

Research and Recordings, by Ellen Bramwell and Francesco Li Santi

Francesco: So, I heard you did some recordings for your research, can you tell me more about that?

Ellen: Yeah, well, for the research I'm doing just now - I'm a PhD student just now - and for that, I'm actually using semi-structured interviews.

Francesco: Oh right.

Ellen: So basically the recording is about the information and going into people's homes, and into people's communities, and getting information from them about things.

Francesco: Ok.

Ellen: So I think it's slightly different to the kind of research you're doing, is it?

Francesco: Yeah, I do, I actually do phonetics analysis which is slightly different...

Ellen: Mmhm.

Francesco: ...because in order to analyse very fine-grained details of the speech or the sounds that we produce with our organs, with our mouth, we really need good, very good quality sounds, so we need to bring people in the sound booth and record them, the way we are doing just now, which is a bit, er, emotional for people who come, so, because we wan-, a phonetician wants to try to record people as they speak when, in a spontaneous environment, er...

Ellen: So for you it's about how people are saying things, whereas for my recordings is about what they are saying?

Francesco: Yeah, yeah. Basically this is the difference, this is the main difference, ehm, so we-, but we want people to speak spontaneously as they speak in the street, as they speak with their family or their relatives. So, once we've been in the lab, in like in a sound booth or in a studio recording, there is always, people tend to, you know, to switch and er,

Ellen: Ah, so put on their kind of posh voice?

Francesco: Yeah, yeah trying to be more, hypercorrection it's called in, which is not really good, cause we want, ehm, I don't know if you do a sociolinguistics analysis and see how different people from Edinburgh, from people of Glasgow, in this vowel, say we want to compare two given vowels, you cannot really do if they are not spontaneous. So what we try to do is just to create some tools or some methods to elicit speech, to distract people.

Ellen: What kind of methods do you use then?

Francesco: So there is different kinds of methods and it really depends on the kind of analysis you want to do. So, in some of my first recordings we had something called map task, which is really really funny. You give people like two maps...

Ellen: Right.

Francesco: ...but they are different and they are in the same room but they cannot see each other, because we put them in different corners of the room.

Ellen: Mmhm.

Francesco: So they have-, one of the speakers is called information, information-giver or instruction-giver...

Ellen: Mmhm.

Francesco: ...and the other is the follower, so the giver has to say-, to give instructions and the other has to decide the route on the paper...

Ellen: Oh right, ok.

Francesco: ...like that, but they have different objects so - it's a bit difficult to explain if you don't have an example - so the giver may say "go around the house and then turn left at the traffic light", but he maybe has the traffic light on the other side of the paper. So even if they have been recorded, after a while because they are so involved in the task, they...

Ellen: They they forget to hypercorrect?

Francesco: Yeah they forget they're being recorded, and you can, yeah you can see the difference between the beginning and the en-, and after, I don't know, five minutes of recording. And people start swearing, or saying, you know, getting angry or, you know, so at least if it's not spontaneous, it's called semi-spontaneous speech.

Ellen: Mm. I mean sometimes I-, well not something similar, cause again it's a very different type of recording but I've done some, well obviously I've done recording for my own research, but I have also done some recording for the SCOTS corpus, here at this uni.

Francesco: Oh right, yes.

Ellen: So some interviewing for that, but also just trying to get people to have conversations with each other in Gaelic or in English. You kind of get the same thing. For the first five minutes people are very very conscious that they're being recorded, and I find this in my interviews with people for my onomastic research as well, people are very conscious of it, people really want to give you the right answers, and there aren't any right answers.

Francesco: Yeah, we call this in linguistics, you may know, this is called observer's paradox...

Ellen: Mmhm.

Francesco: ...and in any field of study, as soon as you want to study a phenomenon and, or no when you, you know, when you are observing something, automatically you influence the phenomenon, so you don't get the real things. You can never get proper things. But, this is why we need to create some methods...

Ellen: Yeah.

Francesco: ...to try to be...

Ellen: Yeah, I mean the way that I try to overcome that is, well the way I've tried to overcome it in some of my research is to do some ethnographic research as well and beforehand, before I do the interviews, so get to know people, play some kind of... Yeah completely.

Francesco: People get used to you and like friends?

Ellen: Mmhm. Yeah, so get used to having me around, get used to speaking to me get-, are kind of happy with me being there, that I am kind of part of whatever is happening.

Francesco: This method is typical in sociolinguistics research and, yeah.

Ellen: Yeah, it does seem to work for my interviews though, because people do seem to be just that bit more comfortable. Again when they notice the tape recorder, you know, they might take a couple of minutes to get into it, but they forget and they do start just having a normal conversation. [laugh]

Francesco: This kind, yeah, this kind of interviews, sometimes if you use, some topics are used in order to make people very very spontaneous, so if you start talking about, I don't know, people say, "tell me about a scary moment of your life" or "tell me about a difficulty, a difficult situation" or something, you know, you are very involved with your emotions...

Ellen: Mm.

Francesco: ...they, they tend to be more vernacular it's called in sociolinguistics, more spontaneous in a way.

Ellen: Yeah.

Francesco: So, can I ask you what kind of tools do you use? How do you organise your recordings, like equipment and stuff?

Ellen: Er, I need to be really... like I have something that's really portable, because I usually go into people's homes or maybe it might be a place of work if the place of work is in the community.

Francesco: Mm.

Ellen: So, I just usually use a portable DAT recorder...

Francesco: Yes.

Ellen: ...with, with just, usually just a single microphone actually, even if I'm recording more than one person, just because I find it gets really obtrusive otherwise and I don't need the kind of fine-grained phonetic detail that I would need if I were doing phonetic analysis.

Francesco: Mmhm. Yeah.

Ellen: So, ehm, yeah for some of my early recordings I was using a dictaphone and before that for some of my undergrad research I used actually just, you know, one of these big tape recorders that you get when you just have normal proper cassette tapes. [laugh]

Francesco: [laugh] I remember them!

Ellen: Yeah, so that was that was quite old-school.

Francesco: I haven't seen a cassette for ages actually. Yeah, no for me it's a bit different, 'cause sometimes for phonetics we really really need to look at very very fine-grained details, so for my last project I did the difference between coronals, and coronals are these sounds produced, generally with the tip of tongue touching in this area of the mouth...

Ellen: Mmhm.

Francesco: ...near your teeth so whether it's more /t/ dental or is alveolar so /d/ it's a very very small difference, and I wanted to see... compare Italians and Italian-English, so Italian-speaking English and Scottish English, so I needed to create some words that in a way would contain these sounds and see which is the difference between them, but in order to do that you need to bring them in a sound booth.

Ellen: 'Cause it's such a tiny difference to the human ear?

Francesco: Tiny, and recording must be very very clear otherwise you can't do any kind of analysis, like, we did software, there is some softwares to do acoustic analysis. And the problem is as soon as you bring someone into the booth, even when you have, you know, talked to them and they said "Ok I'll do that, no problem", as soon as they sit in front of a microphone they get nervous.

Ellen: Oh no!

Francesco: And they start, yeah moving a lot, making a lot of noise and stuff.

Ellen: And it becomes unnatural again, as you were saying, with the observer's paradox.

Francesco: Ehm... Yeah. So I try to tell them to be spontaneous, to don't worry a lot, and especially 'cause they have it written on paper, not to touch the paper, doing that.

Ellen: So you use wordlists to elicit the words?

Francesco: Yeah, I have to use wordlist, but I used to include the word in a sentence so, you know, to distract the speaker from, you know, from the bit I was interested in, so, I don't know, I put the words like "table" in a sentence...

Ellen: Mmhm.

Francesco: ...like, "put a glass of wine on the table", or something like that, so they are not focusing on the words. Otherwise if you just put a list, they may put more attention, they may understand what is the bit, so all the "t"s and stuff, so create wordlist, also random words mixed up, so they don't have a clue. And also I was looking at the vowels, ehm, the "u" vowel, it's called back rounded vowel, so, yeah you create, try to create words, to find words that contain this.

Ellen: Yeah.

Francesco: Er, I remember, you say "don't touch the paper", but all they did all the time, just moving.

Ellen: Oh, and of course interference with the microphones.

Francesco: Yeah, which is really bad for acoustic analysis.

Ellen: Oh, not just for acoustic analysis, though, I mean when I'm..., some of my recordings, I mean you try and make it as quiet as possible, but because you are in people's homes and they've allowed you into their home to do this...

Francesco: They make you a drink or something?

Ellen: Yeah, it does, it becomes a little bit difficult, because you can't really say to people, like, "in your own home you can't do this, and you can't do this, and it must be an entirely quiet environment", when they have other family members moving around and this kind of thing.

Francesco: Or television, dogs, er... [laugh]

Ellen: Yeah, television I have to insist on not having because it's so much of a distraction, but listening back to some of them a typical one is the ticking of a clock in somebody's living room.

Francesco: Oh my god!

Ellen: And they've put you in the living room and you've kin-, you've suggested maybe another room might be better, but it has to be the living room for whatever reason, and you have this "tick-tock, tick-tock" all the way through your two-hour recording, your conversation.

Francesco: Yeah, it's typical. I'm working on some corpus, just now I'm transcribing a corpus, and almost in every house, it was a kind of ethnographic study,

Ellen: Ah, right.

Francesco: So the interviewer went to interview the people in their own houses just to make everything more relaxing and spontaneous and there is always a clock, and in one of them there was like, what's it called, it's a cuckoo...

Ellen: Oh a cuckoo clock, yes.

Francesco: Cuckoo clock? And every, like, fifteen minutes there was this thing coming out!

Ellen: Oh no, yeah. No, I know it's worse when you're listening back though and it starts drumming into your head.

Francesco: But if you do this kind of sociolinguistic analysis it's not really a problem?

Ellen: It is not so much of a problem, when you're doing more of a content analysis, you're looking at the content of what people are saying rather than...

Francesco: Discourse analysis?

Ellen: ...yeah, so how people, rather than how people are saying it but er, it makes it more difficult just in terms of your own concentration, trying to listen to what's being said and kind of how people are saying it, and what...

Francesco: It's a bit distracting.

Ellen: Yeah.

Francesco: And then because you need to listen, listen, listen again, it can be tiring.

Ellen: Mm.

Francesco: So do you do any, like trial recordings before, to see if everything is ok?

Ellen: Yeah, I always do actually before every interview 'cause, because they tend to be really long interviews as well, I just can't imagine how bad it would be getting to the end of, kind of, maybe two hours sitting talking to someone...

Francesco: Yeah.

Ellen: ...and then finding that in fact it wasn't picking it up or something like this.

Francesco: Yeah, it would be terrible. [laugh]

Ellen: [laugh] So no, I do this, and it's to kind of get them used to the fact that they're being recorded a little bit as well.

Francesco: I think I did, the first time I was recording in the sound booth,

Ellen: Mm.

Francesco: I was sure I was recording but I wasn't! [laugh]

Ellen: Oh no, did you lose the recording?

Francesco: I didn't lo- yeah, no we just lose one hour, no, maybe forty minutes or something, so we needed to do that again. But it's funny because the very first recording I did, I did with one of my friends, who's Italian and he is doing undergraduate studies, first year here...

Ellen: Mhmm.

Francesco: ...and his English is not great, so because I wanted to compare, er, Scottish-English and Italian-English I asked him to speak English but also Italian to see what they are trying to do.

Ellen: Mmhm.

Francesco: You know, when they speak Scottish, or English, well English, so if there's a difference and there is actually difference, they're shifting their vowels and their sounds... ehm, yeah and he was a friend of mine, so as soon as we started recording we started laughing.

Ellen: Oh no!

Francesco: We couldn't concentrate...

Ellen: Mm.

Francesco: ...because we always laugh all the time with him, he is a very very funny guy, all his jokes and stuff.

Ellen: Mm.

Francesco: We couldn't concentrate and then I couldn't be serious because he was so funny to listen...

Ellen: Oh no!

Francesco: ...well he was getting quite nervous while reading...

Ellen: Right.

Francesco: ...the recordings and at the same time I couldn't, because I needed to concentrate on the screen to make sure he was not mispronouncing or something because all the time he mispronounced we had to go back to the word so I had to, you know, note down all the words, that we needed to go back to.

Ellen: So it was a shame that that wasn't a kind of one where you wanted it to be spontaneous because that would have been perfect in a way.

Francesco: Yeah, yeah! And the thing is, I prepared these words but he was pronouncing with an Italian accent, and not properly, so if I was looking at the "u" vowel like in "boot" he would say "bot" and [laugh] and something like that, but it was a good experience actually.

Ellen: Mm.

Francesco: Erm.

Ellen: I know, I find it quite a steep learning curve when, I mean your very first recording, or your very first couple of recordings especially if you're using new equipment, or something like that.

Francesco: Yeah, yeah.

Ellen: But even just really simple things like getting people to turn off mobile phones, things that you think you would think of but...

Francesco: Yeah, there's so many things that you need to be careful of that you wouldn't imagine, 'cause as I said before I told people not to move with the paper but what they did all the time was just move a lot and move the papers and make so much noise 'cause they were nervous and I couldn't really talk so I tried to tell..., you know, 'cause during the recording you can't really talk, so we made a break and I said "try not to move a lot" and he said "I'm not moving at all" and I said "yeah you are, don't move your paper, don't touch your paper!"

Ellen: And with the paper it's the worst, 'cause we were experimenting with that before we started this recording, weren't we, and it's just...

Francesco: Are very intrusive these noises.

Ellen: I mean it was just so loud when you do that.

Francesco: These frications. And it just ruins your acoustic analysis if you do this kind of sounds.

Ellen: Uh-huh.

Francesco: Do you find this kind of, I don't know, job or research rewarding, or making recordings and stuff?

Ellen: I do, yeah, ehm, I suppose I find it rewarding because I'm asking people to tell me something about themselves and quite often we do start with like a little-, because it's about names, my research is about names and people's names and er, and, you know, that kind of goes on to why people called their children this or, you know, why they were called this and what kind of things they like, and who they know and it kind of branches out like that, but it tends to start from their early life and where they've grown up and it is quite rewarding because I think people, although they tend to be really nervous, and at first they always tell me "no, no, well, you know, you know me, I don't know anything about this subject, I'm going to be rubbish, there's no point in asking me about this..."

Francesco: They get to like talking to their life and their story?

Ellen: Yeah! People don't get much of a chance to just sit and tell somebody about themselves, and I think, I find that aspect really rewarding, because I think people actually get something out of that, so...

Francesco: Well, for me it's not that rewarding from this point of view, 'cause it's just a list of words most of the time, but with map-task, er, sometimes it's so funny to go back and listen...

Ellen: Oh yeah!

Francesco: ...because you know they are trying to find this place, but they, ehm, it's all mixed up so they get angry or they say things, also in a funny way...

Ellen: Mmhm.

Francesco: ...and make a lot of fun so "where are you going?" and he would go like "I'm here!"

Ellen: So they're probably enjoying it as well?

Francesco: Yeah, yeah, most of..., er also when I was back in Italy, I did some of this kind of recordings, most of them have really enjoyed it, and it's really funny when you do your analysis, go back and listen, and but it's rewarding in the sense that, you know, once you've got your recording you can do an analysis on what you are interested in.

Ellen: Yeah, I find this as well, obviously from a completely different perspective, but once you have that data you can do something, whether you can find something out...

Francesco: You have them, and then spend time on them and see, there are so many things come up, things that you don't imagine, if you just speak to someone, you don't even imagine these but the more you listen you say "oh, he's moving the tongue like that", or "he's more dental" or "his 't's are more alveolar" or something like that, or his vowels, er...

Ellen: And you start to be able to build up patterns and pictures of what people generally do somewhere, and what people generally do somewhere else...

Francesco: Yeah. And I really find fascinating the fact that, ehm, you know if you see, I don't know for my experience in Italian, speaking English, and especially when they are first, like, my speakers were very very poor in English speaker...

Ellen: Right.

Francesco: ...so I thought, well, they are speaking English but with a very Italian accent, so also the vowels are modulated, are created with, we call it vowel space, it's called.

Ellen: Yeah.

Francesco: So within the Italian vowel space, but they actually were shifting a lot towards what are the vowel space, for example, of English, or Scottish English. So, they do something, I mean there is this er...

Ellen: Yeah, that's slightly, this is slightly off-topic actually, but that's quite interesting. Do they move towards Scottish English, so, from being in Glasgow? Or do they move more towards an ideal British English?

Francesco: Yeah... I'm also looking at the back rounded vowels "u", like in "boot" or "goose", something, and the Italians, erm, it's difficult to explain if you don't have any phonetics, but Italians are more...

Ellen: Oh, I do, yeah. [laugh]

Francesco: Ah, you did phonetics, sorry! And it's more, back and more high...

Ellen: Yeah.

Francesco: ...while Scottish is more towards the fronted and

Ellen: Yeah, or even some-

Francesco: more central.

Ellen: Yeah, I was going to say some of my back vowels tend to go towards centre.

Francesco: Yeah, yeah. So when the Italians' words were very very back and very very high, but when they speak English, well what they learned back in Italy was standard English, so it's not really Scottish, but they were moving towards the centre.

Ellen: Ah.

Francesco: They were not so high as in Italian and were very close, so when I compared them on a chart the Scottish and the Italians, ehm Italian-English, they were quite close.

Ellen: Right. Oh, right.

Francesco: So, there is, there was this, strat-, how do you say? There was a, they were, not a strategy but...

Ellen: Oh no, I think you could say strategy.

Francesco: ...there was a, I mean they were doing something in order to get closer, so the Italian "u" is "u" so they were saying "boot", they were not saying like "boot" with an Italian...

Ellen: Ok.

Francesco: ...but much more closer to...

Ellen: To where Scottish English is?

Francesco: Yeah. Oh I think, I don't know what I do sometimes, I need to analyse my recordings. [laugh]

Ellen: [laugh] I'd say it sounds like you know exactly what you are doing!

Francesco: Yeah...

Ellen: Ehm, I suppose we've kind of talked a little bit about how you encourage people to talk about what you want them to talk about, because you use word-lists and elicitation tasks.

Francesco: Yeah, basically, yeah.

Ellen: So, it's very structured in a way then?

Francesco: It's really really structured, because sounds, in phonetics there is this thing called assimilation, ehm, what am I saying, [laugh] it's not assimilation but it's co-articulation. For example, the "u" changes a lot according to the preceding sound and the following sound, so in every word, in every kind of context it keeps changing...

Ellen: Mmhm.

Francesco: ...so we need to, if we want to look at "u" we cannot just look at "u" but we need to consider the previous...

Ellen: Yeah, it needs to be in a similar context?

Francesco: Yeah, the previous phonological environment and the following phonological environment, so we need to create words that have, you know, this kind of structure, or nucl-, syllable. And because I was comparing Italian and British words, well Scottish-English, I had to find Italian words that had the same context, so the "u" was in the same context as the Scottish words. It's just difficult to find words that have a meaning, 'cause I didn't want to use nonsense words, I wanted to use words to put in a sentence to create elicitation.

Ellen: Mmhm. Yeah.

Francesco: It was really difficult, that was a very very hard task, because yeah...

Ellen: Yeah, so it requires a lot of planning and structuring and...

Francesco: Yeah, yeah. To design the project, the table for the word-list, it's really time-consuming.

Ellen: Yeah, but you know from there exactly where the interview is going to go and then it's going to be the same for each speaker.

Francesco: Yeah.

Ellen: Yeah, because I mean mine... I suppose what I do is really quite different then in some ways, I mean I use semi-structured interviews in that I do have topics that I want to talk about.

Francesco: You've got topics, yeah.

Ellen: Yeah, but I kind of let people go where they want to go with it, rather than try and hem them in and talk about, like, have a structured interview and ask them one question and response, question and response. I try to make it more like a conversation and allow them to go off and talk about what they think is important, rather than trying to impose what I think is important, as long as I get kind of similar, a similar range of information from each person, if you know what I mean? But that, yeah, that can be more time-consuming and more difficult than it sounds, I think! [laugh]

Francesco: Yeah, I can imagine. Yeah, this is the problem with phonetics, er, it's quite a pain, 'cause you really need to be very structured and very... there is also something called interactional phonetics, when you study phonetics but in interaction - speech. Because when we just speak like we are doing just now, we probably... because words are all co-articulated, it's called...

Ellen: Yeah.

Francesco: ...we don't really pronounce the words, all the sounds, then if we have a list, for example, let's say "table", you say "table" when you speak but you don't say all the sounds, you cut part of the word.

Ellen: Completely. And people have a kind of reading voice, a story voice as well, which is maybe what you get a little more, in terms of word-lists.

Francesco: Especially if you are studying something like intonation, or prosody, and it's really different, if it is interaction or if you're reading a passage or something.

Ellen: Yeah. Ok, so what you think the benefits are then of using recordings, compared with other methods?

Francesco: Yeah, it depends if it is..., especially nowadays, that you can store, you know, once you've got your recording, you can store it and you can go back whenever you want.

Ellen: Yeah, so you can use it again?

Francesco: Yeah again, so if you do, I don't know, I've got my data, to do this kind of analysis. And if in ten years' time or five years' time, or two years' time, you want to go... you have an idea and you want to go back to the same data, and you can use your data for this kind of analysis. But then when you go to recordings, you know, it's very very simple to manage them in an electronic way. Do you know what I mean? Er, you know, you've got a dialogue, and then you just want a bit of that, you can cut the bit you want.

Ellen: Oh, yeah.

Francesco: You can create corpora and manage them electronically. There is a lot of software you can er... I don't know, you put a dialogue in this corpora, and say "find me all these sounds, find me all these words", it finds you all these words, and you can just listen to the words you are interested in, or make any kind of statistical analysis or something, so...

Ellen: Yeah, for me as well, for any kind of qualitative research, I think the fact that you can go back to it as well. Because there are some interviews, 'cause I always give people the choice, obviously I much prefer being able to tape-record them in some way, and be able to go back to them, but I'll give people the choice, and I can take down what I can take down with a pen and paper, but you don't get the same quality of information.

Francesco: Of course, yeah.

Ellen: And you don't get the quotations that you can use to back up your arguments and that kind of thing.

Francesco: Yeah, also, just now for my Masters dissertation, I'm looking at pragmatics, trying to correlate pragmatics and phonetic realisation.

Ellen: Oh, right.

Francesco: So when you deal with pragmatics, it's tricky because there's a lot of interpretation. So you really need to go back and listen, listen, listen over. And sometimes, you know, the more you listen the more you change your mind.

Ellen: It is true actually, and it depends what you've been reading as well, I mean you might read something which starts to make something clear for you, and then you can go back with that in mind as well.

Francesco: Yeah, so, you know, a first analysis you think "oh, it's that" then you go back and listen again and say "I was wrong... probably".

Ellen: Mm.

Francesco: But it's very very tricky pragmatics, 'cause there's also a cultural thing.

Ellen: Yeah. And it's all about context, again.

Francesco: And because I am non-native, I'm studying Scottish-English, Glaswegian, speakers.

Ellen: Oh right, yes.

Francesco: So, there is all this kind of things, that we are not aware in linguistics, you know, like pauses, like intonation or something have meanings.

Ellen: Mm.

Francesco: So we interpret, when we speak, in discourse we keep interpreting these things, but there is cultural difference. So a pause may mean something for me, for an Italian may mean, if I stop, I don't know, for one second, may mean that I give you the turn.

Ellen: Yeah.

Francesco: But, here maybe it has a different meaning. So there are all these kinds of things, you know?

Ellen: Yeah, yeah, absolutely.

Francesco: But it's really fascinating.

Ellen: It is, definitely. And erm, what about rather than using other methods and things as well? 'Cause I think you've used corpora to some extent, have you?

Francesco: Yeah, yeah, I used many.

Ellen: But again have you used, erm, recordings taken from corpora rather than using textual corpora?

Francesco: Yeah. I always work on spoken corpora...

Ellen: Right.

Francesco: ...because I always had the idea, well I'm much more interested in spoken... erm, and I don't really find attract-, well it depends on what kind of study. If you do philology, or something you study historical stuff, of course you only have, you don't have recordings, but I'm really interested in the phonetics...

Ellen: Mmhm, yeah, and of course you need spoken data! [laugh]

Francesco: ...so the phonetics just studies voice, sounds, so you just need spoken data.

Ellen: Yeah.

Francesco: Well, you need phonetic-, you can reconstruct the sounds from books or something, phonetics, there is historical phonetics.

Ellen: Mmhm. Yeah, if you have an IPA transcription or something, you can sit and read that, but...

Francesco: Yeah, so you can compare some, you know, documents and try to recreate. But I'm not really interested in that, er yeah.

Ellen: I mean I've used, ehm, questionnaires alongside some of my kind of more ethnographic interviews and things and...

Francesco: Mm.

Ellen: I find that... I mean it's good in that you can get more data, well you can get data from more people, and you can get data on specific, these specific things that you're interested in that you think are important. But then again I'm asking about these really specific...

Francesco: It is more controlled.

Ellen: Very much more controlled, which in some ways I suppose is good but in the interviews I feel like they can talk about something I wouldn't even have thought about, maybe, because it's quite specific to their micro-community.

Francesco: Yeah, it's a sort of constriction when you do that, because you try to keep things the way you like it, but it's a constriction.

Ellen: Yeah, absolutely, and even on questionnaires where you get the kind of information you might get in interviews, you find they've written maybe a sentence about something, and you can't..., or they've ticked something and it seems a little odd, compared to the rest of the answers and you can't ask.

Francesco: Yeah.

Ellen: Like, that's one real benefit I think of being able to interview and be able to recording and come back to it.

Francesco: Then I find corpora really amazing, you know, when you've got your data, and you create a corpus, it's amazing because different people can have different... can find something different in corpora.

Ellen: Yeah, so can have different interpretations, or can, yeah, absolutely.

Francesco: Interpretations, yeah. I've just had this experience this morning, there was an undergraduate student in the lab and we had a look at the transcript yesterday. I was helping her, and we couldn't find really what she was looking for.

Ellen: Mmhm.

Francesco: But then she kept doing that in the afternoon. She came up this morning and said "Oh, you know what, I found...", it is not something she is interested in, but she found something and said "Look what these people do!" And it is not very typical for Scottish and I said "Wow!" I mean I never had... I knew that transcript but I never had a clue they were doing these kind of sounds. It is really interesting, so I said "When you go back to your supervisor you should mention this, 'cause it's a really good finding, you spotted something really..." So this is why I find corpora fascinating...

Ellen: Mmhm.

Francesco: ...because it gives, it's like a tool that gives people, it's like an open book where people...

Ellen: Oh, completely, and it's like so much research... it's about what the researcher takes to it as well.

Francesco: Yeah.

Ellen: And I suppose we just can't forget that that always comes into whatever research we do.

Francesco: That was really nice.

Ellen: Yeah, that was really interesting.

Francesco: Interesting, and also to compare these two kinds of...

Ellen: Yeah, because we do very different kinds, or recordings for very different purposes, I'd say.

Francesco: Yeah, because yours is more field, let's say.

Ellen: Yeah, fieldwork-based.

Francesco: Mine is more lab-based.

Ellen: Mmhm.

Francesco: So it's two different approaches.

Ellen: Yeah, but obviously there are different factors relevant for different types of research, and that's maybe the most important thing to remember and take from this.

Francesco: Yeah, it's good to know the different techniques we use, you know, I'm more in the lab and try to be very very quiet, you know, to make sure all the equipment is fine, so I do a lot of checking before to avoid clippings or noises that you don't want in the recordings.

Ellen: Mhm.

Francesco: But when you do something like ethnographic, you don't really...

Ellen: In the field you try and do this to the largest extent possible, but quite often, you have... you always have to make compromises for these things...

Francesco: Yeah.

Ellen: ...because you are out in the field and you are doing this in people's homes, and in people's places of work.

Francesco: Then you don't really want people to feel too nervous so...

Ellen: Yeah, it's playing these factors off against each other and just trying to figure out what works, but I think once you've done one or two, you start to get a feel for what works, and ehm... But hopefully this discussion might have helped a couple of people to start off.

Francesco: Yeah, yeah of course. I mean I find phonetics and also linguistics really fascinating, I'm just in love and making recordings is great, I think.

Ellen: Definitely and ethnographic fieldwork, sociolinguistics...

Francesco: Yeah.

Ellen: ...onomastics for me, name study, which not so many people do.

Francesco: It's great 'cause you can always go back and listen.

Ellen: Yeah, absolutely.

Francesco: And yeah, it's something that not all people get to do, so we are quite lucky I think.

Ellen: I think we definitely are. So if anyone is still listening, then good luck with your fieldwork and I hope this has helped!

Francesco: Ok. Thank you very much.

Ellen: Thank you.