

Transcription Guide for Survivor-Centered Visual Narratives

By Janine Wulz & Jennifer Sauter, University of Victoria

This transcription guide for the Survivor-Centered Visual Narratives project is designed to support research assistants in transcribing audio or video recordings, such as interviews, webinars, or podcasts for the project. It provides tools to support the transcription process and to understand the care and ethics necessary for working with sensitive content. Most importantly, this guide standardizes the format, so that the transcripts are accessible to all readers working with them.

Main recommendations for SCVN interview transcription

1. **Transcription ethics:** Interviews in this project often feature conversations about difficult experiences and traumatic events. All transcription work should be undertaken with an in-depth understanding of the courage it takes to speak about these experiences and the honour of listening to an intimate conversation about them. To care about the speakers also means to listen carefully and annotate the transcript as needed to retain the survivor's voice and provide clarity for future readers.
2. **Transcriber's self-care:** As the transcriptions include difficult topics, self-care is an important part of transcription work. Take a break when needed. Acknowledge that the narratives you hear might cause a reaction in you – such as picturing what happened, reflecting on your own difficult

experiences, or dreaming about the survivor. Take your time to acknowledge the emotions coming up and speak with your supervisor about the situation.

3. **Using software:** Some transcribers prefer a direct speech-to text transcription while others might use software to make transcribing easier. Your university library might have some guidelines or programs you can try out.
 - a. If you are using speech-to-text software, be careful about the software you use (again, your library is a good place to ask). Make sure you are not uploading sensitive interviews to a platform where it might be stored or even made publicly accessible. In order to avoid this, carefully read the information about the program you want to use and the related data protection policy before you use the software.
 - b. Using speech-to-text software is not really a shortcut as, so far, no software has been successful enough to catch all the nuances of a spoken conversation. However, it is a good starting point. Make sure to work through the transcript carefully and review it several times. First, make sure words are transcribed correctly, as some programs misunderstand words or have difficulties with accents and different languages. Second, make sure the details are clear and in place: non-verbatim transcription style is followed (see 4.), speakers are correctly aligned, paragraphs and punctuation support readability and understanding. Third, proofread the whole document before sharing.
 - c. Microsoft Word also has a Dictate feature with a Transcribe option for audio. If the file is video, audio can be extracted and then uploaded.

4. All interviews should follow the same style of **non-verbatim transcription**. The goal is to ensure readability of the final text while not changing the spoken words and their meaning. Here are some general rules for this type of transcription:
- Type every word said. Words like *mhm*, can have meaning too, if they are a sign of agreement or non-agreement.
 - Expressions in non-speech verbalization, such as laughter or sarcasm in audio, or shrugs and gestures in video may also be included to enhance the intended communication.
 - You don't have to type filler words or words repeated to fill a pause.
 - You can change informal structures to formal.

Verbatim vs. Non-Verbatim (default)		Major Accuracy Error		13
		Verbatim	Non-Verbatim	
Non-speech sounds:	Mm-hmm (affirmative) or Mm-mm (negative) Uh-huh (affirmative) or Uh-uh (negative) (beep)	✓	✓	
Non-speech sounds:	(laughs) or (laughing)	✓		
All OTHER non-speech sounds	(e.g. coughs, sneezes, clapping, paper rustling, dog barks, car honks)	✗	✗	
Interjections or signs of active listening	(e.g. Okay, Yeah, Mm-hmm (affirmative)) interjections that interrupt a speaker. Exception for non-verbatim: A direct response to a question, or an acknowledgement when the speaker has finished.	✓		
Filler words	(ums, uhs, and you know, like, etc.)	✓		
False starts / self-corrections	that are quickly reworded, unless they provide additional context. A complete sentence is not a false start. (see Example 3 & 4 on the next page)	✓		
Stutters	(e.g. I think we should go to the, the m- m- movies.)	✓		
Intentional words spoken	(e.g. probably, just, that, really, I think, well) even if the sentence "sounds fine" without.	✓	✓	
Explicit content or profanity		✓	✓	
Changing informal contractions to formal speech	(e.g. gonna → going to, wanna → want to)		✓	

Source: *Rev Transcription Style Guide v4.0.2, 2019.*

Technical elements of transcription

1. **File names:** File names should clearly indicate when the interview took place (year/month/day), where it took place (Location/Zoom) and some context about what the interview is about in relation to that specific transcript. Filenames should not have special characters or spaces. Please use the following format for naming files:

Year/Month/Day_Location_Context:

20230613_Toronto_BreakfastRecollection

20240313_Toronto_Lunch

202040615_Zoom_ScriptCollaboration1

2. **File Details:** File details should include who, what, where, and when the interviews took place. Please include the unique details of the interview at the beginning of each transcript, following this example:

In-person Interview #3 – Miriam visits Rose in Toronto for storyboard feedback

Location: Miriam visiting Rose’s residence in Toronto.

Date/time: Morning interview, approx. 10:00 am, March 13, 2024

Speakers:

Miriam Libicki (graphic artist)

Rose Lipszyc (survivor)

Mark Celinscak (Holocaust Research Cluster Co-Lead)

Transcribed by: Jessica Botts

3. **Time stamps:** Interviews require time stamps if someone wants to quote from a transcript. Make sure to insert them always in the same format indicating hours, minutes, and seconds (no milliseconds needed): [01:27:07] Timestamps should be placed with each speaker but can be every 5 minutes at the minimum.

4. **Identifying speakers:** Make sure to identify the speakers correctly. If you don't know who is speaking, name them Speaker 1, Speaker 2...etc. Do not make up names for the speakers. A new speaker always starts with a new paragraph.

5. **Formatting:** After proofreading the final transcript, review it again to ensure it is properly formatted. To maximize readability, use Arial 12-point font and double spacing throughout the document.

Charlotte Schallié: [38:07]

Let's get started.

Andrea Webb: [38:12]

This is a great idea.

6. **Incomprehensible words:** Listening to conversations again or slowing down the audio will help to better understand the speakers. However, if it is impossible to make out a word, create a note such as [inaudible 06:23].

7. **Punctuation:** Try to use common punctuation marks whenever possible. That means there is a terminal punctuation [.!] at the end of most sentences. Use ellipses [...] sparingly to indicate a longer pause or a hyphen [-] to indicate interruption by another speaker.

8. **Foreign language:** If you detect a word in another language you understand, you may provide a preliminary translation by indicating the language. If you do not understand the language, indicate it is a foreign language.

Charlotte Schallié: [07:23]

Das ist ja interessant! [German language [That is interesting!]].

Andrea Webb: [07:30]

Absolutely. Naturalnie! [Foreign language].

9. **Sentence length:** Make sure sentences are short and understandable. Use periods and commas to break up long sentences. The goal is good readability!

If you have any questions regarding the transcription process, please contact Jennifer Sauter at jsauter@uvic.ca.

Sample transcript

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Location: Miriam visiting Rose's residence in Toronto.

Date/time: Morning interview, approx. 10:00 am, March 13, 2024

Speakers:

Miriam Libicki (graphic artist)

Rose Lipszyc (survivor)

Mark Celinscak (Holocaust Research Cluster Co-Lead)

Transcribed by: Jessica Botts

Transcript

Miriam: [00:15]

Ok, so in Brerengroanite(?), there is one historian who, he is not working on this one but he is affiliated with a project, he is living in Germany, and he said he might go to Bremen like he has family. So I don't know if I -

Rose: [00:52]

It's not Bremen. It's not the city of Bremen.

Miriam: [01:02]

Okay.

Rose: [01:10]

It's 20km from Bremen. (Miriam: hmm) And the name of it was Bremen Grohn at the time. I don't know what they call it now.

Miriam: [01:45]

I see. I thought it was a neighborhood inside Bremen.

Rose: [02:00]

No.