

Autoethnographic Interviews – exercises and guidelines

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The following text contains the exercises and the guidelines given to the participants, to encourage them to experiment with interview strategies after the theoretical introduction on Autoethnographic Interviewing.

Exercise 1: think of an event or episode of your recent daily life, not necessarily connected with your profession. In pairs, interview each other on your events, taking notes manually or recording. At the end, prepare a five-minutes “presentation” of each interview, selecting the most meaningful questions and answers, and be ready to re-enact it in the afternoon task.

The participants were given one hour to complete the first exercise in pairs. In the following phase, two couples were matched and instructed to present their interviews to each other. Then they received the following “twist” task:

Exercise 2 “Here is the twist”: When you present one of your questions to a person from the other duo, the question should be answered by their partner (the person that they did their interview with).

Follow this conduct with all the follow-up questions you have prepared.

When you answer questions on behalf of your interview partner, don’t be worried about getting it right! Answer them in first person and trust that you know “your” truth.

The scope of the exercise was not to enact a real autoethnographic interview, but more to test interview strategies in a safe context and reflect on how the identity of each participant influenced their perception of other people’s stories.

Interviewer guidelines:

- Use physical sensations other than sight: what were they smelling, hearing, tasting, touching...
- Use the environment: is the experience happening inside or in open air? What are the surroundings? How do they feel in that environment?
- Use relationships: who else is there? Do they know the person well? Is there a hierarchy between them, what do they think about it?
- Use action and reaction: what were they doing? What were the consequences of the actions they took there? What would have happened to them if they had taken a different action? Would they act differently, knowing what they know now?
- Use contrasts: evoke contrasting or opposite emotions to what the interviewee mentions. i.e. if they were sad, was there anything that made them happy?
- Use memory: have you been in that situation already? Was anything different? Were you different, and how?
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Reminder: keep into account body language, facial expressions, and other physical cues of the interviewee to enrich your understanding. Do they look relaxed, at ease, happy, excited, curious, hesitant, uncomfortable, sad, angry, perplexed, confused, irritated, lost, bristling... what is the pace of their speaking? Do they slow down or speed up in certain moments? How fast are their reactions? Are they in a closed or opened position with the body? What are their hands doing?

Don't forget to keep in touch with yourself: do you relate with that experience? Does your perception/sensation/reception diverge from that of the interviewee? How? Why? Have you had similar experiences? Do you resonate with the sensations recalled by the interviewee? Would you have acted differently? If it feels comfortable, **share your opinion, experience, or differences with the interviewee.**

Bibliography

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