

Conversations at Scale: Robust AI-led Interviews with a Simple Open-Source Platform*

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Abstract

The advent of large language models (LLMs) provides an opportunity to conduct qualitative interviews at a large scale, with thousands of respondents, creating a bridge between qualitative and quantitative methods. In this paper, we develop a simple, versatile open-source platform for researchers to run AI-led qualitative interviews. Our approach incorporates established best practices from the sociology literature, uses only a single LLM agent with low latency, and can be adapted to new interview topics almost instantaneously. We assess its robustness by drawing comparisons to human experts and using several respondents-based quality metrics. Its versatility is illustrated through four broad classes of applications: eliciting key factors in decision making, political views, views of the external world, and subjective mental states. High performance ratings are obtained in all of these domains. The platform is easy to use and deploy: we provide detailed explanations and code for researchers to swiftly set up and test their own AI-led interviews. In addition, we develop, validate, and share a simple LLM-based pipeline for textual analysis and coding of large volumes of interview transcripts.

Keywords: qualitative interviews; large language models; surveys.