car that he has no complaints about and likes just fine. He owns a Ford for his personal use, and most of the cars he has purchased have been Fords. He would consider buying a GM.

The conversation got interesting when we discussed GM and the media. He definitely associates GM and car manufacturers, in general, with getting an unfair advantage through government assistance. Any other business would have gone out of business in his opinion, and it doesn't seem fair that a business that has union wages and mismanagement would get help. He does acknowledge that GM is trying get away from its reputation as building the biggest vehicles on the road using the most gas. He sees GM vehicles now that he likes.

The interview was approximately 40 minutes, and I used a tape recorder. This gentleman is interested in seeing the results.

I prepared an introductory statement for myself at the beginning of the tape. The interview was conducted in comfortable chairs at my home, and the tone was conversational. The gentleman was engaged and participated in the conversation.

Transcript:

Interviewee (K): Okay, this is Thursday, February 26th, 2009, 6 p.m., and this is an interview with a gentleman, Mr. _____, who is over 45, Hispanic, and interested in participating in this interview.

(K continues with introductory remarks)

I am a graduate student at the University of North Texas, and I am taking a class in organizational anthropology. In this class we are studying people's perceptions of General Motors. Do you mind if I ask you some questions about your perceptions of General Motors?

Gentleman (G): (laughing) Sure, knock yourself out.

K: The interview should take 45 minutes to an hour. If at any time you wish to stop, we will do so. Your identity will be kept confidential and we will not be using your name in any of our findings. Our finding will be presented to individuals at General Motors, and I can provide you with a copy of them if you wish. I would like to tape the interview, if it is okay with you. That way, I can get your words down exactly. Is it okay to interview you this way?

G: Yes, that is fine.

K: We'll get some demographics out of the way, first. Okay, if you are comfortable answering, what is your age? (hesitation on the part of the gentleman, there was a pause in receiving an answer) A range is fine to share.

G: Over 45

.... (transcript continues for 6 pages)

Reviewing the Example Transcript

This is a real example of a real interview that was conducted in March of 2009. Notice at the beginning there are basic details in case demographics need to play a part later when we are analyzing and synthesizing the data. The pseudonym is also listed.

The last thing I want to bring your attention to is that throughout the text here there are comments in parenthesis i.e. (laughing) and (hesitation...). These are the additional context I'm talking about. If this interview took place in a particular setting, the beginning might also provide a description of that, who chose it, what time you were there, and the effects it had on the interview. If the environment played a part at a particular time, that might be noted inline with the responses.

If it made sense to do so, you might also photograph the environment to add to your data. Remember, things that may seem insignificant in the beginning, may have a larger part to play the further you get into the study.

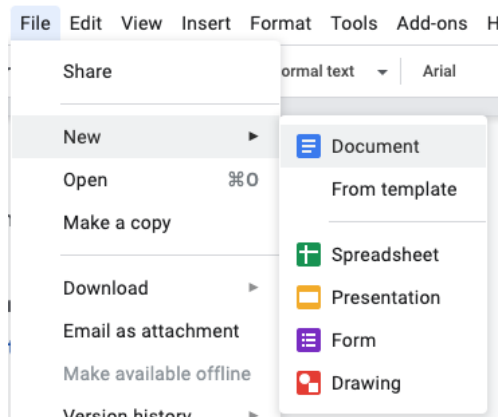
Now for a quick trick on transcribing! (continues on the next page)

Transcribing via Google Docs

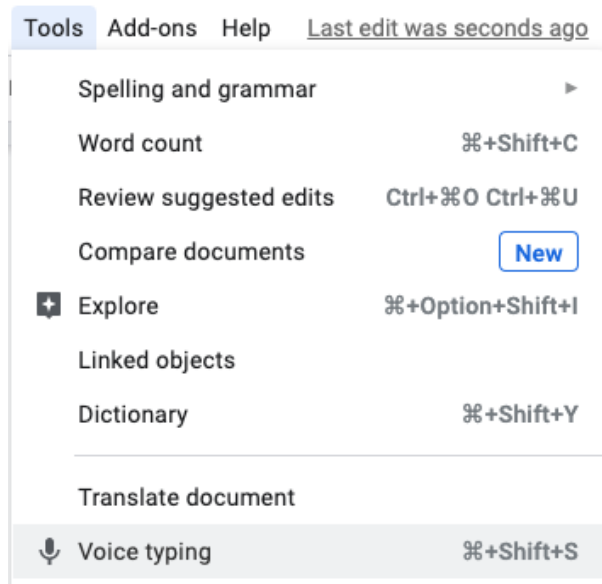
If you were to manually transcribe an audio recording it usually takes 3x the length of the recording to transcribe it. If you're a professional like me, you even have a foot pedal to help you do this so you don't have to take your hands off the keys to start and stop the recording while you type it out. Thankfully I am not asking you to go that far for this class! Instead, I'm going to let you in on a little hack.

To do this I suggest using two devices. One to play back your original recording on through headphones so you're the only one who can hear it and one you can dictate into via a microphone. However, you should be able to do it on a single device

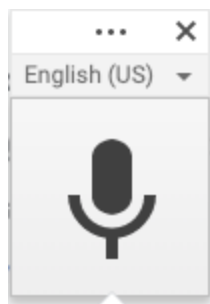
Once you get these two devices setup, open Google Docs (you have access through Brandeis, or you can open it through any Google account). Start a new Google Doc.



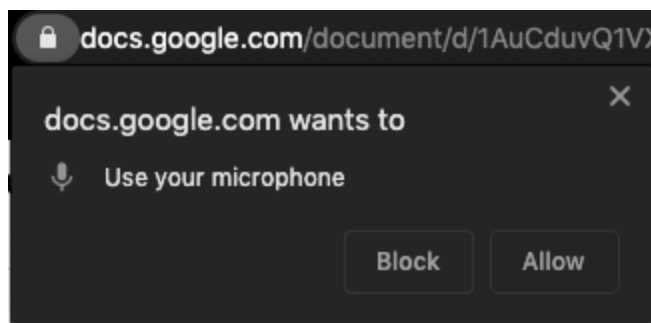
After you open it, go to Tools and find Voice Typing.



You will then see an icon to the left of your document that looks like a microphone and has the contextual help “Click to speak”.

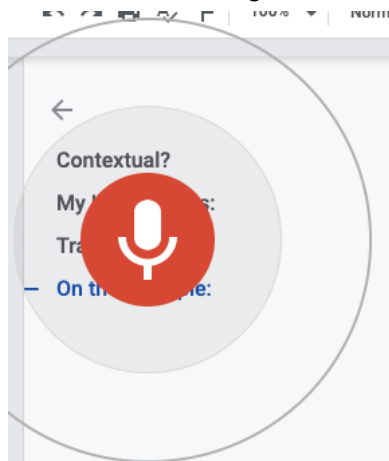


You might get an alert that asks you to allow docs.google.com to use your microphone. You want to click allow for this to work.

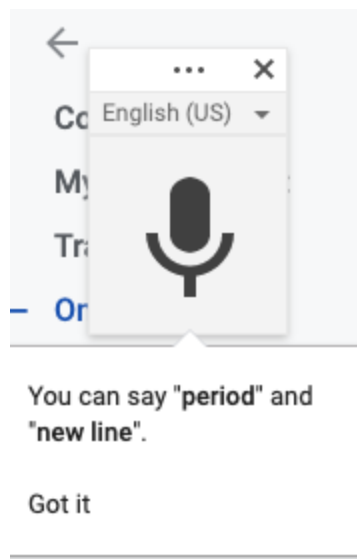


Now as you listen the words from your interview over your headphones you can simply repeat them into your microphone and Google Docs will type it out for you. This entire paragraph was recorded in this way.

When it is recording it will look like a red microphone with circles around it.



As you are recording you might want to start and stop your audio while docs catches up with you. Also, if you want to add in punctuation and new lines simply say “period” and “new line” so it knows how to do it for you.



And there you go. A quick hack to get at least the rough draft of your interview done very quickly. Once you get this all out and onto a document, you will want to go back and add who was talking for each statement as well as the contextual data (see previous example). As long as you keep your interviews around the 20 minute mark, this should take less than an hour to do!

If you conducted your interview remotely via Zoom, you can also get a machine version of your transcription through that service. You will need to edit it, but it gives you a great starting point.

The next part of this process is to code the interview. Look for details on that in the Week 4 assignment guidance.

Turning it In

Your coded (you'll learn about coding in week 4) transcription is due with your group's Week 4 20% review and turn in due on the last day of Week 4 by the end of the day.

On your coded transcription, please provide a link to the recording at the top above any descriptive information you provide, there is not a separate turn in for the recording but it should be uploaded and accessible.