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# Transcribing screen-capture data : the process of developing a transcription system for multi-modal text-based data

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2015.1082291>

<b>Title</b>	Transcribing screen-capture data : the process of developing a transcription system for multi-modal text-based data
<b>Authors</b>	Meredith, JM
<b>Publication title</b>	International Journal of Social Research Methodology
<b>Publisher</b>	Taylor & Francis
<b>Type</b>	Article
<b>USIR URL</b>	This version is available at: <a href="http://usir.salford.ac.uk/id/eprint/36884/">http://usir.salford.ac.uk/id/eprint/36884/</a>
<b>Published Date</b>	2015

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1 **Transcribing screen-capture data: The process of developing a**  
2 **transcription system for multi-modal text-based data**

3

4 **Abstract**

5 Transcription of audio data is widespread in qualitative research, with transcription of video-  
6 data also becoming common. Online data is now being collected using screen-capture or  
7 video software, which then needs transcribing. This paper draws together literature on  
8 transcription of spoken interaction and highlights key transcription principles, namely  
9 reflecting the methodological approach, readability, accessibility, usability. These principles  
10 provide a framework for developing a transcription system for multi-modal text-based data.  
11 The process of developing a transcription system for data from Facebook chat is described  
12 and reflected on. Key issues in the transcription of multi-modal text-based data are discussed,  
13 and examples provided of how these were overcome when developing the transcription  
14 system.

15

16 **Keywords:** Transcription, conversation analysis, screen-capture data, online interaction, text-  
17 based chat.

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22

# 1 **Introduction**

2 A recent development in qualitative research has been the growing interest in online text-  
3 based data, such as online chats, e-mails, text messages, instant messaging interactions and so  
4 on (e.g., Baym, 2009; Coulson, 2005; Herring, 2007). While much of this data does not need  
5 to be transcribed, some online data is now being collected using screen-capture software  
6 (Bhatt & de Roock, 2013), which records actions represented on a computer screen. The use  
7 of these kinds of data poses challenges for transcription, which is an integral part of  
8 qualitative research. Transcription most commonly involves representing an oral language,  
9 with its attendant set of rules, as written language, with a different set of rules (Kvale, 1996).  
10 Previous literature has described the process of transcription and has provided 'how to'  
11 guides (e.g., Du Bois, Schuetze-Coburn, Cumming, & Paolino, 1993; Hepburn & Bolden,  
12 2013; Jefferson, 2004). Transcription has also been critically examined, with many authors  
13 noting that it is not a neutral process, but rather is theory-laden (Bucholtz, 2000; Davidson,  
14 2009; Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999; Ochs, 1979). While most of the literature has focused on  
15 transcribing spoken language, a growing literature discusses how to transcribe physical  
16 aspects of an interaction, such as body language, gaze, gesture and so on (e.g. Bezemer &  
17 Mavers, 2011; Goodwin, 1986; Heath, Hindmarsh, & Luff, 2010). This paper brings together  
18 the previous literature on transcription and transcription principles, and uses it to show how  
19 multi-modal text based data can be transcribed.

20 In the following section, I will provide an overview of the literature on transcription,  
21 including reviewing the development of multi-modal transcription for both spoken and online  
22 discourse. In the second section, I will identify the key principles which comprise the  
23 framework for developing a transcription system. The final sections provide examples of a  
24 transcription system developed for text-based screen-capture data. I will use these examples  
25 to demonstrate some of the challenges of transcribing multi-modal data, and how the

1 transcription principles guided the process.

2

### 3 **Transcripts and transcription in qualitative research**

4 Transcripts are used in qualitative research to aid analysis. A transcript is “compact,  
5 transportable and reproducible, and provides for easy random access unlike audio or video  
6 records” (Hepburn & Bolden, 2013, p. 75). In other words, paper transcripts can be accessed  
7 at any time, without needing a computer or any technical equipment. Transcripts allow data  
8 to be presented to others in journal articles, conferences, data sessions and so on. However,  
9 there is no ‘gold standard’ for how to transcribe spoken discourse and there is debate about  
10 how much, and what kind of, information to include in transcripts (Potter & Hepburn, 2005;  
11 Smith, Hollway, & Mishler, 2005). Potter and Hepburn argue that transcripts “should be  
12 transcribed to a level that allows interactional features to be appreciated even if interactional  
13 features are not the topic of study” (p.291). However, Smith, Hollway and Mishler suggest  
14 that this stance does not consider the differing aims of different types of qualitative research,  
15 and that for many approaches the inclusion of interactional features is irrelevant for the  
16 subsequent analysis. This debate encapsulates the issue that transcripts are not merely  
17 objective artefacts, but rather are theory-laden (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1998; Ochs, 1979). In  
18 other words, “data collection and transcription are affected by the theoretical interests of the  
19 analyst which inevitably determine which aspects of an interaction will be attended to and  
20 how they will be represented” (Jones, 2011, p. 9). Therefore, the finished transcript is not a  
21 simple record of the audio or video data, but instead is a record of the *approach* taken to the  
22 data by the transcriber (Bird, 2005; Lapadat & Lindsay, 1998).

23 The process of producing a transcript is often considered as the first stage of analysis  
24 (Edwards, 2003; Kvale, 1996; Lapadat & Lindsay, 1998, 1999), although it is also argued  
25 that even the initial viewing or hearing of the data requires the construction of meaning

1 (Ashmore, MacMillan, & Brown, 2004; Goodwin, 1994). The production of a transcript  
2 allows the researcher to familiarise themselves with the data, and subsequently identify  
3 interesting phenomena for analysis (ten Have, 2007). However, it is important that transcripts  
4 are not treated as data (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008) nor as an adequate substitute for watching  
5 or listening to the recorded data (Hepburn & Bolden, 2013; Heritage & Atkinson, 1984).

6

### 7 *Multi-modal transcription*

8 With the increased use of video in qualitative research, a number of systems for representing  
9 embodied conduct have been developed (e.g., Goodwin, 1980, 1986; Heath, et al., 2010).  
10 Bezemer and Mavers (2011) note that physical or bodily conduct is often simply described,  
11 such as 'shakes head'. Images are also used, including video stills, drawings and computer-  
12 generated images (e.g., Avital & Streeck, 2011; Goodwin, 2007; Heath & Luff, 2011), but  
13 their use varies considerably. Images are sometimes used alongside transcripts, highlighting  
14 particular actions or lines of dialogue (e.g., Craven & Potter, 2010). Others use images *as* the  
15 transcript, with relevant text overlaid on the images (e.g., Norris, 2004). However, due to the  
16 space which images require, these transcripts often only represent small sections of data  
17 (Bezemer, 2014). There are, of course, further transcription notations for multi-modal data in  
18 addition to those described above (Bezemer and Mavers, 2011), with some transcripts  
19 combining different methods. For example, Richardson and Stokoe (2014) use stills  
20 alongside transcripts, with relevant lines of dialogue imposed on the images as well as  
21 descriptions of actions in the transcript.

22       There are few examples of transcription of text-based multi-modal data. For studies of  
23 online data, authors sometimes choose to use screenshots to represent the actions occurring  
24 on-screen (e.g., Keating & Sunakawa, 2011), while others provide a written transcript (e.g.,  
25 Beisswenger, 2008; Garcia & Jacobs, 1999). Beisswenger's transcript includes one column

1 for posted messages, another column for messages in construction, and a third column for  
2 embodied conduct taken from a video recording. Garcia and Jacobs, on the other hand,  
3 reproduce “what is visually available to each student on the screen” (p.343), and show what  
4 is appearing in the chat window, along with the message entry box for each participant.  
5 While these transcription systems are used to present data, it is rare that there is a description  
6 of *how* these systems were developed. This paper draws upon and develops previous  
7 literature on transcription by discussing the specific challenges of transcribing multi-modal  
8 text-based data.

9

### 10 **Transcription principles**

11 In this section, I will discuss a number of transcription principles drawn from the literature,  
12 which function as a framework for guiding the development of a transcription system. As  
13 previously discussed, transcription should not be seen as an objective process, rather it is “a very  
14 complex process involving a series of interpretive judgements and decisions” (Müller &  
15 Damico, 2002, p. 300). The choices made during the transcription process are dependent  
16 upon the questions the researcher asks of that data and their methodological and theoretical  
17 approach (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1998; Ochs, 1979). In other words, a key principle is that the  
18 transcript will, and should, inevitably reflect the analytic method and research question.

19 Another principle is that a transcript should be readable. As Ochs (1979) argues “a  
20 transcript that is too detailed is difficult to follow and assess. A more useful transcript is a  
21 more selective one” (p44). Therefore, a transcript will necessarily be selective, and so  
22 transcribers will need to consider what should be included and excluded, based upon the  
23 goals of the research (Davidson, 2009; Lapadat, 2000; Müller & Damico, 2002).

24 A third, and potentially competing principle, is that the transcript must be useful to the  
25 researcher. Therefore, it must include *enough* information so that it can be used for current,

1 and potentially future, analytic interests (Du Bois, 1991). However, a balance must be struck  
2 between the transcript being usable and readable.

3 A fourth principle is that the transcript should be accessible to others in similar fields  
4 of research, by using a similar layout or ‘borrowing’ symbols from other well-established  
5 systems (Du Bois, 1991) . While readability and usability relate to the researcher’s use of the  
6 transcript, accessibility focuses on whether others are able to use and understand it.

7 These principles are not rigid rules, but rather are a framework for guiding the process  
8 of both developing a transcription system and subsequently producing transcripts. In the rest  
9 of this paper I will discuss the process of developing a transcription system specifically for  
10 multi-modal text based data. I will show how the principles discussed here are relevant for  
11 managing the challenges of transcribing these kinds of data. First, though, I will provide a  
12 brief overview of the data collected and methodological approach taken to analysis, because –  
13 as discussed above – such factors impact upon the production of a transcript.

14

### 15 **Data and methodological approach**

16 The data comprised a corpus of screen-capture videos of Facebook chats. Facebook chat is a  
17 text-based instant messaging service, available through the social networking site Facebook,  
18 allowing users to interact with their friends in real time<sup>1</sup>. Four participants downloaded  
19 screen-capture software on to their computers, and were asked to engage in Facebook chats  
20 as normal, but to record their screens when doing so. All participants gave informed consent  
21 to have their chats recorded, and they also gained consent from their chat partners. 47 screen-  
22 capture chats were collected comprising around 25 hours of recordings.

---

<sup>1</sup> At the time of data collection, Facebook chat was a quasi-synchronous means of interacting with others online. After data collection was completed, Facebook combined the asynchronous private messaging and quasi-synchronous chat features.

1           The aim of the research was to investigate how instant messaging interaction is  
2 organised, using conversation analysis (henceforth CA) to analyse the data. CA examines  
3 instances of naturally-occurring interaction to analyse how social action can be seen as  
4 patterned and orderly (Heritage & Atkinson, 1984). The key findings of CA are that turns-at-  
5 talk incorporate actions, in other words, they are ‘doing things’ such as inviting, requesting,  
6 offering and so on (Drew, 2005). In addition, CA finds that talk is organised sequentially, so  
7 one action will project a particular next action. CA is also concerned with how participants  
8 mutually co-ordinate turn-taking in conversation (Schegloff, 2007). The broad analytic  
9 interests of CA are therefore action, sequences and turn-taking, and this is reflected in the  
10 types of transcripts produced.

11           CA transcripts are designed to include details of not only what is said, but also details  
12 of how a turn is delivered, such as the pitch, volume, speed or prosody of a turn (Hepburn &  
13 Bolden, 2013). The most common method of transcription in CA is the Jefferson (2004)  
14 system, which incorporates ways of representing temporal features, utterance alignment,  
15 speech delivery and intonation (Hepburn & Bolden, 2013; Roberts & Robinson, 2004). The  
16 Jefferson system is based largely on notation which is familiar from written interaction,  
17 including capital letters for volume, underlining for emphasis and so on (Hepburn & Bolden,  
18 2013).

19           For the Facebook chat data, a transcription system was developed which would reflect  
20 my research interests and which was accessible, as far as possible, to other CA researchers.  
21 There were three key features which distinguished this data from spoken interaction, and  
22 which posed challenges for transcription: firstly, the interaction itself was text-based, as  
23 opposed to representing spoken language as text; Secondly, some data was only available via  
24 the screen-capture and was not available to both participants in the chat; and thirdly, the on-  
25 screen data often involved moving text (for example, writing or deleting messages), and this



1 needed to be accurately represented and distinguished from the chat itself. In the following  
2 sections I will discuss the process of developing a transcription system, and show how these  
3 issues were addressed.

4

#### 5 **Designing a multi-modal transcription system**

6 In this section I will outline some initial decisions made in the process of developing the  
7 transcription system. I will then discuss the layout and some of the symbols used throughout  
8 the transcript. Finally, I will show how overlaps, writing and deleting are represented in the  
9 transcript.

10

#### 11 *The initial decision-making process*

12 Hammersley (2010) notes that a number of decisions need to be made during transcription,  
13 including what to transcribe, how much to transcribe and how much detail to include. Here, I  
14 will discuss the decisions involved in the initial stages of transcribing screen-capture data.  
15 The first step in developing the transcription system involved watching the screen-capture  
16 videos, and noting relevant details. This initial stage functioned as a ‘noticing device’ (ten  
17 Have, 2007, p. 95), allowing me to identify interesting phenomena for analysis and was,  
18 effectively, the first stage of analysis (Edwards, 2003). In text-based data, the main aspect to  
19 be included is the actual interaction, in this case, the text of the Facebook chat. The screen-  
20 capture data provided additional information, including message construction, overlapping  
21 writing, using other websites, and so on, which was only available to the participant  
22 recording their screen.

23 There were many features in the video data which could be included, but based on the  
24 principle of readability it was necessary to consider what features would be analytically  
25 relevant, and to exclude those which did not appear to be. For example, I chose not to include

1 the mouse movement as this action would not assist in answering the research question. In  
2 addition, the inclusion of mouse movements in multi-modal transcripts often makes the  
3 transcript more complex (Laurier, Forthcoming), and thus less readable.

4 Another decision related to how much detail to include. References to activities outside  
5 of the chat were included, but with fairly limited information, as demonstrated in the Figure  
6 1.

7

8 1 K\*: 🖥️ 6.0 University e-mail 🖥️  
9 2 ((Opens Microsoft Word))

10

11 Figure 1. Extract from Facebook chat.

12

13 K spends 6 seconds using her university e-mail (line 1), before opening word processing  
14 software (line 2). These lines of text represent images but the action is described rather than  
15 shown. The description of these activities is brief; there is no detail such as whether K was  
16 writing, reading or organising her e-mail for example, as this was deemed irrelevant for  
17 analysis. The availability of the full screen-capture video also raised another issue in terms of  
18 selectivity. Participants often engaged in more than one chat simultaneously and therefore the  
19 decision needed to be made whether to include all chats in one single transcript or to  
20 represent each single interaction in its own transcript. Including all the interactions would  
21 represent the participants' lived experience of Facebook chat (Meredith & Potter, 2014), but  
22 the aim of the research was to focus on one-to-one interaction. Therefore, guided by the  
23 principle that the transcript should reflect the aims of the research (Lapadat, 2000; Ochs,  
24 1979), I transcribed each single interaction separately. An additional consideration was that a  
25 transcript of the entire screen would most likely have been extremely complex and therefore  
26 both unreadable and unusable for analysis (Du Bois, 1991).

1           One final decision at this stage was whether to use transcription software such as  
2 Transana. I chose not to do this for a number of reasons. Firstly, in keeping with the principle  
3 of accessibility (Du Bois, 1991), I wanted to produce the transcript as Jefferson transcripts are  
4 produced, where Microsoft Word is most commonly used (Heritage, n.d.). Secondly, not  
5 using transcription software allowed for work on the transcript on any computer, without  
6 needing to download additional software, making it more practical.

7           So far, I have laid out the basic decision-making processes of developing a transcription  
8 system. Some of these decisions are similar to those made when transcribing spoken  
9 interaction, but some issues do relate to the data being transcribed. In the following section, I  
10 will discuss some of the more practical decisions about the transcript, related to the layout  
11 and symbols.

12

### 13 *Layout and symbols of the screen-capture transcript*

14           One key decision was whether the transcript should be in vertical, column or partiture format  
15 (Edwards, 2003). Most spoken transcripts are “arranged in the conventional ‘play-script’  
16 layout” (Jones, 2011, p. 14), meaning they are read from top-to-bottom and left-to-right.  
17 While some transcripts for spoken interaction use a column-based format, this can give “the  
18 impression (due to left-to-right reading bias) that the speaker whose utterances are leftmost is  
19 the more dominant in the interaction” (Edwards, 2003, p. 326; see also Ochs, 1979). A  
20 similar issue could arise with multi-modal transcripts, as one part of the interaction – the chat  
21 or on-screen actions – could be given precedence in a column-based transcript. One  
22 consideration for the Facebook chat transcript was that the Jefferson system predominantly  
23 uses a vertical format, although it borrows occasionally from the partiture format (ten Have,  
24 2007). Therefore, using a vertical format would make the transcript more accessible to other  
25 conversation analysts (Du Bois, 1991). An example of the layout of the final transcript is

1 shown in Figure 2.

2

3	1	2	3	4	5
4	1	2.17	0.15	Isla:	wait wait wait
5	2				(2.0)
6	3			I*:	<del>i</del> ±    (2.0)    <del></del>
7	4	2.23	0.06	Callum:	new

8

9 Figure 2. Extract from Facebook chat.

10

11 There are columns in the transcript, which are numbered for the purposes of this example.

12 The interaction itself is in a single column (Column 5), and therefore resembles the vertical  
13 format, with both the on-screen activities and the chat in the same column; this decision was  
14 made for three reasons. Firstly, breaking up the on-screen activities and the chat could mean  
15 that, in the course of the analysis, the chat was given precedence. Secondly, the use of  
16 columns breaks up the linearity of the interaction. Thirdly, using columns makes the  
17 transcript less readable and useable for conversation analysis, as it is difficult to accurately  
18 indicate the occurrence of overlaps, which are key for the analysis of turn-taking. Therefore,  
19 in the screen-capture transcript, both the actions taken from the screen-capture and the chat  
20 are included in a single column.

21 Columns are used in this transcript for indicating line numbers (Column 1) and  
22 participant identification (Column 4), as in a Jefferson transcript. In Jefferson transcripts,  
23 time between and within turns is timed to tenths of seconds and placed within the interaction  
24 (Hepburn & Bolden, 2013). However, in the screen-capture transcript, due to the nature of  
25 textual interaction, there are different timings to be presented. Firstly, time between sent  
26 turns is relevant, and available, for both participants in the chat and these are represented in  
27 column 3 (15 seconds; 6 seconds). In addition, the cumulative time elapsed is indicated in

1 column 2 (2 minutes 17 seconds; 2 minutes 23 seconds). Secondly, there are on-screen gaps,  
2 taken from the screen-capture, when nothing is happening on-screen for the participant  
3 recording the data (line 2). Thirdly, there are pauses in the construction of messages, where  
4 the writer momentarily stops writing (line 3). These latter two timings are only available from  
5 the screen-capture, and these are presented within the interaction itself (Column 5). The other  
6 timings, available to both participants, are placed alongside the interaction, as a method of  
7 distinguishing between the different timings.

8 In Column 4 the full (anonymised) name of the participant is used in lines 1 and 4,  
9 whereas only the initial of the participant is used in line 3. This distinction relates to how  
10 different data types can be contrasted “so that readers of a transcription will know at every  
11 moment what kind of information they are taking in” (Du Bois, 1991, p. 79). In this case, the  
12 distinction is between the visible interaction available to both participants, and the on-screen  
13 actions, available only to one participant. When a line refers to a part of the visible  
14 interaction, the participants’ full names are used. When only an initial with an asterisk is  
15 used, as in line 3, the information is taken directly from the screen-capture and refers to some  
16 action occurring on-screen.

17 Another way of contrasting data types was through highlighting the turns which were  
18 part of the interaction and so visible to both participants (lines 1 and 4). This means that for a  
19 reader who is not familiar with the transcript, it is clear which parts of the chat are visible to  
20 both participants, thus making it more accessible and readable (Du Bois, 1991).

21 Figure 2 also shows some of the symbols used throughout the transcript. When  
22 deciding which symbols to use, accessibility was the key principle abided by and conventions  
23 from the Jefferson system were used where possible. However, while the Jefferson system  
24 uses some notations from written interaction, such as capital letters, underlining and  
25 punctuation (Hepburn & Bolden, 2013), this was not possible in text-based chat as these

1 written notations were used as part of the interaction. Therefore, symbols needed to be chosen  
2 which were not commonly used in written language, but which were widely available (Du  
3 Bois, 1991). In the Facebook chat transcript, symbols were chosen from the ‘Wingdings’ and  
4 ‘Zingbats’ fonts on Microsoft Word. The symbols were chosen because they best represented  
5 the actions on-screen, but also because they seemed unlikely to be used in everyday written  
6 interaction.

7

### 8 *Writing and overlaps*

9 In Facebook chat, as with most other instant messaging services, the construction and sending  
10 of messages are separate, so message construction is not visible to the recipient. Therefore,  
11 the issue arises when transcribing text-based screen-capture data of how to distinguish  
12 between text which is not visible to the co-participant, and text which is visible to both  
13 participants. While some methods have been described above, such as highlighting turns, the  
14 following examples show in more detail how writing is represented.

15

16	1		I*:	✍ wait wait wait ✍
17	2	2.17	0.15	Isla: wait wait wait

18

19 Figure 3. Extract showing writing in Facebook chat.

20

21 In Figure 3 the use of an initial in line 1, rather than a full name, indicates that this action  
22 occurs on-screen. In contrast, in line 2, which is visible to both participants, the full name is  
23 used and the line is highlighted. The writing symbol (✍) is used in line 1 to show that Isla is  
24 constructing a message, and it is also placed at the end of message construction, which is  
25 particularly important when it occurs over a number of lines of the transcript. Du Bois (1991)  
26 suggests that symbols should be ‘iconic’, that is, they should have some link to the action

1 they are designed to represent. The writing symbol is ‘iconic’, as it visually represents the  
 2 action it is symbolising. It is also readily available through Microsoft Word and was not  
 3 available in Facebook chat, so would be less likely to be used during an ordinary chat. The  
 4 message being constructed is written in italics, to distinguish it from messages sent to the  
 5 chat, thus aiding readability and usability.

6 From the screen-capture video, the overlap of message construction and sending was  
 7 visible (as seen briefly in Figure 2) and these phenomena were included in the transcript, as  
 8 they were relevant to the research question. The following example shows how overlap is  
 9 represented.

10

11	1			I*:	<i>yeah i need    to   </i> ↔
12	2	06:36	00:21	Joe:	<i>   some one tried to add</i>
13	3				<i>photos of me from friday 😊   </i>
14	4			I*:	↔ <i>cook</i> ↯
15	5	06:37	00:01	Isla:	<i>yeah I need to cook</i>
16	6				(2.0)
17	7			I*:	<i>and i(2.0) [think we might watch</i> ↔
18	8			J*:	<i>[writing</i> ↔
19	9			I*:	↔ <i>a watch a film tod &amp; o</i> ↯
20	10			J*:	↔ <i>writing</i> ] ↔
21	11	06:48	00:11	Isla:	<i>and i think we might watch a film</i>
22	12				<i>too</i>
23	13			J*:	↔ <i>1.0 writing</i> ↯
24	14	06:49	00:01	Joe:	<i>yea you need cock? .....what?</i>
25	15			I*:	<i>who&gt;&gt;</i> ↯
26	16	06:50	00:01	Isla:	<i>who&gt;&gt;</i>
27					

28 Figure 4. Transcript showing overlapping writing.

29 [Figure 5 about here]

30

31 In Figure 4 the content of Isla’s message construction is available, whereas Joe’s is not, as  
 32 Isla is the participant recording her screen. It is possible to see that Joe is writing, as a small  
 33 writing symbol appears in the corner of the chat window (see Figure 5). Therefore, from  
 34 viewing the screen-capture video it is possible to see when both parties are constructing

1 messages. As with the Jefferson system, overlaps are indicated using square brackets (lines 7  
2 and 8), making it more accessible to conversation analysts.

3 Joe's message at lines 2 and 3 is sent while Isla is constructing hers, and in line 4 Isla  
4 continues to write her next turn. In the transcript this is indicated by the double headed arrow  
5 ('↔'), representing 'latching', placed at the end of line 1 and the start of line 4. This symbol  
6 indicates that the writing is continuous. From lines 7 to 10, writing symbols, overlapping  
7 brackets and latching symbols are used to indicate that the two parties are writing  
8 simultaneously.

9 In line 1 Isla starts to construct the turn that eventually appears at line 5; an action  
10 which is only available for Isla. At the end of the line, while Isla is writing 'to', Joe sends a  
11 message to the chat (lines 2 and 3), and this is represented by the use of || symbols placed  
12 around the parts that occur at the same time. The || symbols are placed around the entire  
13 message which occurs simultaneously, even if this runs over more than one line. Here, then,  
14 the partiture format is used for actions occurring at the same time, similarly to Jefferson  
15 transcripts, thus making the transcript more accessible. The features highlighted here show  
16 how the text-chat and multi-modal features can be represented in the same transcript using  
17 symbols and descriptions, rather than images. The overlap of on-screen actions and text-chat  
18 demonstrates how including the interaction in a single column makes it clearer how overlap  
19 occurs.

20 The production of such a detailed transcript reflects the aims of the research, which  
21 were to examine the sequential and turn-taking aspects of instant messaging conversations.  
22 For example, in Figure 5 Joe's humorous message to Isla at line 14 ('yea you need  
23 cock...what?') appears to be unrelated to the previous turn. However, by transcribing the  
24 overlapping writing, we can see that this sequential disruption occurs because of the  
25 overlapping writing and posting. Isla posts the first-pair part (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973) to



1 Joe's message ('yeah I need to cook') in line 5. Isla then continues to construct another  
 2 message in line 7. What is apparent from the transcript is that Joe starts to construct a  
 3 message in line 8, while Isla is still writing her subsequent message. Isla finishes constructing  
 4 her message a second prior to Joe and therefore her message appears first. So, we can see,  
 5 firstly, how turn-taking and sequence organization are impacted by the ability to write  
 6 messages simultaneously (see Meredith, forthcoming). Secondly, the fact that simultaneous  
 7 writing is not accountable, as simultaneous speech might be (see Schegloff, 2000) means that  
 8 we can start to understand some of the interactional norms of instant messaging interaction.

9

10 ***Deleting and editing messages***

11 As the Facebook chat interaction is text-based and message construction occurs separately  
 12 from sending, participants are able to edit their messages, which raises the question of how to  
 13 accurately transcribe this editing. In the transcripts, strikethrough of letters was used to  
 14 represent deletion, utilising methods from other forms of written communication (Du Bois,  
 15 1991; Hepburn & Bolden, 2013). However, due to the issues of representing moving text in a  
 16 static format, the representation of deletion was slightly more complex than first anticipated.  
 17 Consider, for example, Figure 6 which shows a message construction and deletion.

18

19 1 I\*: ~~holy (.) shit (.) t st~~  
 20 2 ~~hit joe - wherewe e were you~~  
 21 3 ~~lastnight night ? ? and i bet~~  
 22 4 ~~you can't remember a thinkg glo~~  
 23 5 ~~g g lol (3.0) i th (1.0)~~  
 24 6 (2.0) oh dar ~~o~~  
 25 7 01.23 Isla: oh dar

26

27 Figure 6. Transcript of deletion in Facebook chat.

28

1 In this example, it is difficult to see what the deleted message was, as all the letters are  
 2 struck-through. As will be shown below, the detail of what is being deleted can be relevant  
 3 for analysis. In addition, any nuances of message construction are lost because the entire  
 4 message is deleted. Therefore, in order to enhance the usability of the transcript, the decision  
 5 to re-write the letters was taken, as shown in the following example.

6

```

7 1          I*:      h holy (.) shit th (.) s t e st e
8 2              hit joe - wherewe ewe e were you
9 3              lastnight thgin night ? -? ? and i bet
10 4             you can't remember a thinkg gk glo -olg
11 5             g -g g lol (3.0) i th ht i (1.0)
12 6             lol gniht a rebmemer t'nac uoy tob I dna ?thgin
13 7             tsal uoy crew crchw - coj this yloh
14 8             (2.0) oh dar h
15 9 01.23 Isla:    oh dar
  
```

16

17 Figure 7. Revised transcript of deletion.

18

19 In Figure 7, it is easier to see how the message was constructed, moment-by-moment. The  
 20 letters which are being deleted are re-written in the order in which they are deleted (in  
 21 reverse). For minor corrections, this representation of the deleted letters is mostly  
 22 unproblematic. However, for the major deletion in this extract, it is difficult to see – at first  
 23 glance – what has been deleted. Therefore, it was decided that the letters would be re-written  
 24 as normal, thus enhancing the usability and accessibility of the transcripts. The following  
 25 example shows the final version of the transcript.

26

```

27 1          I*:      h holy (.) shit hit (.) s t e st e
28 2              hit joe - wherewe ewe e were you
29 3              lastnight night night ? -? ? and i bet
30 4             you can't remember a thinkg kg glo -glo
  
```

1 5 *g -g g lol (3.0) i th ~~i-th~~ (1.0)*  
 2 6 *~~holy shit joe - where were you last~~*  
 3 7 *~~night? and i bet you can't remember~~*  
 4 8 *~~a thing lol (2.0) oh dar ¯~~*  
 5 9 01.23 Isla: oh dar  
 6

7 Figure 8. Final transcription of deletion.

8

9 The transcript appears more readable and usable when written in the format in Figure 8. It is  
 10 possible to see the construction of the message moment-by-moment, but also to see clearly  
 11 the deleted text in lines 6-8. Having a clear representation of deletions enabled the analysis of  
 12 how participants orient to the potential implications of doing a particular action in the  
 13 conversation (Drew, Walker, & Ogden, 2013). The deletion in Figure 8 is significant because  
 14 it represents a shift from Isla asking further questions about the topic to merely assessing the  
 15 situation. Initially, Isla issues an inquiry ‘where were you last night?’. The second action is an  
 16 assertion ‘I bet you can’t remember a thing lol’, which could project a confirmation or denial,  
 17 or perhaps a humorous account. This completed message would have projected a further  
 18 telling from Joe about his evening. However, in her eventual turn Isla does not close down  
 19 the topic explicitly, but neither does she invite further talk on it (See Meredith & Stokoe,  
 20 2014).

21

22 **Discussion**

23 This paper has demonstrated how a framework of transcription principles can be used for  
 24 developing a transcription system for text-based multi-modal data. Previous literature has  
 25 shown how such data can be transcribed (e.g., Beisswenger, 2008; Garcia & Jacobs, 1999),  
 26 but transcripts are often presented with little explanation of the choices made (Davidson,  
 27 2009). As Lapadat (2000) suggests “transcription decisions and processes employed during

1 data collection and analysis need to be explained clearly and thoroughly in the write-up”  
2 (p.217). At the outset it was suggested that there were three key challenges which multi-  
3 modal text-based data posed: 1) the interaction was text-based; 2) some data was only  
4 available via screen-capture and not to both participants; and 3) the on-screen data involved  
5 moving text. The transcript presented here demonstrates how these particular challenges can  
6 be overcome. This paper therefore contributes to the literature on multi-modal transcription  
7 by offering an in-depth explanation of how a transcription system was developed.

8         This transcript is, as with all transcripts, a record of the approach taken to the data  
9 (Bird, 2005; Lapadat & Lindsay, 1998), that is, conversation analysis. Consequently, the  
10 debates around transcription in spoken interaction (Potter & Hepburn, 2005; Smith, Hollway  
11 & Mishler, 2005) are also relevant here. Potter & Hepburn argue that all interview extracts  
12 “should be transcribed to a level that allows interactional features to be appreciated even if  
13 interactional features are not the topic of study” (p.291). A similar argument could be applied  
14 to multi-modal transcripts; that is, that details of overlaps, writing and editing should be  
15 included in all transcripts. However, depending on the focus of the analysis, this level of  
16 detail may not be necessary. Considering that there can be no ‘neutral’ transcription  
17 (Bucholtz, 2000; Lapadat & Lindsay, 1998), ensuring that the transcript itself reflects the  
18 aims of the research is perhaps most important when developing a transcription system. The  
19 researcher still has to make decisions about what to include and exclude from the transcript,  
20 principally based on how relevant certain details are to the research question. As a result, the  
21 development of a transcription system can be seen as a key part of the analysis (Edwards,  
22 2003). For conversation analysts, features such as overlap, deletion and editing are important  
23 for the analysis, as demonstrated by the presentation of some brief analysis in this paper.

24         The four transcription principles were developed based on spoken interaction (e.g.,  
25 Du Bois, 1991; Lapadat, 2000; Ochs, 1979). However, it is important to note that these

1 principles do not encapsulate all those discussed throughout the literature. For example,  
2 Edwards (2003) includes principles around computational tractability and visual display, and  
3 Du Bois' work (1991) discusses robustness and economy. However, such transcription  
4 principles are seemingly specific to transcribing spoken interaction. Therefore, the four  
5 principles used in this paper are chosen because they can be applied to a broader range of  
6 data. There may be questions over the extent to which the transcript is in fact readable or  
7 accessible to other conversation analysts. I have used a similar format to the Jefferson system,  
8 including borrowing some aspects of the partiture format, and some transcription symbols;  
9 however, it clearly deviates quite significantly from a Jefferson transcript. Therefore, for  
10 newcomers, it may be that this transcript is not particularly accessible or readable. However,  
11 for many new to Jefferson transcripts, time must be spent learning to read and do this form of  
12 transcription (ten Have, 2007). There are, for example, chapters in many introductory texts  
13 which cover Jefferson transcription (e.g., Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008; ten Have, 2007) as well  
14 as a number of online tutorials providing guidance for new CA scholars (e.g., Antaki, 2011;  
15 Scheloff, n.d.). By including interactional features, both in text-based multi-modal and  
16 spoken transcripts, time is required to learn how to work effectively with the transcript, thus  
17 impacting upon its accessibility. It is notable that even when presenting the transcript in this  
18 paper, I used an image to demonstrate a feature of the technology. It is, therefore, certainly  
19 not my argument that the use of images is redundant when presenting multi-modal data.  
20 However, when analysing the data it is useful to have a transcript for noting observations or  
21 analytic comments (ten Have, 2007).

22         One potential issue with the data used in this paper is that having access to only one  
23 participant's screen may have implications for the accuracy of the transcript. For example, a  
24 message sent from one participant may not appear on the co-participant's screen  
25 immediately, due to 'lag' (Herring, 1999). By only having one participant's screen recorded,

1 it is not possible to examine the extent to which lag occurs and to reflect that in the transcript.  
2 Another related issue is that the detail of message construction can only be transcribed for  
3 one participant. The writing symbol appears in the chat window to indicate that the co-  
4 participant is constructing a message, but it is not possible to indicate whether they are  
5 writing, deleting or editing messages or whether, perhaps, the writing symbol has merely  
6 appeared in error. It is important to remember, though, that this also reflects the experience of  
7 the participant recording the screen, as they also only have access to their side of the chat.  
8 However, if screen-capture data were to be collected from both parties in the chat, the  
9 transcript could reflect the full chat, rather than one participant's side of it, although it would  
10 be particularly important to ensure that the transcript was still readable and usable when  
11 representing both participants' actions.

12         In contrast to spoken interaction, there is significant variability in the types of online  
13 interaction which could be recorded (see Herring, 2007 for a taxonomy of online  
14 communication). For data from online sites such as Instagram or Tumblr, which incorporate  
15 images, or sites such as Twitter, which involve far greater numbers of participants, the  
16 transcription system presented is likely to be unsuitable. However, the transcription principles  
17 laid out in this paper would be able to guide the development of transcription systems for  
18 different types of online data.

19         For conversation analysts, this paper demonstrates that text-based multi-modal  
20 interaction can be a rich source of interactional data. By collecting screen-capture data,  
21 interaction can be recorded in 'real-time', and this paper shows that it is possible to present  
22 these data in a readable transcript. Such findings should provide incentive to conversation  
23 analysts to continue to work with these kinds of data. For those working with multi-modal  
24 online data, this paper has provided some insight in to how such data can be presented, which  
25 does not rely on screen-shots. As new methods for collecting online data develop, it will be

1 important for researchers to consider the development of methods of transcribing and  
2 presenting such data as an integral part of the research and analysis (Edwards, 2003).

3

#### 4 **Conclusion**

5 The aim of this paper was to demonstrate how text-based multi-modal data can be transcribed  
6 using a framework of transcription principles. The framework was based on four principles of  
7 transcription - accessibility, usability, readability and reflecting the aims of the research.

8 There are three key challenges for transcribing text-based video data: 1) managing the text-  
9 based interaction; 2) representing text which is available to either one or both participants;  
10 and 3) representing 'moving' text. This article has argued that it is possible to overcome those  
11 challenges, through developing a transcription system according to the four basic principles  
12 of transcription. A transcription system, such as the one described in this article, can allow for  
13 a clear analysis of both text and video data. It is possible that such a framework could be used  
14 for developing transcription systems in the future.

15

#### 16 **Funding**

17 This work was supported by the Economic and Social Research Council [Grant number:  
18 ES/I903321/1]

19

#### 20 **Acknowledgements**

21 I would like to thank Elizabeth Stokoe and Charles Antaki for their advice at various stages  
22 of writing this article.

23

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