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Linda Cabral and Laura Sefton on Using Voice Recognition Software for Transcription


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AEA 365 - Using Voice Recognition Software for Transcription

Hello, we are Linda Cabral and Laura Sefton from the [Center for Health Policy and Research at UMass Medical School](#). We often collect qualitative data from interviews and focus groups. One challenge we frequently face is how to quickly and efficiently transcribe the audio data. We have experimented using voice recognition software (VRS), and we'd like to share our approach.

You will need headphones, a microphone (stand-alone or attached to a headset), and a computer with audio playback and VRS installed on it. We use Dragon Naturally Speaking Premium Version 11.5 voice recognition software, however other VRS is available. Use of audio playback software will allow you to control the playback speed, so you can slow it down, pause, fast forward, and rewind as needed.

Open the audio file in the playback software and open a new document in the VRS. As you listen to the audio via the headphones, repeat what you hear into the microphone. During this step, you can format the document to indicate who is speaking and to add punctuation. Because VRS works best when trained to understand a single voice, a designated team member should repeat all the spoken content, regardless of how many voices are in the audio file.

This process will generate a document in the VRS that can be saved to your computer as a Microsoft Word file. As a final review, read through the Word file while listening to the audio file and make any needed corrections. This step could be done by another member of the project team as a double check of the document's accuracy.

Hot Tips:

- Spend some time upfront training the VRS to recognize your voice. A few practice sessions with the software may be needed where you can read dummy data into the software in order for it to learn your voice. This will improve the transcription quality thereby minimizing the time spent editing.
- Train the VRS to recognize project-specific acronyms or terminology prior to starting transcription.

Lessons Learned:

- Often, financial resources for evaluation projects are limited. In an effort to keep the transcription process in-house, we were using our administrative staff to transcribe the audio files. By using the VRS and someone from our project team familiar with the data as the designated recorder, we have found savings in time and efficiencies.
- No recording yet has captured 100% content accurately the first time. Therefore, build in time to listen to the recording and to make manual edits.

Rad Resources:

The following resources may be helpful to you as you explore whether VRS is right for you.

- [Article](#) by Jennifer Matheson: "The Voice Transcription Technique: Use of Voice Recognition Software to Transcribe Digital Interview Data in Qualitative Research"
- [Review](#) of VRS products by consumersearch: "In reviews, it's generally Dragon vs. Dragon"