

Qualitative Methods in Language Testing and Assessment

Day One

9.00 – 10.30



Qualitative Methods

www.lsa.umich.edu/eli

- Introductions
- Overview of qualitative methods in language testing and assessment
- Who we are
- Workshop programme



Introductions

- Name
- Affiliation
- Description of current work/research



Overview of qualitative methods

- What is qualitative?
- Qualitative vs Quantitative
- Data collection methods
- Data
- Data analysis approaches



- What is qualitative?
 - Focus on individuals and small groups
 - ‘interactive and humanistic’ (Creswell, 2003: 181)
 - Interpretive (consider the image of a spiral staircase)



- Qualitative vs Quantitative
 - Point of view
 - Data reporting

Qualitative and Quantitative approaches
are complementary



- Data collection methods

Reflection	Verbal Reports/Protocols Diary Studies Blogs Letters Internet Messenger Software Repertory Grid Technique
Analytical frameworks	Task Characteristics Frameworks Checklists Classroom Observation
Feedback methods	Questionnaires Checklists Interviews

Wikis? -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JwfceBwNmuk&feature=related>



Reflection

- Diary Studies | Blogs | Letters
 - Guided or unguided
 - Selecting participants
 - Language of the diary, blog, or letter
 - Routines (how often should entries be made and for how long)
 - Monitoring

Just for fun:

http://thelanguageofblogs.typepad.com/the_language_of_blogs/about_this_blog/



- Repertory Grid Technique
 - Personal construct theory (Kelly, 1955)
 - Elements
 - Constructs (elicited vs supplied)
 - Rowsell (1992)
 - Tarnanen (2003)



- Repertory Grid Technique
 - Relevance of constructs to all participants
 - Halo effect
 - Are constructs truly bi-polar?
 - Interpreting constructs (interesting / boring)



Analytical Frameworks

- Checklists
 - Allow for systematic and consistent review of materials
 - Textbooks (Bonkowski, 1995; Tsagari, 2006)
 - Test validation (O'Sullivan et al., 2002)



Appendix 3 Operational checklist (used in Phase 3)

Informational functions

Providing personal information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Give information on present circumstances• Give information on past experiences• Give information on future plans
Expressing opinions	Express opinions
Elaborating	Elaborate on, or modify an opinion
Justifying opinions	Express reasons for assertions s/he had made
Comparing	Compare things/people/events
Speculating	Speculate
Staging	Separate out or interpret the parts of an issue
Describing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Describe a sequence of events• Describe a scene
Summarizing	Summarize what s/he has said
Suggesting	Suggest a particular idea
Expressing preferences	Express preferences

Extracted from O'Sullivan et al. (2002: 54)

- Checklists
 - Need to be customised
 - Extensive trialing required
 - Deciding on categories of observation
 - Present/not present
 - Degrees of presence
 - Quality of presence
 - Training to use the checklist



- Classroom Observation
 - COLT (Allen et al., 1983)
 - Banerjee (1995)



Section B: Observation Schedule

Part One

Please use the following grid to give a detailed description of the lesson you are observing.
(use the reverse side of this sheet if you need to)

Activity No.	Time spent	What the teacher does	What the students do	Interaction	Skills practised
1					

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- Classroom Observation
 - Need to be customised
 - Extensive trialing required
 - Training to use the checklist



- Task characteristic frameworks
 - Bachman and Palmer (1996: 57-58)
 - Weigle (2002: 63)



Dimension	Examples
Subject matter	self, family, school, technology, etc.
Stimulus	text, multiple texts, graph, table
Genre	essay, letter, informal note, advertisement
Rhetorical task	narration, description, exposition, argument
Pattern of exposition	process, comparison/contrast, cause/effect, classification, definition
Cognitive demands	reproduce facts/ideas, organize/reorganize information, apply/analyze/synthesize/evaluate
Specification of:	
-audience	-self, teacher, classmates, general public
-role	-self/detached observer, other/assumed persona
-tone, style	-formal, informal
Length	less than ½ page, ½ to 1 page, 2–5 pages
Time allowed	less than 30 minutes, 30–59 minutes, 1–2 hours
Prompt wording	question vs. statement, implicit vs. explicit, amount of context provided
Choice of prompts	choice vs. no choice
Transcription mode	handwritten vs. word-processed
Scoring criteria	primarily content and organization; primarily linguistic accuracy; unspecified

- Task characteristic frameworks
 - Specific or generic
 - Adapting the framework
 - Level of detail
 - Training judges



Feedback methods

- Questionnaires
 - Provide anonymity
 - Reduce face threat
 - Give respondents time to consider answers
 - Allow for large sample sizes
 - Qualitative or quantitative?



4.3 Do you think you have to work harder than native speakers of English on your course?

- Yes, probably
- No, probably not
- I don't know

4.4 If you think you have to work harder, please explain why.

Open and closed questions Taken from Allwright & Banerjee (1997)



How well do you think you are doing on your course so far?

Circle the number that most accurately reflects your opinion.

I am doubtful
about
whether I will
pass the
course

1

2

I am
managing
and I am
reasonably
confident I will
pass

3

4

I think I am
going to pass
well

5

6

I feel I am
doing
extremely
well

7

An example of a questionnaire item using a Likert-scale

Taken from Allwright & Banerjee (1997)



- Questionnaires
 - Researcher ‘bias’
 - Interpreting ‘free response’ items
 - Language of the questionnaire
 - Length of the questionnaire
 - Response rates



- **Interviews**

- Structured, semi-structured, or unstructured?
- Co-construction of meaning
- Interviewer training



- Data

Transcripts	Verbal protocols Interviews Test review meetings
Test language	Speaking test performances Writing test performances Reading texts Listening texts
Test documentation	Test specifications Information Bulletins Website Textbooks Media articles
Feedback	Questionnaires Checklists



- Data analysis approaches
 - Content analysis | Theme analysis
 - Conversation Analysis
 - Discourse Analysis
 - Analysis of test language
 - Lexical richness
 - Rhetorical structure/functions
 - Genre
 - Discourse markers
 - Grammatical complexity
 - Register
 - Accuracy



- When might qualitative methods be used?
 - Investigations of TLU Domain/needs analyses
 - Development and review of item types
 - Development and review of rating scales/scoring rubric
 - On-going test feedback
 - Construct validation
 - Standard setting



Who we are

- 14 different countries

Austria

Belgium

Czech Republic

Denmark

Finland

Germany

Hungary

Lithuania

Macedonia

Spain

Turkey

Ukraine

United Kingdom

United States of

America



- Our interests:
 - Data collection methods

Reflection	Verbal Reports/Protocols Repertory Grid Technique
Analytical frameworks	Checklists Classroom Observation Task Characteristics Frameworks
Feedback methods	Questionnaires Checklists Interviews



- Our interests:
 - Data

Transcripts	Verbal protocols Interviews
Test language	Speaking test performances Writing test performances Reading texts Listening texts
Feedback	Questionnaires Checklists



- Our interests:
 - Data analysis approaches

Theoretical perspectives	Grounded Theory
Approaches	Conversation Analysis Discourse Analysis Analysis of test language Content analysis
Tools	Computer assisted qualitative data analysis software



Workshop Programme

Data collection methods	Verbal reports/protocols
Data	Verbal protocols Speaking test performances Writing test performances
Approaches	Content analysis (with reference to Grounded Theory) Computer assisted qualitative data analysis software Conversation Analysis Analysis of test language Discourse Analysis

