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THE INTERVIEW

An interview refers to a conversation between the researcher and the informant. There are three types of interviews: structured, semi-structured and unstructured. The structured interview takes the form of an oral questionnaire. It requires all the respondents to answer the same questions which have the same wording. Thus it follows the format of a questionnaire but it is administered orally. The semi-structured interview involves an outline of the topics that will be discussed. Therefore, the interviewer asks questions without following a specific order and wording. The unstructured interview takes a form of a general discussion since that researcher just explains the research topic to the informant who has to provide his opinion about it.

The interview is useful for gathering information about opinions and attitudes. The structured interview may be used for the collection of qualitative and quantitative data. On the other hand, the semi-structured and unstructured interviews provide qualitative data. The interview relies more on open-ended questions; it is time consuming and may introduce bias.

When designing an interview, follow these instructions:

o Think about the type of the interview you will opt for and the issue you will tackle.

o Prepare the questions or outline in advance.

o When meeting the informant, start with an oral introduction involving the greeting, the purpose of the interview as well as the consent of the respondent.

o Avoid questions that increase bias and make the informant feel at ease.

o While listening to the respondent, take notes or record the speech of the informant. However, recording should not be employed without the permission of the respondent. Thus, note-taking remains the best method for keeping data.

References:

- Cohen, Louis, Manion, Lawrence, and Morrison, Keith. (2007). Research Methods in Education. New York: Routledge.

- Perry, Fred. (2005). Research in Applied Linguistics: Becoming a Discerning Consumer. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.