Julianne Cabour

To interview my first international student, we decided to meet on the first floor of the library, a fairly open and very social area, settling in one of the nooks. At 7p.m on a Monday evening, this is was the ideal location for my interviewee, not necessarily for me, but given I was working around his time schedule, the location worked out and the timing was alright. Although, my interviewee needed to be finished by 8 p.m. and arrived slightly late, giving me less time to interview. Fortunately, this did not affect the quality of the interview, as we finished everything on time. However in the future, I think I might try to interview students outside of the library, or at least the first floor, to avoid distractions and eliminate the background noise. Once again, the location was selected out of convenience for the international student and not my first suggestion.

As for my first interview, I felt overall the discussion went well, although while transcribing, I did see some areas within the interview as stronger than others. If anything can be said, I certainly used the “Uh-huhh probe” to the best of my ability throughout the interview, something that I found helpful in conversation but somewhat tiresome when transcribing. Also, starting out with specific questions, such as his language and native country, helped to start up the conversation and get my interviewee talking. I thought I successfully avoided the use of leading in my questioning, and only occasionally provided summaries of what was said. Additionally, I felt the personalization tactic of questions, such as asking for personal anecdotes regarding his family, high school, and stereotypes, along with some of the depersonalized questions, regarding eating habits and school. Although I do feel as though I have a habit of personalizing questions accidentally, something that I could work on. Also, I feel a little uncomfortable when the person goes silent, and I feel a need to fill the silent void, something I definitely need to improve while interviewing someone, because although I do not cut my interviewee off, there are moments where I feel like I cut him off a little. Although this was not a technique mentioned, one part of my interview that I thought I did particularly well in was relating to the person I was interviewing and getting “closer” through small details, such as me living in Massachusetts or the economics professor. Through this minor detail, I felt I was able to explore other topics and make him feel more comfortable around me, having relayed some personal information. Even though at times this helped me, I did realize at times I thought I was sharing too much, for example bringing in my cousin, something that certainly could have been left out. Other problems I faced were the deference effect, where I encouraged my interviewee not to hold back when discussing his opinion on Americans and American culture, and a little of the response effect, given I think the opinions and situations of various international students are quite different from the male I interviewed, so I will have to factor this in.

Finally, regarding the questionnaire versus my own improvisation, I felt as though I did more improvisation than initially expected. While in the beginning, as I said before, I stuck to the standard questions, following the order of my other questions became more and more difficult as the interview progressed. I felt as though I would start with one question and then realize that my final question had already been answered. When I tried to return to the questions, I felt there was a semi-awkward lull in conversation, however, the questions did provide me with a focus and a basic structure to improvise off of. Overall, I was glad I improvised and felt it helped keep a flow in the interview, despite some changing of topics are points.