

# Reflection/Commentary on a Past Article: “Transcription: Imperatives for Qualitative Research”

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## *How Did It Fit Into Your Career Path?*

My interest in transcription developed during my doctoral studies. Although drawing on conversation analysis (CA), and its notation system and approach to transcription, I found myself caught up in thinking about the decisions that developing transcripts of my data required. This process led to a detailed section in my doctoral thesis raising issues I had experienced during the transcription process. One examiner of my doctoral thesis directed me toward some specific literature on transcription, and I began to collect and read articles about transcription. I was surprised by the literature that “emerged” once I looked outside my own field of education. I decided that transcription warranted a more systematic review and so I undertook that. When the review was accepted for publication by the *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, I realized that writing about research methods was an important and useful thing to do and so I developed a plan to write further articles on transcription (e.g., Davidson, 2010) in tandem with developing a research profile encompassing publications based on my doctoral studies in literacy education. So, that is what I did.

## *How Did It Impact Your Work?*

My academic profile continues to reflect my interest in transcription and my empirical research addressing children’s social accomplishment of activities during interactions with other children and with adults. Most recently, research with co-researchers at Charles Sturt University, Australia, encompassed the use of digital recording glasses worn by young children to record their interactions during family shopping experiences. We have written about implications for transcription and analytic method when incorporating the data from the recording glasses (Davidson, Fenton, & MacDonald, accepted). Another study examines changes teachers made to interaction in literacy lessons, through drawing on recordings and

transcripts of their interactions with students (Edwards-Groves & Davidson, 2017). This publication with Christine Edwards-Groves is a book for classroom teachers, and it contains an entire chapter addressing transcription. The chapter considers the importance of transcription for examining classroom lessons and demonstrates use of some symbols drawn from Jefferson’s (2004) notation system. Although intended for use in CA, the system encompasses numerous symbols that practitioner researchers could find useful.

## *How Did It Impact the Field?*

I examined Google Scholar citation records, in order to gain a better sense of the breadth and depth of use of the article. I categorized citations broadly according to the focus of the individual literature. Categorizations encompassed literature where (1) transcription is the specific focus, (2) transcription is addressed within an overall focus on other research methods, and (3) transcription is addressed in reports of empirical research, including postdoctoral research studies.

Within the first category, a number of researchers directly reference my review in the statement of the “problem” or focus for their article. That is, some entire articles on transcription directly seek to address a key point from the transcription review, such as interview transcripts in narrative research (Butler, 2015), development of team protocols for professional transcription and translation encompassing Spanish and English (Clark, Birkhead, Fernandex, & Egger, 2017), the relationship between technology and transcription (Tessier, 2012),

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and transcription and analysis of qualitative data (McNulty, 2012).

Transcription is addressed by some researchers within their overall focus on another particular research method (such as interviewing) or group of methods. The Artemisinin Combination Therapy Consortium guidance: Qualitative methods for international health intervention research (Chandler, Reynolds, Palmer, & Hutchinson, 2013) were developed to support the work of field researchers addressing Artemisinin-based combination therapy for Malaria. The guidelines address transcription citing my article (among others) to support guidelines suggested for the process of transcription.

Numerous authors cite the article when addressing transcription in the Method section of their publication. The citation is often used to support a single statement about transcription pertaining to an aspect of the project, such as consideration of translation in the development of transcripts in research conducted in rural Malawi (Chiutsi-Phiri et al., 2017). Other authors include the citation along with citations from others who have addressed transcription in a substantial way. Karam, Kibler, and Yoder (2017) cite my article, and others central to my review, to provide a thorough consideration of transcription of recordings in Arabic, in their study of Syrian refugee teachers and teaching of English as a foreign language.

### ***Were There Any Surprises That Came From This Publication?***

Yes—being invited to contribute to this special issue of your journal. Secondly, I was surprised when reading over the work of others to see the numerous ways that researchers had drawn on my review.

### ***What Is the One Thing That You Think Has Changed the Most in This Area Since You Published This Manuscript?***

I am not sure about what has changed the most; however, I note a growing interest in the development of multimodal transcription across a number of fields (Bezemer & Mavers, 2011; Norris & Maier, 2014) traditionally influenced by linguistics and encompassing notions of transcripts as print-based texts that re-present speech (Bezemer & Mavers, 2011). Classroom interaction research (e.g., Cowan, 2014) and research examining young children's digital literacies (e.g., Scriven, 2015) are two fields where attention to multimodality is increasing.

Multimodal transcripts illustrate a diversity in the ways that multimodality is represented. For example, transcripts might employ tabular layout (Cowan, 2014) and written description (e.g., Ranker, 2018), scripts using written description (Mondada, 2016), or incorporating written description, symbols, and images (Mondada, 2016). O'Dell and Willim (2013, p. 320) examine "drawing transcriptions," encompassing visual representations such as cartooning.

In their consideration of multimodal transcription, Bezemer and Mavers (2011) note that the diversity and flexibility within

approaches (p. 192). They foreground a social semiotic perspective, wherein transcription is understood as "a social meaning-making practice" (p. 193) that entail "representational choices" (p. 193) that:

shape the social relations between transcribers and readers, between transcribers and the participants represented in the transcript, between the represented participants and readers, and between the represented participants themselves. (Bezemer & Mavers, 2011, p. 194)

In their consequent examination of versions of transcripts, Bezemer and Mavers highlight that transcripts must be "assessed within their context of production" (p. 196). This is a salient reminder that researchers need to develop transcripts that are consistent with all aspects of individual study design including theoretical and analytic perspectives (Davidson, 2009).

Some accounts of multimodal transcription have been developed within CA. Mondada (2016) provides a historical perspective on the development of multimodality within research and within CA specifically. She provides several examples of multimodal transcripts and their analysis. Transcripts draw on transcription conventions that Mondada developed specifically for analyzing aspects of multimodality using CA. Most recently, Mondada (2018) considers "the principles of multimodal CA, the way they can be operationalized in a transcription system, and the analytical and conceptual consequences of transcription choices" (p. 85). Meredith (2016) gives a detailed consideration of her development of a transcription system that enabled analysis of Facebook chat data. She addresses the development of a transcript that represents on-screen interaction, employing text-based data and the need to capture timing in interaction, overlap and rewriting of text in progress. Meredith gives powerful insight into the multimodal transcription process she undertook and the ways that core principals of transcription aided that process.

The complexity of multimodality highlights, once again, that we need to be clear about the development of transcripts and we need to communicate our approaches to others. This communication might be through publications that specifically focus on transcription, address transcription in relation to other aspects of research, or that provide explicit accounts of transcription when reporting empirical studies.

### **Declaration of Conflicting Interests**

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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