

## TRANSCRIPTION EXERCISE

Classes, readings, assignments and quizzes for this course all rely on detailed transcripts of interactions. This exercise is intended to help you develop an understanding of, and an ability to use, Conversation Analytic (CA) transcription conventions.

It's important that you learn to read CA transcripts so you can recognize what a transcript shows to have actually happened in a conversation, and how it shows that. The most effective way for you to learn these things is by using the transcription conventions—first, in reading some transcript, and then in producing some of your own.

### First, read some CA transcript:

Familiarize yourself with the description of the transcription conventions by:

- reading over the document “CA Transcript Symbols.pdf” (download pdf on Canvas)
- going through the online CA transcript symbol tutorial at the following website (access using the browser Chrome):  
<http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/schegloff/TranscriptionProject/>
- listening to a sample call called “Medeiros 1” while reading a sample transcript: (listen to the sound file “**Medeiros 1.mov**” on Canvas as you read the transcript “**Medeiros 1**” below)  
“Medeiros 1” is a phone call between a high school truancy officer and a student’s parent. Work at associating the symbols in the transcript with the sounds of the talk that you hear on the call.

### Second, produce your own CA transcript:

Transcribe the 1-minute 24-second long sound file (on Canvas) of the 911 call we will refer to as “Oakland BBQ” using CA Transcript Symbols. Start by first listening to the entire 911 call.

In your transcript, refer to the speakers as **CLR** (for the caller) and **911** (for the call-taker). Spell out the words for any numbers you hear (e.g., “forty” not “40”).

The Caller’s name is Jennifer Schulte (you may use that spelling), and she mentions the places “Lake Merritt Park” and “Cleveland Cascade” in Oakland, California. This is the first 911 call you can also hear here, through until the 1-minute 24-second mark:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LgaU1h0QiLo>

**Format your transcript** according to the instructions below:

(See “**FORMATTING CONVENTIONS FOR THE TRANSCRIPT ASSIGNMENT**” and “**Some General Hints for Doing CA Transcription**” below.)

**Your job is to hear what the participants actually say as accurately as you can, and then transcribe that as precisely as you can. This means that you are transcribing what you hear them say, and not what you expect them to say or what you think they should have said.**

Your work will be evaluated by assessing the degree to which your transcript displays:

- an adequate grasp of the level of detail it is appropriate to capture,
- a substantial grasp of what the symbols are used to represent, and
- your own, individual best effort to hear and represent this stretch of talk (do not use anyone else's transcript to inform your own).

After you turn in your transcript, you will see a copy of a professional transcript of this call so you can compare it to your work.

**Your transcript of “Oakland BBQ” is due Monday, 9/21/20 at the start of class.**

**Advice:** Do not wait until the last minute to do this Exercise. It will take MORE TIME THAN YOU ANTICIPATE. For a person doing CA transcribing for the first time, it can take several hours to transcribe an adequate level of detail in each minute of interaction. You may find it best to work on it in several shorter sessions rather than in one long one.

## FORMATTING CONVENTIONS FOR THE TRANSCRIPT ASSIGNMENT

Type your transcript using the following formatting conventions. First, see the example transcript below:

### Example Transcript

```
01  DOC:      Are you havin' any real specific problems with thuh cou::gh, er
02           anything like that? with your sinu[ses?
03  PAT:                        [Uh::(m) thee only thing
04           every once inna while I get a-=(get a-) uh: a really wi:ld
05           (0.2) extreme tickle in my throat. An' I:(ve) gotta cough
06           cough cough fer: (0.2) seconds.
```

### (A) Formatting the assignment: When you open the document on your computer...

1. **Set Top, Bottom and Left page margins to 1". Set Right page margin to 2".**

2. **Set the font to Courier New or Courier.** This is important because Courier is a fixed-space font, as opposed to others (e.g. Times New Roman and Palatino), which are proportional fonts. In fixed-space fonts, all characters use the same amount of space. This allows all characters above and below each other to line up evenly on the page.

3. **Set the font size to 10-point.**

### (B) Formatting the assignment: When you begin to type up your transcript...

1. **Begin each line with four (4) spaces (using the spacebar).**

2. After these four spaces, add a **speaker-identification abbreviation, followed by a colon**. In the example above, "DOC:" and "PAT:" refer to doctor and patient, respectively. For other assignments, use any abbreviation that makes sense.

3. After the speaker-identification abbreviation, **add five (5) spaces (using the spacebar)**.

4. Transcribe until the end of the line, including all of the transcription conventions necessary.

5. **At the end of each line, add a hard return.** That is, hit the 'return' key (rather than simply typing to the next line, using tabs, etc.).

6. Before adding a next line of transcript for the same speaker, use spaces (created with the spacebar) to line it up with the previous lines. Do NOT use tabs or any other formatting device.

7. When your transcript is finished, go back and **replace the first two spaces of each line with a two-digit line number** (01, 02, 03 ... 10, 11, 12). Thus, each line should ultimately begin with a two-digit line number (followed by two spaces preceding each speaker-identification abbreviation, or followed by eleven spaces preceding each same-speaker continuation as in lines 04-06 in the example above).

### (C) Notes of caution:

1. Remember to transcribe what you hear (that is, all of the words and sounds as they are actually produced by the participants). People do not always speak 'formally'. For example, in line 01 of the example transcript above, the doctor says "havin'", not "having". Or again, at lines 01-02, the doctor says "er anything...", not "or anything". Furthermore, participants often repeat themselves, such as in line 04 of the example transcript above, where the patient says "I get a =(get a-)".

2. **Do not blindly run a spell check on your transcript.** Your computer will not be familiar with the transcription conventions, or with nonstandard spellings.

## Some General Hints for Doing CA Transcription

### 1. Pre-Transcribing

Listen to the entire recording all the way through a few times (at least twice) to get a sense of what's going on in it: how many participants are talking, which voice belongs to which participant, what are ambient vs. focal sounds (e.g. foreground vs. background talking), etc. Then, listen to the first 15-20 seconds of the recording several times. You should do this at least 5 times—10 times is better—before starting to transcribe.

### 2. First Pass: A Basic Sketch

Take the first 5-10 seconds of the recording and listen to it 4 or 5 additional times before transcribing.

2.1 Sketch out the basic turn-taking organization: Who speaks first? Second? Third? etc.

2.2 Begin your transcript by first typing out the words that constitute each speaker's turn.

Initially, don't worry about including all the details. You can add in detail as you refine your transcript upon subsequent hearings. It's often easier to add/refine detail once all the words are already transcribed. Spell out the words you hear as they are pronounced/articulated, not as they 'should' be spelled (according to the dictionary).

2.3 After typing out the words, go back and listen for silences. Do you hear any silences between the turns? Are there silences within one speaker's turn? If so, note these silences. On your first pass at transcribing the recording, I recommend that you initially note the 'spots' in which you hear a silence with the following notation: (.)

Then, on your subsequent passes, return to these (.) spots and time out the silences more precisely.

### 3. Second Pass: Refining and Adding Detail

Take the same 5-10 seconds or so that you've already been working on and begin listening to it again for more detail. Some important details to listen for:

overlapping talk; latched utterances/sounds; sound stretches; emphasized words or sounds (or increased volume); turn or unit-final intonation (comma, period, question mark); sound cut-offs; increased/decreased pace of talk; pitch contours; audible breathiness (inbreaths, outbreaths; laughter)

After you've listened to the recording 10 or so times, you'll begin to get a sense of the detail. When you're new to doing transcription, it's likely that you'll need to listen to the same 5 seconds at least 15-20 times to hear a sufficient level of detail. The payoff: the more time you spend transcribing, the more detail you'll have – detail that will enable you to develop and present a stronger analysis (and get a better grade).

#### **Timing Silences:**

Once you've identified and isolated a spot in the recording where you hear a silence, listen to the recording starting just before that spot several times. As you're listening, count out seconds ("Naught one thousand..."). Start counting the moment you hear the silence start, and stop counting the moment you hear talk/sounds resume.

Naugh[t      one [th    ou[s a n [d,      O[ne    one [th    ou[s a n [d  
(.) [(0.2)      [(0.5)    [(0.8) [(1.0),    [(1.2)    [(1.5)    [(1.8) [(2.0)

Or use the "Mississippi" method, i.e., practice saying "Mississippi" at a pace such that it takes about 1 second to say it, and then use this to time pauses. Each syllable represents about 0.25 seconds, so it makes for a nice way to time pauses accurately to the nearest 1/4 second.

## Medeiros 1

((ring x2))  
 01 Mom: Hello,  
 02 (0.5)  
 03 Off: Hello Mister Williams?  
 04 (0.8)  
 05 Mom: Uh: this is Missus Willia:ms,=  
 06 Off: =Uh Missus Williams I'm sorry.=This is Miss Medeiros  
 07 from Redondo High School calling?  
 08 Mom: Mm[hm,  
 09 Off: [.hhhh (uh)Was Mark home from school ill  
 10 toda[y?  
 11 Mom: [U:::h yes he was in fact I'm sorry I- I didn'  
 12 ca:ll because uh::h I slept in late=I (.) haven' been  
 13 feeling well either(,/.) .hhhh And uh .hhh (0.5) u::h  
 14 he had uh yih know, uh fever: (0.2) this morning.=  
 15 Off: =U::h hu:h,  
 16 ( ): .hhh=  
 17 Mom: =A:nd u:h >I don' know y'know if he'll< be: (.) in  
 18 tomorrow fer sure er no:t,=He's kinna j'st bin layin'  
 19 arou:nd,=j (hh)uhkno:w,=  
 20 Off: =Okay.=Well I'll [go 'head en: u:hm (.)  
 21 Mom: [( )  
 22 Off: I won' call you tomorrow night if we don' see 'im  
 23 tomorrow=We'll just assume he was home ill.  
 24 ( ): (.)/(ptch!)  
 25 Mom: nnRig[ht ( )  
 26 Off: [A:n-  
 27 Off: Send a note with him when he does return.  
 28 Mom: I will.  
 29 Off: O:kay,  
 30 Mom: Okay=  
 31 Off: =Thank you=  
 32 Mom: =Uh huh=Buh [bye  
 33 Off: [B'bye