

## Transcription Level 1: *Preliminary*

### Objective

The objective at this level is to learn how to begin transcribing a recorded interaction. Transcribing at this stage may be termed *Level 1 transcription*, representing a *preliminary* level of transcription of spoken discourse. It is so named because for most transcribers it will serve simply as a preliminary stage in the process of transcription, which will subsequently be enriched by the addition of more detailed features.

### Categories

Level 1 transcription is a very basic form of transcription that seeks to represent only some of the more essential features of the recorded interaction, such as the words spoken, the order in which they were spoken, and who spoke them. These are the transcription categories that are needed to “flesh out” a rough sketch of the basic overall organization of the speech event. Typically, a Level 1 transcription is only a first stage on the way to the production of a more detailed transcription. For the most part, categories included at this level are those that virtually all research practices would consider essential for even the most limited transcription.

The one exception is a relatively challenging feature whose inclusion at the most fundamental level of transcription is not widespread and is even, perhaps, controversial. This is the *Intonation Unit* (IU). Reasons for including the IU at this level are two-fold. First, on a theoretical level, the IU represents a fundamental organizing principle of spoken language. IUs are important because they give structure to spoken discourse, with broad implications for aspects of language extending from phonetics and syntax to cognition and interaction. Second, on a practical level, it turns out to be easier to organize the transcribing process, and the transcription itself, if the identification of IUs is addressed right from the beginning. The intonation units define the skeleton of the transcription as it emerges over time. At the preliminary level of transcription, what is needed is a rough initial approximation of the IU boundaries, which will be further refined at higher levels of transcription. (Among other things, later levels of transcription will attend to certain detailed transcription categories that will contribute to the more exact identification of intonation unit boundaries.)

### Conventions

The following conventions are those used for the transcription categories in Level 1 (“*Preliminary*”) transcription, as described in the Du Bois “Transcription Delicacy Hierarchy”.

	<u>MEANING</u>	<u>SYMBOL</u>	<u>COMMENTS</u>
1.	word	[SPACE]	Space before and after marks word
2.	speaker label	JILL;	Full first name in all capitals, plus semicolon
3.	intonation unit	[LINE]	One full line for each Intonation Unit

Beyond what is indicated explicitly by the above symbols, several kinds of information are provided implicitly, in fairly obvious ways. This kind of information is automatically incorporated via the general transcription conventions used, without having to write it using overt symbols. For example, the sequence of words as they are spoken is indicated in the conventional manner, using left-to-right order of words on each line to mark their temporal sequence. Similarly, when speakers take turns, this is indicated implicitly by the introduction of a new speaker label at the beginning of each turn. Moreover, the top-to-bottom order of utterances on the page, plus the speaker labels at each change of speaker, implicitly indicates the sequence of turns.