



Nov 21, 2023

A Protocol for Semi-Structured Interviews in Autobiographical Research: Exploring Narratives from the Spanish Civil War

DOI

<https://dx.doi.org/10.17504/protocols.io.6qpvr3283vmk/v1>

Francisco J Leira-Castiñeira¹, Andrés omínguez-Almansa¹, Raquel Martín-Ríos²

¹University of Santiago de Compostela; ²University Isabel I



Raquel Martín-Ríos

University Isabel I



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Protocol Citation: Francisco J Leira-Castiñeira, Andrés omínguez-Almansa, Raquel Martín-Ríos 2023. A Protocol for Semi-Structured Interviews in Autobiographical Research: Exploring Narratives from the Spanish Civil War. **protocols.io**

<https://dx.doi.org/10.17504/protocols.io.6qpvr3283vmk/v1>

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Protocol status: Working

We use this protocol and it's working

Created: November 20, 2023

Last Modified: November 21, 2023

Protocol Integer ID: 91182

Keywords: Spanish Civil war, Oral History, violence, research, combatans, soldiers, rebel army, victims, narratives from the spanish civil war, historical events like the spanish civil war, combatants during the spanish civil war, autobiographical research, spanish civil war, depth insights into individual narrative, political contexts on personal experience, comprehensive exploration of individual narrative, exploring narrative, individual narrative, life experiences of participant, historical context, traumatic research study, childhood memories to late adulthood, interviewee comfort, life experience, discourse, traumatic event, specific to this historical context, interview, childhood memory, wartime period, political context, personal experience, consistency in the interviewee, historical event, comfortable atmosphere for interviewee, interviewee, sensitivity to interviewee comfort, roles as combatant, combatant, coherence check in the conclusion

Funders Acknowledgements:

HISTAGRA

Projecto Nomes e Voces

Abstract

The protocol outlines a method for conducting semi-structured interviews, specifically focusing on the life experiences of participants with an emphasis on their roles as combatants during the Spanish Civil War. The interviews follow a structured approach, beginning with childhood memories and progressing through different life stages, particularly emphasizing the wartime period. The protocol recognizes the sensitivity of the topics discussed and aims to create a comfortable atmosphere for interviewees. It incorporates a coherence check in the conclusion to ensure consistency in the interviewee's discourse and considers potential changes in thought and action. Overall, the protocol provides a clear and comprehensive guide for gathering in-depth insights into individual narratives, with a focus on exploring the impact of socio-political contexts on personal experiences.

The protocol for semi-structured interviews, centered on the life experiences of participants, particularly as combatants during the Spanish Civil War, is not only specific to this historical context but also offers a versatile framework. Its structured approach, spanning from childhood memories to late adulthood, ensures a comprehensive exploration of individual narratives. The sensitivity to interviewee comfort, the emphasis on coherence checks, and the adaptability of the protocol make it applicable not only to studies related to historical events like the Spanish Civil War but also to research on other historical periods or traumatic events. This adaptability enhances the protocol's utility, making it a valuable tool for a broader range of historical and traumatic research studies.

Theoretical Framework

- 1 "Life Stories" - Semi-Structured Interviews: These interviews revolved around the life experiences of the participants and were semi-structured in nature. The interviewer directed the conversation towards aspects pertinent to the research, in this case, focusing on the participant's experiences as combatants. In-depth semi-structured interviews were the primary method of data collection. This methodology facilitates comprehensive insights into individual narratives. Also, semi-structured interviews have shown significant advantages when researching sensitive topics (Taylor et al., 2020).
- 2 This protocol offers a step-by-step guide for conducting a semi-structured interview, ensuring a thorough exploration of the interviewee's experiences across different life stages. Adjustments can be made based on specific research goals and interviewee responses.
- 3 The provided semi-structured interview protocol is well-organized and comprehensive, covering key aspects of the interview process.

Clarity and Structure:

- The protocol is clear and well-structured, with distinct sections for each stage of the interview. This clarity helps both the interviewer and the interviewee understand the flow of the conversation.

Thorough Exploration:

- The protocol ensures a thorough exploration of the interviewee's life experiences, starting from childhood to late adulthood. This approach allows for a holistic understanding of the individual's personal and socio-political context.

Specific Focus Areas:

- The protocol identifies specific focus areas within each stage, such as exploring feelings and memories during the civil war or understanding the impact of socio-political context on the interviewee's life. This specificity is crucial for obtaining rich and relevant data.

Sensitivity to Interviewee's Comfort:

- The protocol acknowledges the need to create a comfortable atmosphere, especially when discussing sensitive topics like childhood memories or participation in violence.

This consideration is important for maintaining rapport and ensuring the interviewee's well-being.

Inclusion of Coherence Check:

The inclusion of a coherence check in the conclusion is a thoughtful aspect of the protocol. Verifying that the interviewee maintains a coherent discourse adds rigor to the data collection process.

General Structure of the semi-structured interview.

4 1. Introduction.

Structure: Outline the purpose and structure of the interview.

- **General Topics:** Introduce the focus on childhood memories and socio-political/cultural backgrounds.

Interviews begin with questions about their childhood to activate the interviewee's memory. Generally, it is a topic in which they tend to feel comfortable recounting aspects of their childhood, as they were elderly at the time of the interview.

1. We will be focusing on childhood memories and socio-political/cultural backgrounds.
Can you share a significant childhood memory that stands out to you?
2. How do you feel about discussing aspects of your childhood during our conversation?
3. Can you provide some insights into your socio-political and cultural background?
4. Can you elaborate on your role in the wartime events?

5 2. Youthful Period:

Structure: Centralize on civil war experiences.

- **Focus:** In-depth exploration of the interviewee's role in wartime violence.

The central part of the interview is dedicated to his experience of the civil war. The interviewer should be to try sweetening the memory. The interview focuses on the research topic, divided into two aspects:

1. **Mobilization**, whether it was forced or voluntary. Let them explain what it was like and bring out their feelings.
2. **War Experience**. Silence, small inconsistencies, repetition of stories or anecdotes that help them to avoid recounting aspects in which they actively participated in the violence are just as important as the other narrative.

1. As we delve into your experiences during the civil war, what comes to mind first?
2. Can you share your thoughts on how the civil war impacted your life during that period?
3. When reflecting on mobilization during the war, can you describe whether it was forced or voluntary on your part?
4. How did you feel during the mobilization process? Can you recall any specific emotions or thoughts?
5. Could you share your experiences during the war? What stands out to you the most?
6. Sometimes, people avoid certain aspects of their participation in violence. Can you tell me about any moments you find difficult to recount or share?
7. Can you share your feelings and emotions during the war?

6 3. Adulthood.

Structure: Discuss post-war life and dictatorship-era experiences.

- **Focus:** Understand personal experiences during Franco's regime.

Talking about how he lived during Franco's regime. It is necessary to know what his life was like after that experience. Also, it is necessary to understand the relationship between his family's socio-political and cultural context and his life during the dictatorship.

1. Transitioning to post-war life, how did you adapt to the changes that occurred during Franco's regime?
2. What was your life like after the experiences during Franco's regime, and how did it shape your perspectives?
3. Can you describe the impact of Franco's regime on your daily life and personal experiences?
4. How did your family's socio-political and cultural context influence your life during the dictatorship?
5. Can you describe what your daily life was like during Franco's regime?
6. Were there specific challenges you faced due to the socio-political environment?

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4. Late Adulthood.

Structure: Examine links between wartime experiences and political changes.

- **Focus:** Reflect on experiences during political transitions.

To examine how his wartime experience connected with the political change. Relationship between his childhood and his environment, which he experienced in the previous democratic period, as well as the period he was beginning to live in.

1. Reflecting on your wartime experiences, how do you perceive their connection with the political changes that followed?
2. Can you share your observations regarding the relationship between your childhood and the environment during democratic periods?
3. How did the political changes during your late adulthood impact your reflections on the wartime experiences?
4. Were there specific moments or changes during political transitions that had a significant impact on your life?
5. In what ways did your childhood shape your environment during the democratic period?

8 5. Conclusion:

Structure: Verify discourse coherence.

- **Focus:** Identify changes in thought and action typical of human experiences.

Verify that he maintained a coherent discourse, considering possible changes in thought and action that we human beings have.

1. In concluding our conversation, can you summarize the key points we discussed today?
2. Are there specific aspects of your experiences that you believe have shaped changes in your actions or behaviors over time?
3. Have there been notable changes in your thoughts or actions over the years?
4. In what ways do you think your experiences have influenced your perspectives and actions?

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