

## **OBSERVATION 1 FIELDNOTES – JANUARY 22, 2013**

(Began writing for scene-setting before the observation "officially" started)

A late Tuesday afternoon, halfway through the 3rd meeting of an advanced graduate class on qualitative research methods in the Education department. Individual chairs with desks attached, facing the front, where a projection screen (unused) covers half a blackboard spanning the room (scrawled with equations from an earlier class, largely untouched except for a small diagram on note-taking paper layout drawn earlier by the professor).

There are 27 students in this room, myself included. 4 are note-taking on paper; everyone else (23) is typing on a laptop or tablet. 3 male, 24 female students; most of us appear young (somewhere in our twenties or early thirties) but a few (at least 3) are visibly from an older generation, often here getting their PhDs (in various education-related disciplines) while they work. The other people in the room are the professor, and a transcriber who is sitting in the corner (for my accessibility).

It is late January, and there has been a cold snap, so thick coats are draped over the backs of many chairs, piled in empty desks. The professor speaks most of the time during the course of "normal" class; she does not use slides or notes, and frequently pauses in the middle of a statement to solicit students questions and responses. Oftentimes students aren't directly gazing at the professor as she speaks, but rather at their notes or screens.

It is 6:15 when we start, pushing the chairs into a circle. Everyone has some form of note-taking as per prof's request. Prof models with young female grad student -- introductions to purpose (rapport building?) They are sitting in individual chairs, partly facing each other but not head-on. Tape recorder on a table in between. (this is non-transcribed, my "control" sample)

Grad student sitting still, looking at prof as she talks; hands gesturing to illustrate points. Prof "mhm-ing" as student talks, sitting, scratching chin, gesturing in reciprocity, occasionally writing notes, but usually making eye contact with student. (I am paying attention to body language and not content, so it's only now, 3 minutes in, after the 2nd question that has been asked, that I glance at my transcript to catch up.)

Professor waiting until student is done answering question (tone of voice? finality, pacing? there's something that sounds "done" about response) before asking the next question, but is going straight through the order of the questions on the sheet of paper (handed out beforehand, made by professor, on grad school work/life balance). "MMmmmmhms!" are different tones (sympathy "hmms", vs "I am still paying attention" hmms?)

Ah, an interruption of the student -- (glancing at my transcript) I see it was for a clarification of what word she used (did prof not hear the word clearly too?)

professor skips to end (for purposes of class exercise and timing; there doesn't seem to be awkwardness), asks anything you want to add? student asking why this study, professor answers with (I'm reading my transcript here) because I experienced this myself.

Professor-driven Pause, out of character! Interview is paused. Now she asks student what this was like. (This is still an interview, just a different interview now!) Student reflects, pauses -- longest pause so far even if it's a few seconds. She is now looking not at the interviewer, but off to one side ("pondering" look and tone of voice) on occasion while she reflects on this experience.

Professor announces to class now she will give self-criticism, proceeds to do so. Opens it to students for critique, students offer various forms of feedback. Many students are nodding; people

with pencils look down at their paper whereas laptops tend to look up from them more (why is this, is it that typing can be done by touch or is faster?)

student next to me is chewing glasses, tapping pen on notebook (will not describe b/c will otherwise be identifiable) - as students ask questions and dialogue with professor, other students are reading phone, writing in what looks like a day planner, winding up power cords, etc -- some are looking back and forth to speakers, others are performing actions like that. professor holds up questions sheet (as a prop) to answer a student question. one student leaves (has to leave early? quiet, seems pre-arranged) during the discussion of 1st interview so we are down one older female student.

I stand up and explain, set recorder on table in between. entire clas comes to "my side" to see screen." Except for 1 person. still moving as the interview begins.

2 female students start the process. they scooted their chairs around to see the screen

mostly looking at each other, but I see S quickly glance at screen mid-sentence. I is not looking at screen at all. (hard to tell if S is gancing at screen or not! I seems to be really trying hard to avoid looking at the screen.)

(visually distracting as an observer to have this THING between S and I - s = subject, i = interviewer) I is taking paper notes (interesting, she has a transcript or maybe doesn't think she'll get it?)

professor interjects asking to wrap up (this gets transcribed too), I summarizes what S said, then asks if S has questions.

prof asks I to self-rate, I see S looking at screen now, and I begins to glance at screen while answering, but also at paper notes. S looking at I, at professor (who is talking with I), also at screen (there is a typo on screen, is this drawing attention?) Prof also asks S for impressions, S is looking at I and directing her response to I ("you could have taken notes more") (S talking about how I's note-taking could have increased to build rapport; maybe I still need paper notes for rapport)

now as professor talks w circle student, I is looking at screen. prof eliciting feedback from surrounding students (this is also getting transcribed) - people still looking at their notebooks, writing notes, etc. as things are going. (oh interesting -- as they moved to "this side" of circle, many people have left their laptops behind; I am now 1 of only 4 students with electronic devices aking notes)

I notes she turned this into semi-structured; one feedback point from prof is that it flowed very naturally

ah, since most of us are on "this side", to attend to us, S and I need to turn away from screen. this becomes obvious when student on "other side" asks q and screen is between them and viewer

(I should draw pictures of the setup)

When asked how they reacted to the screen:

I: ignore!

S: watching screen while asking questions

other student: kept reading instead of listening, was sitting directly in front of the screen

prof: "your transcript is done!"

transcriptionist: "sort of not really"

transcriptionist joins the discussion

I step into the role of interviewer for the next round, so these following notes are taken after the fact the next morning.

\* Hard to look at subject and screen at the same time; it's very obvious I'm breaking eye contact, and the transcript is several seconds behind the subject speaking -- so I am still lipreading my subject and the live transcription does not give me any additional accessibility during the interview.

\* My subject does not look at the screen during the interview either.

\* I am very thankful, however, to know that the transcript is there immediately afterwards -- because I usually do miss things during the conversation, and often need to wait weeks for my transcripts to find out what was said, and this way I can do it right after the interview while my mind is fresh.

\* The class (after the interview process) points out that I wasn't taking handwritten notes during the interview. I often don't -- I just mentally build a summary of the conversation as I go along, because I can't look at what I'm writing and hear the subject talking at the same time; I need to pause them and say "wait, that sounds important and I want to make sure we get that down." (In general, perhaps I ought to practice pausing, and make a habit of bringing and handwriting notes during an interview; my current practice was developed with valid reasons and it works, but it's a good chance to try tweaking it and see if that works better, and it's fine if I go back to the old way after trying the new one.)

\* My transcriber notes afterwards that she is a bit nervous about the "public performance" her her captioning, but that's part of the job -- and that it might be because of her particular variant of captioning (typewell; other kinds are c-print and CART) and that CART providers in particular are used to being projected and might not be as nervous about being "public" when they type. (That's good, because CART is the method I am thinking about using; this also jives with what a friend of mine who is a professional CART provider has said about it when I asked her.)