

## Understanding how research reports illustrate reporting transparency with transcription

### What this research was about and why it is important

Qualitative researchers who use transcription in their research very often do not describe its process in their research reports. This research paper sets out to understand how qualitative researchers discuss their transcription method and argues for greater transparency with transcription within a specific research report and across the field of language learning and teaching research. Collecting 89 empirical qualitative research reports in *TESOL Quarterly* (*TQ*) from 2012-2018, I documented columns of reporting data on an excel spreadsheet pertaining to how the research reports addressed transcription. I then analyzed the data, by looking for patterns across rows in columns, to find that *TQ* research reports landed on one of six intervals on a general transparency continuum, with the majority of research reports saying little more than their speech data had been transcribed. I then analyzed the 89 research reports for their particular transparency with second language (L2) and multilingual transcription to find three separate continuums of transparency particular to L2 and multilingual transcription. The study concludes that research authors should reflect on the field's call for greater transparency with transcription before reflexively considering how much transparency is necessary for their study.

### What the researcher did

- I chose 89 empirical qualitative research reports (full-length and brief) in recent volumes of *TESOL Quarterly*.
- Using Excel, I put the 89 articles along the Y-axis and reporting specifications across the X-axis. Some of the reporting specifications I documented were: What types of transcription were used?; What types of notation were included if transcription excerpts were used?; Was Conversation Analysis used?; Is transcription software used?; and other reporting specifications that helped me determine intervals of transparency on a continuum.
- I then analyzed the data, looking for patterns across rows in a column. (across Research Reports per Reporting Specifications). Patterns I found across particular reporting specifications helped me determine how research reports could be grouped into particular intervals of transparency on a general transparency continuum.
- Reporting specifications I documented across the 89 research reports that were particular to L2/multilingual transcription practices were: Was there translation?; How was L2 transcription presented?; What description is given of participants?; and other reporting specifications that helped me create continuums of transparency that were particular to L2 and multilingual transcription.

### What the researcher found

- I first surveyed the types of communicative situations being transcribed, and I found two types across research reports: one-on-one interviews and non-interview situations. For the one-on-one interviews, I found three types of transcription excerpts across the 89 research reports: prosaic transcription (transcription embedded in author's voice), block quotes, and dyadic series (transcription with the researcher's speech included).
- Non-interview situations were classroom education-type activities. The way transcription was used to represent these situations was as variable as the situations themselves.
- I found research authors reported on their approaches to transcription by 1. not mentioning transcription at all, 2. referring to transcripts only, 3. discussing their transcription process as verbatim, 4. remarking their speech data were transcribed without discussing its process, 5. highlighting transcription (describing it but superficially), and 6. illuminating transcription (describing it in depth). The majority of research reports fell into interval 4. "transcribed."
- Categories of transparency with L2 and multilingual transcription were: 1. L2 production representation, 2. Translation, 3. Notation, and 4. Data Construction. I constructed transparency continuums for categories 1-3. Data Construction was related to how member checking may have occurred because this changed how some transcription was represented.

### Things to consider

- Transcription is central to qualitative research, yet few articles and few manuals discuss it as a method. Similarly, this study shows that over 80% of *TQ* qualitative research reports included in this sample said little more than their speech data had been transcribed.
- Discussing our interactions with and method of transcription brings its complexities and presuppositions to light and may help other researchers make ethically sound choices about transcription challenges in their own research.

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