



Interview

What is an Interview?

Interviewing involves the interaction in which an interviewer collects information from the students with a sequence of questions and listens for answers. This kind of interaction can be a rich source of information to inform the teacher about how the student understand concepts and use procedures they learned from the course, and provides valuable information and directions for the teacher in modifying the course for improvements.

Structure of an Interview

Although interviews can be conducted over telephone or other forms of media, it is usually done face-to-face. There are two main types: *Structured* and *Unstructured interviews*

Structured interviews are composed of a series of well-chosen questions which are designed to elicit a portrait of a student's understanding about a concept or set of related concepts. To explore the topic more deeply, probe questions are commonly used to follow up those pre-planned 'main' questions. These probe questions are usually not formally designed ahead of the interview. Probe questions are usually formed according to the responses and answers given by the interviewee. When the interviewer finds the responses/answers are worth to explore more deeply, they would ask their interviewee to elaborate the content further. This approach ensures that interviewer and interviewee have thoroughly finished exploring on one topic before moving on to another. Variations of structured interviews include: Instances Interviews, Prediction Interviews, Sorting Interviews, Problem Solving Interviews etc.

1. Instances Interviews: a student is presented with a specific set of examples and counterexamples of the concept of interest and is asked to identify which cases are examples of the concept, and then to explain that decision.
2. Prediction Interviews: students are required to anticipate an outcome of a situation and explain or justify that prediction.
3. Sorting Interviews: the student is presented with a group of objects and asked to sort them according to specific instructions.
4. Problem Solving Interviews: a student is asked to attempt to solve a problem while "thinking aloud," explaining as much as possible about what she is doing, why she is doing it, and what her symbols and actions mean.

Unstructured interviews are used when the interviewer wants to let the interviewee to have complete control over the content of the interview. Interviewer usually prepares one or two questions to start off the interview. Only probe questions would then be used for the rest of the interview for further elaboration on a topic.



	Declarative	CHARACTERISTICS
Y	Functioning	
	Take Time to Set	
Y	Take Time to Answer	
	Take Time to Correct	
	Take Time to provide Feedback	
	Suitable for Large Class	
	Can substitute with Computers	
	Passive	
Y	Active	
Y	Process Oriented Method	
	Product Oriented Method	

P = Possibly Y =Yes

Advantages of an Interview

- **In-depth information** – In contrast to the set of fixed questions used in surveys, interviews allow probing of deeper information from the interviewee, asking for elaboration and examples, discovering new relationships, and the interviewer can modify questions as the interview proceeds.
- **Rapport and trust** – Good interviewers can establish rapport and trust with the interviewee, which can also elicit more honest and more sensitive information than surveys can.
- **Level of understanding by learners** – Structured interviews enable instructors to examine the degree of understanding a learner has for a concept or closely related group of concepts, and focusing on how their instruction is interpreted and internalized by the learner.
- **Guides improvement** – When well-administered, interviews can be a powerful type of formative assessment to guide improvement courses and teaching methods, as well as sharing of the understanding of typical difficulties faced by the students with the course.

Disadvantages of an Interview

- **Time consuming** – Every interview would need to take approximately 30 to 90 minutes to finish. Also, as the nature and quality of probe questions and follow-up questions can efficiently determine the usefulness of the interview technique, interviewers have to take a certain amount of time for planning and designing an informative interview. In addition, as it takes some time to finish the interviewing process and data analysis, it might be quite a while before interviewees can receive their feedback.
- **Bias from interviewers** – It is possible that sometimes the interviewers might somewhat bias the nature of the interview data and thus the results, through their verbal and nonverbal reactions, and their choice of probe questions when interacting with the students during the interviews.
- **Bias of interpretation** – If interviewers are inexperienced, improperly trained or careless, even though the interview results have been “coded” (content analyzed), there are still possibilities for them to have bias when interpreting and summarizing the results.



- **Subjectivity of interviewees** – Information obtained by interviewers is based on the perceptions, knowledge, and words of interviewees, rather than objective and behavioral data. Interviewers have to rely on their interviewees' words regarding the accuracy of the information.

How to design a good Interview Assessment?

1. Try to make the student to feel relaxed and comfortable during the interview, because interviews can generate the most fruitful sharing when a trustful rapport is established
2. Practicing can help to ensure the interview to be done in a reasonable amount of time (normally less than an hour)
3. Carefully select the sample of students for interview so that the group can represent all students who may have different levels of interest and ability
4. Ensure all the necessary equipments for the interview are well-prepared, such as interview protocol, audio and video recorders etc.
5. Try to make the interview group as small as possible, or conduct it individually; this can best facilitate the in-depth sharing of ideas
6. Allow enough time for the students to fully express her ideas; always wait for a few seconds before proceeding to the next question
7. Review the interview transcripts several times with different investigators; this allows multiple perspectives in interpreting the responses given by the interviewees

Marking Rubrics

1. Understanding of concepts of the student, misconceptions
2. Know how students can apply their knowledge in problem solving
3. Obtain feedback for improving teaching

MARKING RUBRICS	Excellent	Proficient	Average	Poor
Knowledge: Understanding of concepts of the subject	Able to give thorough information regarding the topics and concepts concerned; able to connect different pieces of knowledge as a whole	Able to give satisfactory understanding but not complete information regarding the topics and concepts; able to connect different information as few major bodies of knowledge	Showed a basic understanding of information regarding the major topics and concepts; have difficulties in transforming discrete pieces of knowledge as a connected one	Only able to show minimal level of or show no understanding regarding the major topics and concepts; unable to connect the knowledge across different topics
Application: Ability to apply the knowledge to a range of solve practical problems	Showed a competent ability to apply the knowledge from the subject into real-life situations; able to effectively find out practical and feasible solutions for the	Showed adequate ability to apply the knowledge from the subject into real-life situations; generally able to provide solutions for the problems under most	Showed a basic standard of ability to apply the knowledge into real-life situations; usually able to give solutions for the problems under a few situations; creativity is	Failed to apply knowledge into real-life situations; usually have difficulties in finding solutions for the problems; creativity is not observed through the process of problem



	problems under all range of situations; creativity is involved through the process of problem solving	situations; little creativity is demonstrated through the process of problem solving	not shown through the process of problem solving	solving
Reflections: Express opinions and experience about the learning process	Deeply reflected about how the learning process have created positive and significant changes within the student to be a proficient and independent learner; provided solid and valuable insights on how to improve the course for effective learning	Sufficiently reflected how the learning process has created positive changes within the student in developing a good learning attitude; provided generally useful comments on how to improve the course	Expressed a few changes that the course have created within the student to assist his/her learning; provided only a little information on overall improvement of the course	Did not express any reflection or insight regarding the learning experience

Web References and Resources

- Classroom Assessment Techniques: Interviews, The National Institute for Science Education
<https://serc.carleton.edu/resources/14313.html>
- Class Assessment by Student Interview (CLASSI), University of Iowa
<https://teach.its.uiowa.edu/class-assessment-student-interview-classi>
- Toolpack Consulting
<http://www.toolpack.com/d/interviews.html>
- Interview for Student Reasoning
<https://southcentral.edu/Individual-Assessments/individual-assessment-interview-or-demonstration.html>

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