Overview

English 130 teaches you how to conduct primary research and put it to use in your paper. Primary research is all about collecting and analyzing data. The most noteworthy examples are conducting surveys and interviews, examining trends in newspaper and journal articles, and bringing in author experience on relevant topics. Now that you have an idea of what primary research is, here are some terms that should help you do some of your own!
Active listening is a way to focus your attention on a speaker. The goal is to listen carefully to their words and watch their body language rather than paying attention to your ideas and inner thoughts. Often we find our brains are already working ahead even as someone is talking, racing to formulate the next question or topic of conversation. Active listening is particularly useful to keep in mind when conducting an interview.

For more information see:
The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods
CFL REF H 61 .S234 2008; Volume 1
Pgs 7-8
When presented with a question, people tend to agree, regardless of what is being asked. This is known as acquiescence response bias; that is, your survey subjects will be more likely to keep mindlessly circling agree. Researchers have several techniques they use to avoid this:

1. Switch up the survey so that half of the time “agree” is one position and “disagree” means the opposite. Then, halfway through, change to “agree” indicating the opposite position, and “disagree” meaning the first.
2. Allow the survey subjects a spectrum of response (ex. strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree) as opposed to simply agree or disagree.

For more information see:
The Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods
CFL REF HN 29 .E53 2008; Volume 1
Pgs 3
Aided Recall

Aided recall is a way to ask questions to your interview subject in a way that will trigger their memory and get them thinking and talking. The basics of this technique are making your questions and follow-up questions as specific as possible. For example, let’s say you’re conducting research on why certain foods are more appealing. Your subject states that macaroni and cheese is their favorite food. Now it’s time to ask a follow-up question:

Bad Question: Why do you like mac n cheese?

This question is too vague; your subject’s reply will be disjointed as they try to tell you ALL the reasons they like macaroni. Instead, try something like this:

Good Question: What appeals to you about mac n cheese: texture, flavor, or color?

This will get you a specific answer leading to exactly what you want to put in your paper.

For more information see:
The Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods
CFL REF HN 29 .E53 2008; Volume 1
Pgs 15-16
ATTITUDE MEASUREMENT

This is another type of question format. Attitude measurement is a way to find the big picture, or how people feel about a certain issue. Here is the format:

Do you approve, disapprove, or neither approve nor disapprove of _____?

Note: This is more useful in surveys rather than interviews.

For more information, see:
The Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods
CFL REF HN 29 .E53 2008; Volume 1
Pgs 37-38
**Balanced Question**

A balanced question is a question that accurately represents the fact that an issue has two sides. Asking an unbalanced question gets you biased data. Keeping this in mind should help you formulate both interview and survey questions.

Unbalanced Question: Many people believe technology is making us dumber. Do you agree?
There could be a whole spectrum of answers that the interview subject could give, but this question narrows the scope by implying that the subject can only agree or disagree.

Balanced Question: Many people believe technology is making us dumber, but others argue that technology is improving our quality of life. What do you believe?
This is far more open-ended, and doesn’t force the subject to agree or disagree but rather give their own opinion which the interviewer can then interpret.

Unbalanced Question: Some say that poverty is the biggest problem in America. Do you Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree?
In this question, there is no “agree” only “strongly disagree” and “somewhat agree”

Balanced Question: Some say that poverty is the biggest problem in America. Do you Strongly Agree, Agree, Somewhat Agree, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree?
Now both sides of the answers are balanced with the same number of possible replies.

For more information see:
The Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods
CFL REF HN 29 .E53 2008; Volume 1
Pgs 47
Bias is the set of ideas or prejudices that a writer may have that affects the neutrality of their paper. For research and writing, the goal is to stay as unbiased or neutral as possible. If you find yourself fishing for a particular outcome or answer, chances are your question or research is biased.

For more information see:
The Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods
CFL REF HN 29 .E53 2008; Volume 1
Pgs 56-60
The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods
CFL REF H 61 .S234 2008; Volume 1
Pgs 60-61
**Bipolar Scale**

A bipolar scale is used to represent a spectrum of feelings on a certain topic or issue. First a broad question is asked, and then the survey subjects are asked how they feel about it specifically. Here is an example:

Are you likely or unlikely to use your employer’s healthcare?

   Likely       Unlikely

How likely or unlikely are you to use your employer’s healthcare?

Extremely Likely   Likely   Somewhat Likely   Unlikely   Very Unlikely

For more information see:
The Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods
CFL REF HN 29 .E53 2008; Volume 1
Pgs 63-64
**Closed Question (Close-Ended Question)**

This type of question is used to limit the number of possible answers a researcher could receive. It is most often used in surveys, and most students should be familiar with it from standardized tests as well.

How many minutes in the span of an hour do you typically spend on your phone?

a. 1-5 minutes  
b. 5-10 minutes  
c. 10-15 minutes  
d. 15-20 minutes  
e. 20+ minutes

For more information see:  
The Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods  
CFL REF HN 29 .E53 2008; Volume 1  
Pgs 96  
The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods  
CFL REF H 61 .S234 2008; Volume 1  
Pgs 83-84
CONSTRUCT

This is typically used in survey research and is defined as the idea, theme, or subject that the survey is to measure. In other words, the construct of your survey should be the same as your research question.

For more information see:
The Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods
CFL REF HN 29 .E53 2008; Volume 1
Pgs 133-134
DATA ANALYSIS (CONTENT ANALYSIS)

Data or content analysis is looking at your raw data, the information collected in your surveys and interviews, and interpreting it and making connections. This is a key part of primary research. First give a fact and then tie it back to the point of your paper: [statistic] which is a problem because _____.

Research Question: How does teacher pay and healthcare effect the students in their schools?

Fact/Raw Data: 2 out of 7 teachers surveyed live below the poverty line.

Connect to Paper: this is relevant because teachers are often made sick by interacting with children, but they only receive so many paid sick days. Oftentimes teachers must “power through” when they feel under the weather, but this has a negative impact on their teaching that day and the quality of the content the students are learning.

For more information see:
The Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods
CFL REF HN 29 .E53 2008; Volume 1
Pgs 140-141
The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods
CFL REF H 61 .S234 2008; Volume 1
Pgs 186-187
**DOUBLE NEGATIVE**

A double negative uses two negative in one statement or question. This is fairly obvious in speech, but can be much harder to detect when creating questions.

Example 1: Do you agree or disagree with the statement “Schools should not permit cell phones to be used in their classrooms.”
Think of double negatives as when agreement means no and disagreement means yes.

Example 2: Are you more likely or more unlikely to visit a restaurant that is opposed to the use of GMOs?
Again, “yes,” or in this case, likely, actually means “no, I am opposed to GMOs.” “No,” or in this case, “unlikely” means “yes, I am unopposed to GMOs.”

For more information see:
The Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods
CFL REF HN 29 .E53 2008; Volume 1
Pgs 210-211
**Ecological Fallacy**

Ecological fallacy is an error in reasoning where one set of data is applied to mean a whole other group of data will follow the same trend.

Example: Cell phone use in North Dakota is lower than in many other states. Test scores in North Dakota are also lower than in many other states. Therefore, cell phone use actually makes people smarter. This doesn’t follow. The author is using data that has no correlation.

For more information see:
The Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods
CFL REF HN 29 .E53 2008; Volume 1
Pgs 218
Email Interview

Email interview is exactly how it sounds: interviewing a subject and receiving their reply by email. Like any other form of interview, it comes with a unique set of advantages and drawbacks. Remember to write professionally should you choose to do an email interview.

Pros:
--More time for subject to reflect on question
--Participants may disclose more information than they would in a face-to-face setting
--No travel costs and no travel time

Cons:
--No face-to-face cues
--Technological failure
--Time consuming, as you don’t know when your subject will respond

For more information see:
The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods
CFL REF H 61 .S234 2008; Volume 1
Pgs 244
**Face-to-Face Interviewing (In-Person Interview)**

This is the opposite of email interviewing. In face-to-face interviews, you and your subject communicate verbally in real time, sharing the same space.

**Pros:**
--Face-to-face cues
--Can use visual aids
--All questions are usually answered

**Cons:**
--Less time for subjects to think through their answers
--Generally takes more time than an email interview
--Some people aren’t as comfortable talking face-to-face

For more information see:
The Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods
CFL REF HN 29 .E53 2008; Volume 1
Pgs 259-261
The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods
CFL REF H 61 .S234 2008; Volume 1
Pgs 432
INTERVIEW GUIDE

An interview guide can be created to help you format your interview. At the most basic, unstructured level, you may want to list out the topics you want to cover and then “feel your way through” the interview, bringing up specific talking points when you think the time is right. On the other end of the spectrum, you may want to go through and consider exactly what you are going to say, writing out your questions and conducting the interview in a linear format. However you choose, an interview guide should help you through.

For more information see:
The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods
CFL REF H 61 .S234 2008; Volume 1
Pgs 469-470
**ISSUE DEFINITION (FRAMING)**

This is when an author is specific in the scope of their paper. You can look at the issue geographically, culturally, and time-wise.

Example: In this paper, I will examine the factors that cause homelessness in North Dakota, specifically focusing on the issues that take place from the second World War up until our modern times.

This way, your reader knows exactly what, when, and where the factors are. It’s easier for you to write too, now that you’ve narrowed it down a bit.

For more information see:
The Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods
CFL REF HN 29 .E53 2008; Volume 1
Pgs 395-396
LIKERT SCALE

A Likert scale is the most commonly used type of bipolar scale. This scale measures a subject’s agreement with a statement in a survey.

Example: Health and Sanitation codes in the US need to undergo reform.
Strongly Disagree     Disagree     Neutral     Agree     Strongly Agree

For more information see:
The Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods
CFL REF HN 29 .E53 2008; Volume 1
Pgs 427-429
A questionnaire is another word for survey, only this refers exclusively to the document that the questions are answered on. Here is a quick checklist to help you form questions for your research:

--Use simple vocabulary
--Be as clear as possible
--Don’t use double negatives
--Don’t lead a respondent to a particular answer
--Concrete in relation to time and events
--All alternatives should appear acceptable, even the extreme ends
--Follow a logical order

For more information see:
The Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods
CFL REF HN 29 .E53 2008; Volume 2
Pgs 652-659
**Raw Data**

Raw data is data that has not yet been interpreted; that is, data that hasn’t yet been given context.

Examples: 44% of the population surveyed…
7 out of 10 chefs…
Looking at the bar graph, you see that 18-21 year olds had the most…

For more information see:
The Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods
CFL REF HN 29 .E53 2008; Volume 2
Pgs 693-694