

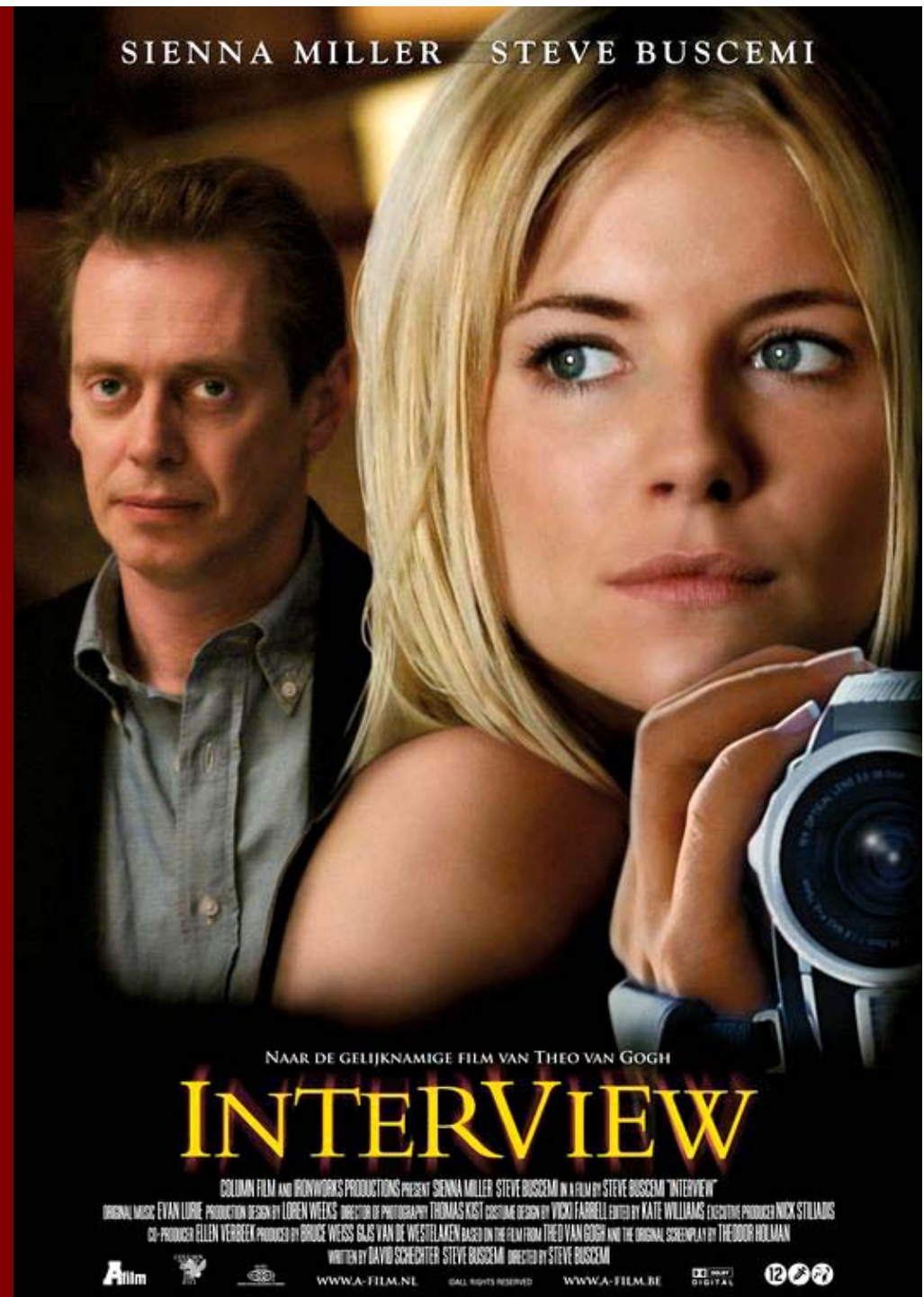
Interviewing

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1. Why interview?
2. Speech genres
3. A terrible interview
4. Practical advice



Why interview?

- + Quick collection of relevant data
- + More flexibility than an impersonal questionnaire

Some drawbacks:

- + Short-term interaction increases likelihood of misunderstanding
- + Context often disappears in presentation of data
 - ***Make sure it's an effective technique for the stage of research you're at.***



http://images.wildmadagascar.org/pictures/nosy_mangabe/rhett_rfi_interview180.jpg, accessed 30 July 2007

Unstructured: open-ended questions on general topics

Structured: ask everyone the same specific questions

The interview is a *speech genre*:

- 1) people who are familiar with it expect it to follow a pattern;**
- 2) some may not be comfortable with the pattern or expectations;**
- 3) expectations can be very different, and not always easy to recognise.**

Three examples:

Mexicanos (New Mexico, USA) don't announce upcoming events to close friends/kin; when one anthropologist asked about them, he found it "nearly impossible" to learn about them—because he was treated as a close friend! (Briggs 1986: 46)

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Three examples:

When I asked one Fijian woman a question about traditional practices, she said, 'We can talk about this in the church compound.'

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Three examples:

CB: How did [the wealthy family] make its money?

GL: There have always been wealthy persons all over.

CB: But how did [they] get so rich when everyone else was poor?

GL: Who knows?

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- 3) expectations can be very different, and not always easy to recognise.

✘ ***Subjects' goals may not be the same as yours!***



A terrible interview



He has no interest in what she's trying to say

...which is also counterproductive to *his* own goals!

He keeps interrupting her

<http://www.escapefromcubicle.com/photos/unauthorized/doctor.jpg>,
accessed 6 August 2007



[Http://www2.ru.ac.za/gallery/albums/environmentalscience/Interview_Kelly_Madzana.sized.jpg](http://www2.ru.ac.za/gallery/albums/environmentalscience/Interview_Kelly_Madzana.sized.jpg), accessed 30 July 2007

Some practical advice:

- 1. Give people the background of your interest and your project**
- 2. Silence is your friend!**
- 3. Beware of leading questions—
“Weren’t you surprised?”
“Did she attack you?”**
- 4. Consider interviewing in a relaxed space, or a group**
- 5. Ask if there’s anything they want to mention that you haven’t asked about**