

Example of explanatory interview or clarifying interview

We propose a description of two examples of explanatory interviews aimed at understanding how to feed a calf for one and how to lead a flock of sheep for the other.

A first example of explanatory interview

The first interview was held with a young 15-year-old girl, the daughter of a farmer.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I also help with calving when my sister and I take care of the new born calves 2. When you say ‘take care of’, what does that involve ? 3. Teaching them to drink, we also clean them. 4. When you teach them to drink, do you do it all the time, every day ? How does it work ? 5. When a calf is born; during holidays only, because I am a boarder at school... 6. Do you remember the last time you did it ? 7. 2 weeks ago, 8. OK, and you still recall it ? 9. Yes. 	<p>The interviewer identifies an action which he/she considers as pertinent for further development as part of an explanatory interview. He/she checks that the action can easily be evoked by the interviewee.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Could you talk to me about that ? 11. Err, yes. 	<p>The interviewer forms a contract with the interviewee, checking that the person agrees to participate in the interview.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Explain what happens ? 13. Sometimes you get the feeling that you are the mother because you teach the calf to drink, we give it milk. 14. When you say that you feel you are the mother, what do you mean ? 15. We take care of the calf and not its real mother. 16. Yes, ok. The calf has a certain behaviour which makes you say that ? 17. They come to us. 18. For example, the last time, two weeks ago, where was it ? 19. In the hangar where the cows are but in special boxes for the calving. 20. The calves are separated or they are all together ? 21. It depends, if there are quite a few in one go, they are all together but if there are just one or two they are separated because there are only two boxes. Afterwards there are buildings 	<p>The interviewer aims to invite the interviewee to evoke a precise situation and guides him/her away from interpretations described with a general present tense.</p>

<p>behind, close to us, where we take them 3 to 4 days after their birth. 22. And two weeks ago, they were together or separated ? 23. Separated.</p>	<p>The interviewer invites the interviewee to recall the situation by evoking a piece of information.</p>
<p>24. So you arrived with a bucket of milk, right ? 25. Yes. 26. You had bottles ? 27. There were teats on the bottles. 28. What did you do with them ? 29. I guided its mouth to the teat with my hand. 30. But when you arrived, you went to the calf or it came to you ?</p>	<p>The interviewee speaks in the simple past, sign that she is evoking a real situation.</p>
<p>31. The calf often lies on the ground so you have to lift it up. 32. And two weeks ago was the calf lying down ? 32. Yes. 33. So what did you do ? 34. I lifted it up. 35. You lifted it up then ? 36. Yes. 37. How did you lift it ? 38. I didn't hit it but pushed it to make it jump and stand up. 39. Pushed it where ? 40. On the back. 41. With your hand ? 42. Yes. 43. Then it got up ? 44. Yes. 45. And then what did you do ? 46. I went to the buckets and tried to put the teat in its mouth.</p>	<p>The interviewee leaves the previous situation and adopts a general present tense. The interviewer invites her to return to the situation.</p> <p>The interviewer tries to define the calf lifting action.</p>
<p>47. How did you try to put its teat in its mouth ?</p>	<p>The interviewer uses the same words to try and understand what she means by 'tried' to put the teat in its mouth.</p>
<p>48. I put my fingers in its mouth, I moved the bucket closer and placed the teat in its mouth. 49. How did you place your fingers in its mouth ? 50. You often have to insist a bit because they don't easily open their mouths. 51. And how do you insist ? 52. I held my fingers under the palate, like this (the person mimes the gesture)</p>	
<p>53. I enjoy it. 54. What is the most pleasant thing about moment ? 55. Seeing that giving them milk gives them strength.</p>	<p>The interviewee gives the emotions felt during the action and her intention.</p>
<p>56. And so you liked doing that you said ?</p>	<p>The interviewee expresses an action which may</p>

<p>57. Yes, I stroked it too. 58. After feeding it ? 59. Well, all along really. 60. Did you stroke it anywhere in particular ? 61. Especially around the neck because it likes it.</p>	<p>be a little embarrassing but expresses the intention to develop an affectionate relationship with the calf.</p>
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A second example of an explanatory interview

The following exchange aims to identify agroecological knowledge used in shepherding a flock of mountain sheep. The interviewee has been a shepherd for 30 years.

Dialogue	The reasons motivating the interviewer's words
<p>1. Do you agree to explaining how you manage a flock of sheep ?</p>	<p>The interviewer makes an initial contract with the interviewee by asking for his approval to be interviewed.</p>
<p>2. Yes, no problem.</p>	
<p>3. Do you agree to me being your interviewer ?</p>	<p>The interviewer makes a second contract to check that the situation has been accepted.</p>
<p>4. That's fine by me.</p>	
<p>5. I may ask some questions that surprise you. It is a different type of interview technique so if you are uncomfortable in any way, please say so and if you find any question disturbing you have no obligation to answer.</p>	<p>The interviewer aims to identify a concrete situation which can be explained.</p>
<p>6. Ok, I understand.</p>	
<p>7. Can you remember any special situation while you were herding your sheep ?</p>	<p>The question is very open to allow the memory to recreate the situation.</p>
<p>8. Hmm... , well, we were in the mountains in the summer so the flock could graze.</p>	
<p>9. Ok, what do you remember about this situation ?</p>	<p>To avoid forcing the memory, which would not be beneficial to the recall process, the interviewer gives more time, to ensure that the interviewee 're-lives' the situation.</p>
<p>10. Hmm...</p>	
<p>11. Take all the time you need to recall the situation.</p>	
<p>12. OK, I was in the mountains, the sheep were walking up the pasture to go grazing.</p>	<p>The interviewer invites the subject to add details, enabling further evocation and use of</p>

<p>13. And when they were walking what were they doing in particular ?</p> <p>14. They were looking for grass in a zigzag pattern, like this (the person shows the pattern with his hands)</p> <p>15. Where were you with regards to the sheep ?</p> <p>16. I was further down, watching them go up.</p> <p>17. And while you were watching them, what did you see ?</p> <p>18. They were walking diagonally across the slope; in any case, sheep always try to spend the least energy possible.</p> <p>19. And while you were watching them, what were you doing or feeling ?</p> <p>20. Well, I knew they would hit the tress and this would be an obstacle for them and that they would change direction.</p> <p>21. And when you knew they would change direction, how did you know ?</p> <p>22. I just knew.</p> <p>23. OK, and at the precise moment when you know that the sheep are going to change direction, what do you think then ? Take the time you need to review that moment.</p> <p>24. Well..... I see the sheep going to towards the forest and I say to myself that they are going to change direction when they hit the forest.</p> <p>25. And when you say that to yourself, how do you visualise this ?</p>	<p>vocabulary directly from the situation. The interviewer uses these same words to ask an open question.</p> <p>The interviewer aims to maintain the interviewee in the recall situation.</p> <p>The interviewer uses the word ‘watching’ to invite further details from the memory.</p> <p>At the end of this section the interviewee is no long in recall, he is interpreting the situation to offer a general explanation.</p> <p>The interviewer aims to reposition the interview into the recall situation and to identify the mental actions at play while the interviewee was watching the sheep.</p> <p>The interviewer aims to identify the learning process in play.</p> <p>The interviewer invites recall in the person’s mind.</p> <p>The interviewer aims to maintain the recall.</p>
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<p>26. I just say it to myself I suppose.</p> <p>27. OK, when you say it, do you hear sounds, do you see and image in your mind or is there anything else ?</p> <p>28. Wait there, in fact I am recalling another situation when the sheep avoided a forest in the same way.</p> <p>29. And when you saw this image what did you think ?</p> <p>30. Well, I was reassured. I knew what was going to happen and I couldn't lose the sheep in the forest. I didn't need to intervene.</p>	<p>The interviewer invites the subject to add information about his thoughts.</p>
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In this second example, knowing that the forest would be an obstacle for the sheep enabled the subject to anticipate the flock's movements and decide not to intervene (to guide the flock). This knowledge is based on an initial experience where the person made the same observation.

The explanatory interview demonstrates our research object in its full expression. This type of interview guides the interviewee towards *“providing a reliable source of inferences to highlight the reasoning actually used and to identify the objectives really sought after in order to identify the theory and skills effectively used in practical situations and to get a grasp of representations or sources of difficulty”* (Vermersch, 1994, p. 18). The explanatory interview gives access to the unconscious acts that comprise an action and the unconscious nature of the intention behind the action.