The role of the interviewer english language essay

Linguistics, English

There are three main types of interview which tend to be used in social research – unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews and structured interviews. For each type you will need to think about how you are going to record the interview, what type of questions you need to ask, how you intend to establish rapport and how you can probe for more information. Interviews are a widely used tool to access people’s experiences and their inner perceptions, attitudes, and feelings of reality. Based on the degree of structuring, interviews can be divided into three categories: structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, and unstructured interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2005). A structured interview is an interview that has a set of predefined questions and the questions would be asked in the same order for all respondents. This standardization is intended to minimize the effects of the instrument and the interviewer on the research results. Structured interviews are similar to surveys except that they are administered orally rather than in writing. Semi-structured interviews are more flexible. An interview guide, usually including both closed-ended and open-ended questions, is prepared; but in the course of the interview, the interviewer has a certain amount of room to adjust the sequence of the questions to be asked and to add questions based on the context of the participants’ responses. The unstructured interview technique was developed in the disciplines of anthropology and sociology as a method to elicit people’s social realities. In the literature, the term is used interchangeably with the terms, informal conversational interview, in-depth interview, non standardized interview, and ethnographic interview.

Unstructured Interviews

The definitions of an unstructured interview are various. Minichiello et al. (1990) defined them as interviews in which neither the question nor the answer categories are predetermined. Instead, they rely on social interaction between the researcher and the informant. Punch (1998) described unstructured interviews as a way to understand the complex behavior of people without imposing any a priori categorization, which might limit the field of inquiry. Patton (2002) described unstructured interviews as a natural extension of participant observation, because they so often occur as part of ongoing generation of questions in the natural flow of an interaction. While the definitions are not the same, there is more agreement about the basic characteristics of unstructured interviews. The researcher comes to the interview with no predefined theoretical framework, and thus no hypotheses and questions about the social realities under investigation. Rather, the researcher has conversations with interviewees and generates questions in response to the interviewees' narration. As a consequence, each unstructured interview might generate data with different structures and patterns. The intention of an unstructured interview is to expose the researcher to unanticipated themes and to help him or her to develop a better understanding of the interviewees' social reality from the interviewees' perspectives. While unstructured interviews can be used as the primary data collection method it is also very common to incorporate unstructured interviews into a study primarily based on participant observation Just because unstructured interviews don't use predefined questions doesn't mean that they are random and non-directive.

Unstructured interviews cannot be started without detailed knowledge and preparation, if you hope to achieve deep insights into people's lives (Patton, 2002). The researcher will keep in mind the study's purpose and the general scope of the issues that he or she would like to discuss in the interview (Fife, 2005). The researcher's control over the conversation is intended to be minimal, but nevertheless the researcher will try to encourage the interviewees to relate experiences and perspectives that are relevant to the problems of interest to the researcher (Burgess, 1982). The decision to use unstructured interviews as a data collection method is governed by both the researcher's epistemology and the study's objectives. Researchers making use of unstructured interviews often hold a constructivist point of view of social reality and correspondingly design studies within an interpretive research paradigm. They believe that, to make sense of a study participant's world, researchers must approach it through the participant's own perspective and in the participant's own terms (Denzin, 1989; Robertson & Boyle, 1984). No hypothesis should be made beforehand and the purpose of inquiry is theory development rather than theory testing. In an ideal unstructured interview, the interviewer follows the interviewees' narration and generates questions spontaneously based on his or her reflections on that narration. It is accepted, however, that the structure of the interview can be loosely guided by a list of questions, called an aide memoire or agenda (Minichiello et al., 1990; Briggs, 2000; McCann & Clark, 2005). An aide memoire or agenda is a broad guide to topic issues that might be covered in the interview, rather than the actual questions to be asked. It is open-ended and flexible (Burgess, 1984). Unlike interview guides used in

structured interviewing, an aide memoire or agenda doesn’t determine the order of the conversation and is subject to revision based on the responses of the interviewees. Using an aide memoire or agenda in an unstructured interview encourages a certain degree of consistency across different interview sessions. Thus, a balance can be achieved between flexibility and consistency. Unstructured interviews can be very useful in studies of people’s information seeking and use. They are especially useful for studies attempting to find patterns, generate models, and inform information system design and implementation. For example, Alvarez and Urla (2002) used unstructured interviews to elicit information requirements during the implementation of an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system. Due to their conversational and non-intrusive characteristics, unstructured interviews can be used in settings where it is inappropriate or impossible to use other more structured methods to examine people’s information activities. For example, Schultze (2000) used unstructured interviews, along with other ethnographic methods, in her eight-month field study in a large company investigating their production of informational objects. Although unstructured interviews can generate detailed data and enable in-depth understanding of a phenomenon, they are still underused in information and library science, compared to surveys and semi-structured interviews. Fortunately, as observed by Ellis and Haugan (1997), a shift has been occurring in the study of information use, toward a more holistic view. The effects of this shift are reflected in a change in data collection approaches, " from a macro-approach, studying large groups via questionnaires or structured interviews, to a micro-approach, studying small groups via

observation or unstructured interviews" (Ellis, 1997, p. 384-385). If Ellis is correct, we will see an increasing use of unstructured interviews in information behavior research.

The Role of the Interviewer

The interviewer has a unique position in an unstructured interview. He or she is an integral part of the research instrument, in that there are no predefined frameworks and questions that can be used to structure the inquiry. To a great extent, the success of the interview depends on the interviewer's ability to generate questions in response to the context and to move the conversation in a direction of interest to the researcher. Thus, an unstructured interview is more open to interviewer effects than its structured and semistructured counterparts. To become a skillful interviewer takes knowledge and experience (Minichiello et al., 1990). The role that an interviewer adopts is critical to the success of an unstructured interview. The choice of roles is constrained by many characteristics of the interviewer, such as gender, age, social status, race and ethnicity. Even so, it is generally preferable that the interviewer present him- or herself as a learner, a friend, and a member of the interviewee's group, who has sympathetic interest in the interviewee's life and is willing to understand it (Burgess, 1984). Adopting this kind of role makes building rapport between the interviewer and interviewees possible; it further makes in-depth understanding of the interviewees' lives possible. The merit of an unstructured interview lies in its conversational nature, which allows the interviewer to be highly responsive to individual differences and situational changes (Patton, 2002). This characteristic of unstructured interviews requires interviewers to have a rich

set of skills. First, the interviewer should be able to listen carefully during the conversation. The interviewer often starts the interview with a very broad and open question, such as, " How do you feel about the ...?". The interviewee then can take over and lead the conversation. In such conversations, the interviewer usually listens and reflects more than he or she talks. Second, in order to adjust the interview direction in response to the individual interview context, the interviewer has to be able to " generate rapid insights [and] formulate questions quickly and smoothly" (Patton, 2002, p. 343). Most importantly, interviewers should be good at questioning, probing, and adjusting the flow of conversations at an appropriate level. This skill is reflected in three aspects of the interviewer’s questioning tactics. First, interviewers should be adept at using the appropriate type of question, based on the specific interview context. The kinds of questions posed are crucial to the unstructured interview (Burgess, 1984). Spradley (1979) identified three main types of questions: descriptive questions, which allow interviewees to provide descriptions about their activities; structural questions, which attempt to find out how interviewees organize their knowledge; and contrast questions, which allow interviewees to discuss the meanings of situations and make comparisons across different situations. Each type of question is used at different points in the interview to encourage interviewees to talk or to probe for more details. Second, interviewers should be able to monitor and control the directiveness of their questions, comments, and even gestures and actions (Burgess, 1984). It is important for interviewers not to ask directive questions when initiating the interview because directive questions may bias the data by leading

interviewees to respond in a way that they thought was expected or desired by the researcher. Patton (2002) cautioned that interviewers should " guard against asking questions that impose interpretations on the situation" (p. 343). Denzin (1989) also pointed out that a " sympathetic identification" with interviewees' points of view is necessary, but the interviewer should avoid giving advice and/or passing judgments on respondents (Denzin, 1989, p. 109). Whyte (1960) provided a six-level scale to evaluate the degree of directiveness in any question or statement made by the interviewer by examining it in the context of what immediately preceded it during the interview. Controlling and adjusting the directiveness of questions and statements is a big challenge for interviewers, especially for those with little interviewing experience. Third, interviewers should be able to maintain control of the pace and direction of the conversation. While the interviewer allows the interviewee to raise new topics or move the conversation in directions that the interviewee believes are important, it is the interviewer's responsibility to engage the interviewee in the conversation and keep the conversation focused on the researcher's concerns. As Minichiello et al. (1990) note, an unstructured interview is " always a controlled conversation, which is geared to the interviewer's research interests" (p. 93). A productive conversation is possible when a balance of control is achieved.

Conducting an Unstructured Interview

There are no official and agreed-upon guidelines for how to conduct an unstructured interview. But in practice, many researchers comply with the steps listed below (Punch, 1998; Fontana & Frey, 2005) when planning and conducting unstructured interviews. Step 1: Getting in: accessing the setting.

Various difficulties in gaining access to research settings have been documented, especially when the researcher is an " outsider" in the environment. Negotiation techniques and tactics are required in this situation. The researcher also has to take into consideration the possible political, legal, and bureaucratic barriers that may arise during the process of gaining access to the setting (Lofland et al., 2006). Step 2: Understanding the language and culture of the interviewees. A primary focus of an unstructured interview is to understand the meaning of human experiences from the interviewees' perspectives. Thus, unstructured interviews are governed by the cultural conventions of the research setting. This requires that the researcher can understand the interviewees' language and, further, its meanings in the specific cultural context of the research setting (Minichiello et al., 1990; Fife, 2005). Step 3: Deciding on how to present oneself. An unstructured interview is a two way conversation. The quality of the conversation is influenced, to a great extent, by how the interviewer represents him- or herself. The interviewer's self representation will depend on the context he or she is in, but in all cases, the interviewer is a " learner" in theconversation, trying to make sense of the interviewee's experiences from his or her pointof view. Step 4: Locating an informant. Not every person in the research setting will makea good informant. The informant (i. e., the interviewee) will be an insider who is willing to talk with you, of course. But even more importantly, the informant must be knowledgeable enough to serve as a guide and interpreter of the setting's unfamiliar language and culture (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Step 5: Gaining trust and establishing rapport. Gaining trust and establishing rapport is essential to the success of

unstructured interviews. Only when a trustful and harmonious relationship is established will the interviewee share his or her experience with the interviewer, especially if the topic of the conversation is sensitive. When endeavoring to cultivate rapport, the interviewer might need to be careful: it’s easy to become so involved with your informants’ lives that you can no longer achieve your research purposes (Fontana and Frey, 2005). Step 6: Capturing the data. Note-taking is a traditional method for capturing interview data. But in an unstructured interview, note-taking is likely to disrupt the natural flow of the conversation. Thus, when possible, it is preferable to audio record the interviews by tape or digital recorder. In situations where only note-taking is possible, you will need to take brief notes during the interview, writing up more detailed notes immediately after each interview (Fontana and Frey, 2005, Lofland, et al., 2006). As you develop your interviewing skills, you also will want to practice a variety of memory techniques, to be able to capture as much detail as possible from each interview.

The Challenges of Unstructured Interviews

While the flexibility of unstructured interviews offers a number of advantages, there are three main challenges that researchers face when using unstructured interviews as a data collection method. The first challenge is that this method requires a significant amount of time to collect the needed information (Patton, 2002), especially when the researcher first enters the field and knows little about the setting. It takes time to gain trust, develop rapport, and gain access to interviewees. Because each interview is highly individualized, the length of each unstructured interview session also

might be longer than structured or semi-structured interview sessions (Arksey & Knight, 1999). The second challenge for researchers is to exert the right amount and type of control over the direction and pace of the conversation. It is difficult to control the degree of directiveness of the questions and statements proposed during the conversation. This issue was discussed in the previous section. Also, when a new topic emerges in the discussion, it is difficult for the researcher to know whether to follow it and risk losing continuity, or to stay on the major theme and risk missing additional useful information(Patton, 2002). Furthermore, when the interviewee moves the conversation/interview in a direction that is not useful, the interviewer will need to decide when and how to interrupt the conversation gracefully, to return it to a topic of interest for the purposes of the research (Whyte, 1960). Researchers agree that, to develop your skills in sensitively controlling unstructured interviews, both training and experience are important. The third challenge is analyzing the data gathered by unstructured interviews. The questions asked in each unstructured interview were dependent on the context of the interview and so can vary dramatically across multiple interviews. Different questions will generate different responses so that a great deal of effort has to be made to analyze the data systematically, to find the patterns within it (Patton, 2002).

Conclusion

Unstructured interviews are most useful when you want to gain an in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon within a particular cultural context. In addition, they are most appropriate when you are working within an interpretive research paradigm, in which you would assume that reality is

socially constructed by the participants in the setting of interest. Based on this underlying assumption, you will want to understand the phenomenon of interest from the individual perspectives of those who are involved with it. If these are your research goals, then it is useful to allow the interview/conversation to be mutually shaped by you and the interviewee. Imposing too much structure on the interview will inhibit the interviewee's responses and you are likely to come away with only an incomplete understanding of the phenomenon of interest. Unstructured interviews are not useful when you already have a basic understanding of a phenomenon and want to pursue particular aspects of it. If your research goals are well-defined, then you can use other methods (e. g., semi-structured interviews or surveys) to collect the needed data more efficiently.

Methods of Recording

If you've decided that interviewing is the most appropriate method for your research, you need to think about what sort of recording equipment you're going to use. You should think about recording methods early on in your research as you need to become familiar with their use through practice. Even if you decide not to use audio recording equipment, and instead use pen and paper, you should practise taking notes in an interview situation, making sure that you can maintain eye contact and write at the same time. If, however, you're conducting a structured interview, you will probably develop a questionnaire with boxes to tick as your method of recording (see Chapter 9). This is perhaps the simplest form of recording, although you will have to be familiar with your questionnaire, to make sure you can work through it quickly and efficiently.

Using audio recording equipment

If you are a student find out what audio recording equipment is available for your use. Today there is a wide variety of recorders available – prices vary enormously and some designs and types are more suited to certain tasks than others. The general rule is that the more you pay for your equipment the better the recording will be. However, there are many other factors that influence the quality of your recording and even if you are on a limited budget you can still obtain a good recording using cheap equipment if you plan carefully.

RECORDING CHECKLIST

Make sure that there is enough space (memory, disk or tape) to record everything you need. Check that the batteries are fully functioning and that you have enough power to complete your recording. A battery indicator light is useful so that you can check discreetly that you are still recording. Do you have spare disks, memory or cassettes, if required? Is the venue free from background noise that could disrupt the recording? Is there a suitable surface on which to place the equipment? Is the microphone strong enough to pick up all voices in a focus group setting? Although built-in microphones are more convenient, you will need to test that they are powerful enough, and if not you may need to consider an external microphone. Built-in microphones tend to be suitable for one-to-one interviews, as long as you are both sitting close enough. Are you able to download files to your PC? Do you have the necessary software available? If you can’t download files, how easy will it be to transcribe your interview? Make sure that storage is safe and secure and that data, disks or cassettes are not lost or accidentally

wiped. RECORDING METHODADVANTAGESDISADVANTAGESADDITIONAL INFORMATIONAudio recording equipmentCan concentrate on listening to what they say. Able to maintain eye contact. Have a complete record of interview for analysis, including what is said and interaction between interviewer and interviewee. Have plenty of useful quotations for report. Rely on equipment – if it fails you have no record of interview. Can become complacent – don't listen as much as you should because it's being recorded. Some interviewees may be nervous of tape-recorders. Overcome equipment failure by practice beforehand and checking throughout interview, without drawing attention to machine. Could take a few notes as well – helps you to write down important issues and you will have some record if equipment fails. Visual recording equipmentProduces the most comprehensive recording of an interview. Gives a permanent record of what is said and includes a record of body language, facial expressions and interaction. The more equipment you use the more chances there are that something will go wrong. This method can be expensive and the equipment hard to transport. Some interviewees may be nervous of visual recording equipment. If you want to use visual recording equipment it is preferable to obtain the help of someone experienced in the use of the equipment. That way you can concentrate on the interview while someone else makes sure that it is recorded correctly. Note-takingDon't have to rely on recording equipment which could fail. Is the cheapest method if on a very limited budget. Interviewees may think they have something important to say if they see you taking notes – while you write they may add more information. Cannot maintain eye contact all the time. Can be hard to concentrate on what

they’re saying and to probe for more information. Can be tiring. Will not have many verbatim quotations for final report. Need to make sure that you have a suitable venue for this type of recording. You will need to develop a type of shorthand which you can understand and you will need to learn to write very quickly. Box-tickingSimple to use. Easy to analyse. Easy to compare information with that obtained from other interviews. Inflexible – no scope for additional information. Forces interviewees to answer in a certain way. May leave interviewees feeling that they have not answered in the way they would have liked to have done. You have to make sure that the questionnaire is very carefully designed so that you cover as many types of answer as possible. It is useful to take a pen and notepad with you to the interview, even if you intend to use a recorder. You might find it useful to jot down pertinent points to which you want to return later, or use it to remind yourself of what you haven’t yet asked. Also, you might encounter someone who doesn’t want to be recorded. This could be because the research is on a sensitive issue, or it might be that the interviewee has a fear of being recorded.

Taking notes

If you intend to take notes, buy yourself a shorthand notepad and develop a shorthand style which you’ll be able to understand later (see Chapter 10). It is advisable to write up all notes into a longer report as soon as possible after the interview while it’s still fresh in your mind. If you can type quicker than you can write, and you have use of a laptop, you may prefer to type your notes as the interviewee speaks, although you should check that they are happy for you to do this as some people may find it a little off-putting. An

advantage to taking notes in this way is that you can organise your notes easily and cut and paste relevant information and quotations into documents and reports. It can be tiring taking notes in long interviews, so only arrange one or two per day. You must learn to try to maintain some eye contact while you’re writing or typing, and make sure that you nod every now and again to indicate that you’re still listening. Try also to get one or two verbatim quotations as these will be useful for your final report.

DEVELOPING AN INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

For most types of interview you need to construct an interview schedule. For structured interviews you will need to construct a list of questions which is asked in the same order and format to each participant (see Chapter 9). For semi-structured interviews the schedule may be in the form of a list of questions or a list of topics. If you’re new to research, you might prefer a list of questions that you can ask in a standard way, thus ensuring that you do not ask leading questions or struggle for something to ask. However, a list of topics tends to offer more flexibility, especially in unstructured interviews where the interviewee is left to discuss issues she deems to be important. By ticking off each topic from your list as it is discussed, you can ensure that all topics have been covered. Often interviewees will raise issues without being asked and a list of topics ensures that they do not have to repeat themselves. Also, it allows the interviewee to raise pertinent issues which you may not have thought about. These can then be added to the schedule for the next interview.

Overcoming nerves

If you’re nervous about working with a list of topics rather than a list of questions, a good way to overcome this is to ask a few set questions first and then, once you and the interviewee have both relaxed, move on to a set of topics. With practice, you will feel comfortable interviewing and will choose the method which suits you best.

Focusing your mind

If you take time to produce a detailed interview schedule, it helps you to focus your mind on your research topic, enabling you to think about all the areas which need to be covered. It should also alert you to any sensitive or controversial issues which could arise. When developing an interview schedule for any type of interview, begin with easy to answer, general questions which will help the interviewee feel at ease. Don’t expect in-depth, personal disclosure immediately.

HOW TO DEVELOP AN INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Brainstorm your research topic – write down every area you can think of without analysis or judgement. Work through your list carefully, discarding irrelevant topics and grouping similar suggestions. Categorise each suggestion under a list of more general topics. Order these general topics into a logical sequence, leaving sensitive or controversial issues until the end – ask about experience and behaviour before asking about opinion and feelings. Move from general to specific. Think of questions you will want to ask relating to each of these areas. If you’re new to research you might find it useful to include these questions on your schedule. However, you do not

have to adhere rigidly to these during your interview. When developing questions, make sure they are open rather than closed. Keep them neutral, short and to the point. Use language which will be understood. Avoid jargon and double-barrelled questions (see Chapter 9). If you need to, revise your schedule after each interview. Become familiar with your schedule so that you do not have to keep referring to it during the interview.

ESTABLISHING RAPPORT

A researcher has to establish rapport before a participant will share personal information. There are a number of ways to do this. Treat interviewees with respect. Make sure you arrive on time. Don’t rush straight into the interview unless the interviewee pushes to do so. Accept a cup of tea, if offered, and make polite conversation to help put both of you at ease. Think about your appearance and the expectations of the person you’re about to interview. If the interviewee is a smartly turned out business person who expects to be interviewed by a professional looking researcher, make sure you try to fulfil those expectations with your appearance and behaviour. Think about body language. Try not to come across as nervous or shy. Maintain appropriate eye-contact and smile in a natural, unforced manner. Remember that the eyes and smile account for more than 50% of the total communication in a greeting situation. If you establish rapid and clear eye-contact, you’ll be more easily trusted. During the interview, firm eye contact with little movement indicates that you’re interested in what is being said. Also, it indicates honesty and high self-esteem. On the other hand, if your eyes wander all over the place and only briefly make contact with the eyes of the interviewee, low self-esteem, deceit or boredom can be indicated. Don’t rub

your eyes as this could indicate you're tired or bored. Conversely, watch the eyes of your interviewees which will tell you a lot about how the interview is progressing. Don't invade their space. Try not to sit directly opposite them – at an angle is better, but not by their side as you will have to keep turning your heads which will be uncomfortable in a long interview. By watching the eye movements and body language of the interviewees, and by listening to what they're saying, you'll soon know when you've established rapport. This is when you can move on to more personal or sensitive issues. If, however, you notice the interviewees becoming uncomfortable in any way, respect their feelings and move on to a more general topic. Sometimes you might need to offer to turn off the recorder or stop taking notes if you touch upon a particularly sensitive issue.

ASKING QUESTIONS AND PROBING FOR INFORMATION

As the interview progresses, ask questions, listen carefully to responses and probe for more information. You should probe in a way which doesn't influence the interviewee. When you probe, you need to think about obtaining clarification, elaboration, explanation and understanding. There are several ways to probe for more detail, as the following list illustrates. It's useful to learn a few of these before you begin your interviews.

PROBING FOR MORE DETAIL

That's interesting; can you explain that in more detail? I'm not quite sure I understand. You were saying? Can you elaborate a little more? Could you clarify that? Could you expand upon that a little? When you say '……', what do you mean? Pauses work well – don't be afraid of silence. You'll find that

most people are uncomfortable during silences and will elaborate on what they've said rather than experience discomfort. Also, you may find it helpful to summarise what people have said as a way of finding out if you have understood them and to determine whether they wish to add any further information. Another useful tactic is to repeat the last few words a person has said, turning it into a question. The following piece of dialogue from an interview illustrates how these techniques can be used so that the researcher does not influence what is being said. Janet:' Well, often I find it really difficult because I just don't think the information's available.'Interviewer:' The information isn't available?'Janet:' No, well I suppose it is available, but I find it really difficult to read so it makes me think it isn't available.'Interviewer:' In what way do you find it difficult to read?'Janet:' Well, the language is a bit beyond me, but also the writing's too small and it's a funny colour.'Interviewer:' You say the language is a bit beyond you?'Janet:' Yes, I suppose really that's why I need to do this, so that it won't be beyond me anymore.' [laughs] Interviewer: ' Why do you laugh about that?' Janet: ' Well, I don't know, I suppose maybe I'm embarrassed, you know, about not being able to read and write so well, you know, I always blame my eyesight and things being a funny colour and everything, but I suppose the bottom line is I just can't read proper. That's why I'm doing this, you know, going to college and all that. I weren't exactly naughty at school, I just didn't really bother, you know, I didn't really like it that much, if I'm honest with you.'This piece of dialogue illustrates how, with careful probing, the researcher can discover a greater depth of information which wasn't initially offered by the interviewee.

COMPLETING THE INTERVIEW

Negotiate a length of time for the interviews and stick to it, unless the interviewees are happy to continue. Make sure you thank them for their help and leave a contact number in case they wish to speak to you at a later date. You might find it useful to send a transcript to the interviewees – it is good for them to have a record of what has been said and they might wish to add further information. Do not disclose information to third parties unless you have received permission to do so (see Chapter 13).

SUMMARY

Practise with the recording equipment before the interview takes place. It might be useful to conduct some pilot interviews so that you can become familiar with the recording equipment. Develop an interview schedule, starting with general, non-personal issues. Check the recording equipment works and make sure you have enough tapes, disks, memory and/or batteries, paper, pens, etc. Check that you have a suitable venue in which to carry out the interview, free from noise and interruptions. Make sure you know how to get to the interview and arrive in good time. Dress and behave appropriately. Establish rapport. Negotiate a length of time for the interview and stick to it, unless the interviewee is happy to continue. Ask open questions, listen to responses and probe where necessary. Keep questions short and to the point. Avoid jargon, double-barrelled questions and leading questions. Listen carefully and acknowledge that you are listening. Check recording equipment is working without drawing attention to it. Repeat and summarise answers to aid clarity and understanding. Achieve closure, thank them and leave a contact number in case they wish to get in touch with you

about anything that has arisen. Respect their confidentiality – do not pass on what has been said to third parties unless you have requested permission to do so.

FURTHER READING

Arksey, H. and Knight, P. (1999) Interviewing for Social Scientists: An Introductory Resource with Examples, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Keats, D. (2000) Interviewing: A Practical Guide for Students and Professionals, Buckingham: Open University Press. Kvale, S. (2007) Doing Interviews, London: Sage. Rubin, H. J. and Rubin, I. S. (2004) Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data, 2nd edition, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Wengraf, T. (2001) Qualitative Research Interviewing: Biographic Narrative and Semi-Structured Methods, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.