An Exploration of Interpreter Performance in Intelligence Gathering Interviews

Supplemental Material – Coding Scheme

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Interrogation Transcript Coding Scheme

Background

The Cognitive Solutions Group of Applied Research Associates, Inc., developed this coding scheme to better understand and characterize participant (interviewee, interviewer, and interpreter) behavior during interrogations. The scheme comprises three superordinate categories (strategy, information, & interpreter) that subsume several subordinate categories or codes. These categories help capture, characterize, and quantify a range of behaviors and strategies that occur during operational interrogations. The coding categories focus on techniques used in police and military interviews and interrogations, and are informed by findings from the scientific literature. These categories also capture the flow of information between participants and the information shared or lost across participants.

Each coding category focuses on a different aspect of the interview, but when used together they allow you to characterize behavior in the interview. The coding scheme requires the coder to parse the interaction into turns and units. A turn begins when the interrogator speaks, it ends with the last utterance before the interrogator speaks again. Multiple units comprise each turn. Units are utterances made by the interrogator, interpreter, and detainee within each turn. There are multiple units within each turn. To simplify coding, we apply a hierarchy to the process. Tactics and rapport strategies take coding precedence such that if a unit represents a single tactic or rapport-building behavior, we code the unit only for that single tactic or rapport-building behavior. We developed this scheme specifically to code interrogations with interpreters; therefore, we included a separate category to apply to interpretations. Generally, we coded interpretations separately from ‘strategic’ utterances of interrogators and detainees. However, if the interpreter assumed the role of interrogator or detainee, applying tactics, building rapport, and asking or answering questions, we applied the ‘strategic’ and ‘information’ codes to their utterances.

We applied the coding scheme as follows:

- Does the unit represent a tactic? If so, apply the Tactics code(s) and code the next unit.
  - If not, does this unit represent rapport building? If so, apply the Rapport code(s) and code the next unit.
  - If the unit does not represent rapport building, does it represent a question or answer? If so, apply the Q&A code(s) and code the next unit.
Strategy Codes

Tactics. This category characterizes speakers’ use of different tactics (e.g., rational or emotional tactics) during the interview. These codes supersede all others. Capture tactics used by a speaker before using another code category. For example, if a speaker asks a question in the furtherance of a tactic (for example, “You’re not smart enough to have coordinated this, are you?”), code the tactic (Emotional) rather than the question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotional (Emo)</th>
<th>Rational (Rat)</th>
<th>Incentives (In)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confrontation (Con)</td>
<td>Minimization (Min)</td>
<td>Other tactics (Oth)</td>
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</table>

*Emo*  Emotional codes include: Ego up, Praise, Ego down, Emotional love, Emotional hate, Fear up, Fear down, Emotional futility (see U.S. Department of the Army, 2006).

*Rat*  Rational codes include: Being credible, Presentation of evidence, Logical argument, Storytelling. Rational codes include instances where the speaker makes an effort to display their credibility, for instance, “I kept my word so far, when you asked for something you’ve received it.” Other instances include when the speaker provides evidence of participation or connection to a topic of interest, when the speaker explains his or her perception of the situation (e.g., “Here’s what I think happened…”) or why he or she cannot be connected to the topic of interest.

*In*  Incentive codes include: Offer incentive, Exchange, Limited time or opportunity, Bargaining, Negotiating. This code will often cover offers of some tangible item, such as food, books, or money or an intangible item, such as information, opportunity, or freedom. The speaker may reference conditions by which the participant can gain the offer or benefit, such as offering items in exchange for information or offering information in exchange for money. The speaker may offer access to an item desired or the speaker may simply make requests of a participant.

*Con*  Confrontation includes a speaker’s direct or indirect accusations of the target. It may include utterances that challenge statements or introduce prior inconsistencies. Confrontation does not include instances in which the speaker simply corrects another participant, unless the participant corrects or denies information that is case relevant. For instance, if the detainee corrects the interrogator about where the detainee last saw a loved one, do not code for confrontation.

*Min*  Minimization includes: Minimization, Legitimizing, Upwards appeal, Situation control (see U.S. Department of the Army, 2006).
**Oth** Other codes include less frequently used and restricted tactics from the Field Manual, including: We Know All, File & Dossier, Establish your identity, Rapid Fire, Silence, Change of Scenery, Mutt & Jeff, False Flag, Separation. We place these behaviors in an ‘other’ category because they may occur infrequently.

The tactics category also contains a No Code option and Problematic option for situations when one cannot code the unit reliably.

**No** No Code applies to units that cannot be coded (e.g., is an incomplete utterance or otherwise unintelligible).

**P** Problematic code applies to units that are difficult to code. Situations include instances in which the coder cannot determine to whom the speaker is speaking, whether the interpreter significantly changed the meaning of a statement or misinterpreted the statement, and when it is unclear whether interpreter used role exchange or a completed a (poor) translation.
Rapport. The rapport category characterizes the different methods participants use as they attempt to make connections with each other. These are rapport-based methods and represent the Taylor and Donald (2007) motivational approaches, specifically, identity and relational approaches. Capture these methods only if a tactics code cannot characterize the unit.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Relational (Rel)</th>
<th>Identity (ID)</th>
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**Rel** Relational codes apply to the speakers’ utterances that convey Connection, Similarity, or Self-disclosure for the purpose of developing or maintaining rapport. Connection includes instances in which the speaker imparts wisdom or advice, or for example, uses the detainee’s greeting conventions or sayings intended to improve or maintain rapport. Similarity codes apply to utterances where the speaker points out a similarity between the speaker and target. The similarity must be obvious. For example, if the target expresses an attitude or opinion, the speaker must express the same attitude or opinion (i.e., the valence must match). Self-disclosure occurs when the speaker discloses information about himself or herself in an effort to build a bond with the target. Information can be related to family, social, or professional life.

Also code instances when a participant shares customs, such as sharing food, or customary greetings as relational.

**Id** Identity codes include instances in which the speakers’ utterances include Empathy/Sympathy and Kindness/Concern. Empathy occurs when the speaker indicates sharing the same feelings as the target, even if what the speaker says is not an exact match with the target’s emotions. For instance, “I feel bad for you” conveys sympathy, even if the target did not explicitly express their feelings. Kindness/Concern occurs when the speaker expresses concern for the target’s welfare, friends, or family, or displays helpful behavior. Code for identity when the speaker expresses gratitude towards the target. Code instances where the speaker attempts to elicit empathy or sympathy as identity.
**Question and Answer.** This category focuses on how speakers word questions and how targets produce the resulting responses. For example, this category codes whether the speaker uses a direct question or the target gives a direct response. It also includes whether a speaker makes a statement, asks a clarifying question, or is non-cooperative. Apply these codes across all participants, not just in response to an interviewer’s question. Capture questions and answers if the tactics and common ground codes cannot characterize the unit. Multiple codes may apply.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct Question (DQ)</th>
<th>Clarifying Questions (ClarQ)</th>
<th>Active Listening (AL)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct Response (DR)</td>
<td>Clarifying Response (ClarR)</td>
<td>Statement (S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Cooperative (NC)</td>
<td></td>
<td>I don’t know (IDK)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**DQ** Directs questions are those that ask for new information or discuss a new topic. For instance, a direct question might include:

“What did the elder say to you about the money?”

**DR** Direct responses are responses to direct questions (or to utterances coded as tactics or rapport that also consist of a direct question). For instance, a direct response might include:

“He told me I was to guard the money until his return.”

Continuations of direct responses, occurring across utterances, should also be coded as direct responses.

**ClarQ** Clarifying questions are those that clarify previously provided information. Code repeated questions as clarifying. Clarifying questions also include expressions that indicate the speaker does not understand, such as “I don’t understand.”

For instance, a clarifying question might include:

“He told you to guard the money? What exactly did he say about the money?”

**ClarR** Clarifying Responses are those responses that answer clarifying questions. Code repeated answers or statements as clarifying. For instance, a clarifying response might include:

“Yes, he told me to guard it until he returned. He said ‘X, you must guard this with your life until my return.’”
**AL**  Active listening includes when the speaker provides words of encouragement to keep the respondent talking, such as “uh-huh,” “go on” and “yeah.” If the speaker repeats back the respondent’s words without requesting additional information, code it as active listening.

**S**  Statements include utterances made without prompting or instances in which the speaker offered information or a response in the absence of a request or question.

**NC**  Non-cooperative utterances are those in which the speaker expresses denial, non-agreement or contradiction to a question or statement. Utterances are non-cooperative when the speaker does not respond to the topic of discussion, by either ignoring the question or changing the topic.

**IDK**  “I don’t know” responses are those in which the speaker offers, “I don’t know” in response to an utterance.
**Information Codes**

These codes capture information elicited during the interrogation. They are not exclusive of the previous three codes. When the speaker provides information or intelligence that could be relevant to the interrogation, code that as a piece of information.

Determine whether the speaker provided relevant information. Apply a liberal criterion: Given our lack of case knowledge, we likely cannot determine whether the information is or is not relevant. For instance, providing information about one’s family may not be relevant to a case; however, it may be relevant to an interrogator’s approach. Do not code information that appears to be unrelated to any furtherance of the investigation, relationship, or interrogation. Indicate whether the unit provides information related to the self, others, or both. If the speaker subsequently repeats this information, code the information as Information-Repeated. Multiple codes may apply if the speaker provides new information about him or herself (I-S) and repeats information provided in a previous turn (I-R).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Information-Self (I-S)</th>
<th>Information-Other (I-O)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information-Both (I-B)</td>
<td>Information-Repeated (I-R)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Coding protocol:

Apply codes to all units as needed and code all types of information provided.

- **I-S** Information-Self denotes instances when the speaker provides new information that is directly related to himself or herself.

- **I-O** Information-Other denotes instances when the speaker provides new information about other individuals.

- **I-B** Information-Both denotes instances when the speaker provides new information about himself or herself and someone else.

- **I-R** Information-Repeated denotes instances when the initial speaker repeats information previously coded as I-S, I-O, or I-B.
**Interpreter Codes**

These codes capture the interpreter’s behavior. First, determine whether the interpreter interpreted a previous unit. If the message is an interpretation, determine whether the interpreter provided an accurate (gist) interpretation that does not include a significant change in meaning, complexity, or length. If the message does not meet the gist interpretation criteria, apply the interpretation codes (addition, subtraction, and omission) to identify how the interpretation differs from the speaker’s original statement. If the interpreter did not interpret a previous unit, code for role exchange. A role exchange occurs when the interpreter assumes control of the conversation by employing tactics, developing rapport, asking questions or making statements. In these cases, code the unit according to the Strategy structure. If the interpreter interpreted a portion of (or all) of the unit but added information that significantly changed the messages’ meaning (e.g., s/he employed a different tactic), code the unit for role exchange.

These codes include performance codes that capture the variations between the speaker’s “input” and the interpreter’s “output.” Differences between what the speaker says and what the interpreter produces in another language could influence the interview. These codes capture simple interpretation errors, such as omitting information or using the wrong word or phrase.

**Coding protocol:**
- Did the interpreter interpret a previous utterance? If so, then determine whether the interpreter interpreted the message without significant changes in meaning, complexity, or length. If there are no significant changes, code the turn as Gist.
  - If significant changes exist, determine whether the interpreter added information (Ad), subtracted information (Sub), or omitted (Om) information. Code for all relevant changes.
  - If significant changes exist, such that the meaning changes significantly and it appears that the interpreter has taken on the role of the interrogator (applying tactics, building or maintaining rapport, or asking questions other than clarifying), then code for Role Exchange.
  - Apply the strategies coding protocol to the unit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gist interpretation (Gist)</th>
<th>Role Exchange (Re)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Omission (Om)</td>
<td>Substitution (Sub)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Addition (Ad)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Gist** Gist interpretations are those in which the message appears to be interpreted sufficiently, without significant changes in meaning or complexity. This may include instances in which the interpreter simplifies or explains a lengthy message without a significant change in meaning. In some cases, the interpreter splits a gist interpretation across two consecutive units. Consider these consecutive units together and code them both as gist.
**Om**  Omissions include instances when the interpreter partially or completely deletes the message, to the exclusion of potentially critical details. For example:

_G:_ I want to know who you met with, when you met them, and what they said and you’d better not leave anything out. I’m tired of this; you’d better tell me everything.

_T:_ I want to know whom you met with, when you met them, and what they said. I’m tired.

In this example, the interpreter (T) omits “and you’d better not leave anything out…of this; you’d better tell me everything.” The omission changes the requests’ nature from one in which the impatient interrogator expresses desire for the detainee to comply with his questions to a simple request for information and a potentially insignificant statement that conveys the interrogator is fatigued.

**Sub**  Substitutions include instances when the interpreter replaces a concept or theme with another concept or theme that changes the message’s meaning. Substitution might also include significant changes in words (e.g., the interpreter substitutes “morning” for “evening”).

**Ad**  Additions include instances when the interpreter adds information to the message. This does not include asking the detainee questions (other than clarifying, which would be coded as role exchange and then for Strategies). For example:

_G:_ “You know, I think we need to get more information before we discuss your release.”

_T:_ “We need to get more information, for example about the day you were captured and what you knew about the money, before we can talk about releasing you.”

**Re**  In role exchange, the interpreter initiates some kind of interrogation behavior, for instance, assuming the role of interrogator or detainee, asking questions (that are not clarifying) and/or using tactics or building rapport. Code Role exchange only if the interpreter initiates the behavior. If the detainee asks the interpreter a clarifying question and the interpreter responds, do not code for Role exchange, but code the unit according to Strategies (or Question and Answer as needed). If the interpreter continues with interrogation-like behaviors, code the behavior as Role exchange and then code the statement according to Strategies (or Question and Answer as needed).

*After coding for Re, apply Strategies (tactics, rapport, or question/answer codes) to the message.*
Additional Coding Protocol Details

Topic Change

Topic change captures the global topic shifts that occur across an interrogation. Code the transition point between major topics. For example, a transition might occur when shifting discussion from a capture timeline to a discussion about love for one’s family. It could also occur, for example, when the interrogation shifts from the initial greeting or rapport phase to a capture timeline discussion. This code does not capture local topic changes, for example, the detainee and interrogator shift from discussing the morning to the afternoon on the day of capture.

Information Flow

These codes capture the direction information sent during an interrogation. For instance, the detainee could intend a message for either the interrogator or the interpreter. Code the intended recipient of the speakers’ statement. When the intended recipient is unclear, denote this instance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interrogator (G)</th>
<th>Detainee (D)</th>
<th>Interpreter (T)</th>
<th>Recipient Unclear (U)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Turn

Mark the turn (1, 2, 3…) on the coding sheet as indicated on the transcript. New turns begin when the interrogator (G) speaks.

Speaker

Mark the speaker as indicated on the transcript. It is often helpful to use (1), (2), (3), and so on, after the speaker code to denote the unit sequence. For instance D(1) is the detainee’s first unit in the turn, D(2) is the detainee’s second unit in the turn, and so on.
This coding scheme was informed by and sought to expand on the information found in the following sources.


