

Conducting a semi-structured interview
Lesson 2: The heart of the interview

Model Answer - Exercise 4

Follow-up and attitudes during the interview

REMINDER OF THE INSTRUCTIONS

In the four cases that follow, after reading the response of the person interviewed, indicate the follow-up question(s) that maintain an appropriately professional attitude during a semi-structured interview.

MODEL ANSWER: Compare the suggestions below (in the right-hand column) with your own.

"+" if the follow-up question is suitable or "-" if the follow-up question is not suitable.

CASE N° 1: Farmer

"Yes, I use this product for cereals; it seems that it is not very good for bees. I even have heard that bees are disappearing because of it... Bees are nice, but listen, I've got to make sure I can produce. Technicians do not really seem to have much of a solution, or they want us to change everything and take up organic farming... That is a whole other story -- I'm fifty years old, I'm not going to start relearning how to do my job now, and let's not even talk about the fact that the harvests are less sure with all the diseases that develop these days..."

1 - You have heard people talk about the negative impacts of the product you use have on bees, but you do not see an alternative that you could implement at present.	Empathy ⊕
2 - But couldn't you use a different product, or reduce the dose that you do use?	Advice ⊖
3 - I totally understand, what with the economic crisis and low farm prices, it is hard for you to manage.	Interpretation ⊖
4 - Considering the diseases that you just mentioned, don't you feel that your health is being negatively affected by all of these chemical products used in agriculture?	Inquisition ⊖

5 - It is always the same debate, economics versus ecology, and economics always wins; we never will find a solution, and while waiting, species are disappearing, nature is in danger, pollution is increasing everywhere... and no one cares as long as they can earn some money.

Evaluation



CASE N° 2: Female officer in-charge of implementing biodiversity protection measures

"I have a lot of trouble communicating the message of protecting biodiversity. Here, people feel that they are close to nature, they are unaware that it really is being degraded, even if you cannot see it at first glance. They say they always have used treatment products, they do not see why they should have to change their practices when it is other people who pollute much more - or in any case, in much more visible ways".

1 - Do you think the fact that you are a woman is viewed poorly in this environment and this makes your job more difficult?	Inquisition ⊖
2 - This always is the problem with awareness building; you have to show people the consequences of using pesticides on the quality of the water in the rivers; have you thought of making posters that you could put up in all of the town halls?	Advice ⊖
3 - You are working with people who are not very aware of their responsibilities regarding pollution of water in the rivers, and who do not really want to change their practices because they hold everyone else primarily responsible.	Empathy ⊕
4 - OK, maybe people are not very aware of the complexity of ecological mechanisms, but all the same, you could rely on the new environmental measure and be more firm about what you do!	Evaluation ⊖
5 - Clearly, people do not see the consequences of their actions, they are stuck in their habits - when they are not staring at their bank accounts, and as for technicians, it is discouraging... you must feel like you are preaching in the desert...	Interpretation ⊖

CASE N° 3: Inhabitants of a village near a factory emitting nauseating fumes

"As for that, one cannot say the air here is good! I've lived here over 40 years and I can tell you that things have not gotten any better in recent years with the arrival of the factory! You have to remember that when the wind is blowing in the wrong direction, opening the window is out of the question! But what can you do, none of us here in the village have a say in this story!"

1 - You are so right! Big shots make the laws and little people live with them; it is very true that it is hard to change the world...	Interpretation ⊖
2 - You make do with the pollution from the factory and you feel that there is nothing that you can do to change things.	Empathy ⊕
3 - Come on! You cannot just sit there like there is nothing you can do, you have to act! If everyone thought like you, nothing would ever change!	Evaluation ⊖
4 - Do you think this feeling of being powerlessness perhaps comes from other, similar experiences where you could not change things to your advantage?	Inquisition ⊖

5 - Don't you think that you could change things if you acted collectively, with the support of the mayor's office, by writing to the local paper?	Advice ⊖
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CASE N° 4: Director of a factory discharging polluting waste into the river

"Listen, the purpose of a business is to turn a profit! Already we are expected to create jobs, invest, and now we also are supposed to take care of the health of fish? Caring for the landscape is for farmers; we have enough on our shoulders with the economic crisis; in the end, what is it all for? So that fishermen can continue to amuse themselves on Sundays? Get serious!"

1 - You are totally unaware of the value of biodiversity ! And yet you know very well that your business is contributing to the destruction of the planet!	Evaluation ⊖
2 - How many jobs have you created over the past five years? What are the investments that you have made?	Inquisition ⊖
3 - I completely understand your perspective, you are an important economic actor in the region, and employment is critical these days. Ecologists put pointless pressure on everyone, they make us feel guilty with all of their announcements of catastrophes every morning...	Interpretation ⊖
4 - We are not asking you to save the planet, but there are economically viable technical solutions that could limit the damage. You could consider solutions adopted in other European countries; it might help you.	Advice ⊖
5 - You think that adding additional constraints in order to conserve biodiversity is a heavy responsibility in the current economic context and you do not accord any legitimacy to demands that businesses limit the pollution they produce.	Empathy ⊕