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メタデータ	言語: en 出版者: 大阪公立大学大学院 現代システム科学研究科 現代システム科学専攻 社会福祉学分野 公開日: 2024-02-15 キーワード (Ja): キーワード (En): 作成者: Kiegelmann, Mechthild メールアドレス: 所属:
URL	<a href="https://doi.org/10.24729/0002000363">https://doi.org/10.24729/0002000363</a>

# Development of an extended version of the Listening Guide research methodology for use in transnational research

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## Abstract

This paper provides information about an extended version of the Listening Guide, i.e. a research method for qualitative empirical social research embedded in a theoretical framework of relational psychology. The development of an extended version of the method is described and a tool for systematic documentation of the process of analysis is presented. The extended version of the Listening Guide is a context- and language-sensitive version of the method, which can be extended for use with various languages, including Japanese.

## 1) Introduction

The theoretical approach of relational psychology was developed by Carol Gilligan and her colleagues starting in the 1970ties in the USA (Brown et al., 1988; Gilligan, 1977, 1982). Over the decades, several researchers further developed this perspective and created a systematic method of qualitative social research, applying it to various research questions (e.g. Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan & Eddy, 2021; Harel-Shalev & Daphna-Tekoah, 2021; Kiegelmann, 2000b; Way, 1997). A key feature of the Listening Guide is a systematic analysis of qualitative data in social research. Special attention to social context and specific language conventions is helpful in this endeavor. This paper introduces an extended version of the Listening Guide and a corresponding worksheet as a tool for systematic documentation of research processes.

## 2) Relational psychology as theoretical background of the extended Listening Guide

There are several theoretical lines, which led to the development of the research framework behind the Listening Guide. Most important to the several theoretical influences, which became relevant for the creation of the underlying psychological approach of relational psychology is the work of feminist developmental psychologist Carol Gilligan (Gilligan, 1977, 1982, 2015; Gilligan & Eddy, 2021; Gilligan & Kiegelmann, 2009). Gilligan developed the approach by drawing on the discourses of an emerging second wave of feminism in the US (see Gergen, 2000) as well as other research in psychology, such as Kohlberg's work on moral development (Kohlberg, 1973) or Erikson's theories on identity development (Erikson, 1993; Erikson & Erikson, 1981). In collaboration with colleagues at the "Project on the Psychology of Women and the Development of Girls" at Harvard Graduate School of Education, USA (See Brown et al., 1988). Gilligan introduced feminist approach for qualitative research to psychology. Before the current name "Listening

Guide” was established, members of the research group used various names for the emerging approach, such as Voice Centered Reading, Voice Approach or Listening Guide (e.g. Kiegelmann, 2007; Woodcock, 2016). In a recent publication, Gilligan and Eddy (2021) summarize key theoretical aspects of this relational approach to psychology as

“In this spirit, we approach the Listening Guide (LG). As a method and a methodology—a way of working and a logic of working—the guide is at once new and timeless. New in replacing the binary logic of coding categories with an ear for the polyphony of voices that speak both within and around us; new in mapping a way of attending to the associative logic of psychological processes and to evidence of dissociation. Timeless in tapping into the relational nature of human beings. And perhaps above all, timely. In laying out a practice of what we have come to call radical listening, the LG marks a path to discovery that holds a potential for transformation.” (Gilligan & Eddy, 2021, p. 141).

In other words, the Listening Guide draws on previous research and also adds new aspects. A central feature of the innovative new developments in the approach is opening up psychological research for attending to multi-layered aspects of meaning in human experiences. For example, in the Listening Guide, researchers search for complex patterns in data, which represent various strands of meaning, including contradictions within people. This way, complexity of experiences can be attended to. Simplified constructs or binary characterizations in qualitative analysis are replaced by a tool for capturing multi-faceted aspects of experiences within human relationships. With an attention on self-representation of research participants, a layered analysis, which allows for attending to inner contradictions is presented. Because the method is sensitive to complex patterns of layers in the self-awareness and self-representation of research participants, this sensitivity enables researchers to analyze processes of psychological development in complex ways. Other theories of identity development, which focus on few or even single characters of identity and conceptualize descriptions of identity that build on stability and non-contradictory measures can be overcome (Gilligan & Kiegelmann, 2009). Within the theoretical framework of relational psychology, references to psychoanalytic informed thinking shine through, especially with attention to the work of the Eriksons (Erikson & Erikson, 1981). Besides overt expressions and literally to understand language, the way people speak and relate to each other can carry information for deeper understanding and for detecting and listening to hard to understand subtle meaning. Following associative logics of utterances and resonances can be useful for tracing subtle meaning. Similar to other theories of psychology, the Listening Guide understands human beings as experiencing identity with complex pattern, e.g. similar to the concept of “patchwork identity” described by Keupp (2012).

Inherent in relational psychology is an analytical and critical component of social analysis and deconstructing structural and personal forms of oppression. Relational psychology was developed with an explicit feminist vision, which aimed at reducing oppression in form of sexism and all other forms of social inequalities. In her early work, Gilligan focused on expectations on women and girls in Western societies to negate their own desires and silence themselves (Gilligan, 1982). Rather than speaking up for themselves and holding onto their knowledge about needs, desires and knowledge about processes of human relationships, girls and women experience social pressure towards silencing such knowledge and perform

selflessness and submission. Gilligan bundled the effect of such silencing in the notion of “dissociation”.

Carol Gilligan has worked for decades to point to the psychological costs of social pressures towards silencing. In her early work on women facing abortion decisions, she contributed the influential theoretical constructs of “voices of care” and “voice of justice” (Gilligan, 1982), which became a key contribution to feminist psychology in the so-called “second wave of feminism”. The feminist perspective in social sciences and psychology increasingly took a wide array of diversity into account. Building on the idea of voice of care and voice of justice, the research group “Project on the Psychology of Women and the Development of Girls” at Harvard University later developed the method, which then was called “voice centered listening” (Brown et al., 1988) and included several categories of discrimination. There is a wide span of disciplines who drew on the work of Gilligan and her concept of Voice and critique of social pressures towards silencing, dissociation and self-diminishing and discrimination. Among them were in a German speaking context for example feminist scholars of Christian theology who were working on concepts of deconstructing patriarchal social structures as oppressive for all kinds of social groups such as women and girls, poor people, people of color (Schüssler-Fiorenza, 1984; Thürmer-Rohr, 1989; Kohn-Roelin, 1991; see also Cannon, 1988).

### **3) Research relationships within social contexts**

A key concept within the application of the Listening Guide is attention to context, especially with a focus on close relationships. Central in the theoretical framework underlying the Listening Guide is a perspective on psychology, which focuses on human relationships on a micro level. Gilligan (1982) suggests placing human relationships at the center of understanding of developmental psychology, rather than the goal of autonomy and analysis of human individuals in isolation. Other approaches in psychology, which emphasize the importance of relationships have been incorporated into the approach when the approach was developed further. For the here discussed extended version of the Listening Guide, the concept of “saliency” in social identity theory (SIT) and the related self-categorization theory are relevant (Tajfel, 1982; Abrams & Hogg, 1990). This social psychology perspective focuses on group relations usually larger than micro level relationships. In studies in the framework of SIT could be observed that people notice and empathize selected aspects of their identity dependent of the social group they related to. For example, Ho and Yeung (2019) observed different conflict strategies depending on which group membership people experienced as salient at the time. Similarly, relational psychology pays attention to the way people become aware of the social space around them and to how people relate to others at any given time, including the specific time of research relationships.

In relational psychology, mutual resonances to how people represent themselves and react to each other over the process of interaction are seen as relevant for understanding research relationships and the research data generated within these relationships. In the here discussed extended version of the Listening Guide, a separate step of analysis with a focus on the relevance of social context was added by Kiegelmann (2000b; 2021). This way, both the interactions and resonances within the research relationships at the time

of data collection is separately analyzed, as well as the wider socio-historical background.

#### 4) Original Listening Guide

As a research method based in relational psychology, the Listening Guide was developed to systematically trace evidence of meaning in qualitative social research data, especially in thematic fields of psychology. In the center is a guide for going through the data step by step. Each step of the analysis focusses on a different aspect which leads the researcher to repeatedly analyze the data with a different focus each time and thereby successively generate answers to the given research questions (Gilligan, 2015; Kiegelmann, 2000b). Originally, there are three steps within the Listening Guide: 1. Listening for plot, 2. for self and 3. for multiple voices. In the original version of the Listening Guide, researchers worked with written transcripts of audio taped spoken language generated within interview relationships. This was followed by numerous studies, which included other data sets as well (see for an overview Gilligan, 2015 and Gilligan & Eddy, 2021).

- 1) In the first listening, the attention lies on the content of what is spoken, which is similar to the methods of content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Mayring, 2015). Yet, in addition to overt meaning of the content of interviewees' utterances, the first reading also is sensitive to the resonance of the material on researchers who relate to the material in the process of analysis at the time of analyzing the previously collected data.
- 2) Listening for self is a key feature of the Listening Guide. In order to detect patterns and meaning not only in "what" a person talks about, but also in "how" these persons speak about themselves, all statements in which the speakers mention themselves are coded and noted in form of a "poem." This visualization supports the analysis of shifts in voice such as moving away from confident use of "I" or "I know" towards potential indication of more self-doubt or less agency such as in "one has to" (Koelsch, 2016; Gilligan, 2015; Frances, 2023).
- 3) Finally, the analysis with the Listening Guide proceeds in the third listening to detecting multiple layers of meaning or expressions relevant to how the research participants spoke about themes relevant to the given research questions within the research project (see for example Lugo & Gilligan, 2021). In this step, the complexity and multi-layered patterns of meaning can be traced and analyzed, i.e. one of the new features within qualitative psychological research (see above).

In the here presented extended version of the Listening Guide, Kiegelmann and her colleagues extended the three listenings into five ones and an additional step of collecting relevant background information. This extended Listening Guide supports researchers to focus more explicitly on the relevance of social contexts, their connotations in the research relationships and research data (Kiegelmann, 2021; Müller et al., 2023).

### **5) Worksheets as a tool for documenting the process of analysis**

Several scholars in various countries and from the perspective of a diverse spectrum of disciplines have used and adapted the Listening Guide since the 1980ties (see overview in Gilligan, 2015 and Gilligan & Eddy, 2017). This paper focusses on the development of the extended Listening Guide by Kiegelmann and her colleagues within a psychological field of research (Kiegelmann, 1997; 2000a & 2000b, 2001, 2007, 2021, Müller et al., 2023; Kiegelmann & Huber, 2005). Kiegelmann found it helpful to present a worksheet when teaching research methodology or introducing the Listening Guide to researchers unfamiliar with relational psychology. Especially providing novice researchers a tool for sorting and documenting their notes was helpful for learning research methodology and for keeping track of the successive findings when applying the systematic steps of analysis. This way, researchers can document the process of generating research finding, including the order and sequence of generating findings, which lead to the final research results. Depending on the specific research question and data material, further forms of the extended Listening Guide have been developed within this group of scholars, for example Springmann's work on gender and eating disorders (Springmann, 2021) or a version of the Listening Guide for analyzing video data about a theater intervention with people who suffer from dementia (Höhn, 2023). The most recent development of the worksheet took place within a transnational project on methods development using data about experiences of female soldiers in Israeli military (Harel-Shalev & Daphna-Tekoah, 2021), when Springmann and Kiegelmann formulated the idea of adding the step zero (0) for background information to the Listening guide (Springmann, Daphna-Tekoah, Harel, Hendrich, & Kiegelmann, submitted).

In 2018, Kiegelmann was able to present and discuss the Listening Guide and its extended version at the Osaka Prefecture University (OPU). Later, in 2023 she then could give a talk about the extended Listening Guide at the then renamed Osaka Metropolitan University (OMU). These presentations and discussions within Japan were the context in which the worksheet was developed, at first as a hand out accompanying the lecture. The here annotated version of the extended Listening Guide worksheet (see below) was discussed and applied with students and colleagues at OMU in the spring of 2023. It can be used not only by experienced qualitative researchers who are familiar with the Listening Guide, but also by students and scholars new to relational psychology. It is helpful also for use by researchers who use English as lingua franca within a team.

6) Worksheet for the extended Listening Guide (Version Kiegelmann, 2023)

Listenings	Notes about data analysis	Summary	Purpose and rationale for each Listening
<b>0. General background information</b>			Information about date and setting of data collection, relevant information about socio-political situation
<b>1. Plot</b>			<p>Summary of the overtly mentioned content of the interview and it's sequence</p> <p>see content analysis, e.g. Mayring, P. (2015). <i>Qualitative Content Analysis: Theoretical Background and Procedures</i>. In A. Bikner-Ahsbabs, C. Knipping, &amp; N. Presmeg (Eds.), <i>Advances in Mathematics Education Ser. Approaches to Qualitative Research in Mathematics Education: Examples of Methodology and Methods</i> (pp. 365–380). Springer Netherlands. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-9181-6_13">https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-9181-6_13</a></p>
<b>2. Reader's Response</b>			<p>Place to reflect on researcher's reaction to the data, personal sour spots, excitements, threatened values etc.</p> <p>see construct of "countertransference" in psychoanalysis or autoethnography, e.g. Adams, T. E., Ellis, C., &amp; Jones, S. H. (2017). Autoethnography. In J. Matthes, C. S. Davis, &amp; R. F. Potter (Eds.), <i>International encyclopedia of communication research methods</i> (pp. 1–11). Wiley Blackwell. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118901731.iecrm0011">https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118901731.iecrm0011</a></p>

Listenings	Notes about data analysis	Summary	Purpose and rationale for each Listening
<p><b>3. Social Context</b></p> <p>a) Listening for social context (with focus on interview relationship)</p> <p>b) Reading for social context (with focus on process of analysis)</p>			<p>a) Trace what discourses from the social context are documented within the data about the situation when the interview took place. This includes for example information about SES as well as language use which documents social discourses.</p> <p>b) Also trace context-factors within the process of analysis – i.e. how the researchers were socially embedded at the time of analyzing.</p> <p>Kiegelmann, M. (2021). Adding listening and reading for social context to the voice approach of the Listening Guide method. <i>Qualitative Psychology</i>, 8(2), 224–243.  <a href="https://doi.org/10.1037/qup0000210">https://doi.org/10.1037/qup0000210</a></p>
<p><b>4. Self</b></p>			<p>Pay attention to the exact wordings about how the self is named. Analyse the meaning of this wording for relationships which are mentioned. For this create a “self-poem”.</p> <p>Koelsch, L. E. (2015). I poems: Evoking self. <i>Qualitative Psychology</i>, 2(1), 96–107.  <a href="https://doi.org/10.1037/qup0000021">https://doi.org/10.1037/qup0000021</a></p> <p>Gilligan, C. (2015). The Listening Guide method of psychological inquiry. <i>Qualitative Psychology</i>, 2(1), 69–77.  <a href="https://doi.org/10.1037/qup0000023">https://doi.org/10.1037/qup0000023</a></p>



Listenings	Notes about data analysis	Summary	Purpose and rationale for each Listening
<p><b>5. Multiple Voices</b></p>			<p>Similar to the voice of care as an additional voice besides the voice of justice. Trace inductively layers in meaning, including resonances of “inner voices” which the speaker tries to suppress.</p> <p>Mauthner, N. S. (2017). The Listening Guide Feminist Method of Narrative Analysis: Towards a Posthumanist Performative (Re)configuration. In J. Woodiwiss, K. Smith, &amp; K. Lockwood (Eds.), <i>Feminist Narrative Research: Opportunities and Challenges</i> (pp. 65–91). Palgrave Macmillan UK.  <a href="https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-48568-7_4">https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-48568-7_4</a></p> <p>Kiegelmann, M. (2000b). Qualitative psychological research using the method of voice. <i>Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research</i>, 1(2).  <a href="https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-1.2.1082">https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-1.2.1082</a></p>

The succession of steps of analysis in the Listening Guide built on each other. Researchers go through the data several times, focusing on different aspects each time. In order to remember the sequence in which observations, ideas about interpretation or results are generated and written down. For an invited lecture at the OPU, Kiegelmann created a worksheet in form of a simple table in which notes during the work with data in each step could be placed. The worksheet supports researchers to take systematic notes during the processes of reading/listening to research data and keep control over documenting the sequencing of the successively generated results. Kiegelmann suggests that researchers read (or listen) to the data and in each listening step of the Listening Guide to immediately reflect on key aspects of the results. Within the suggested worksheet, each listening step of the Listening Guide provides one column

for notes about observations and an additional column to write down a summary of each listening. This way, researchers need to step back from being immersed in the data and are forced to concentrate on answering the research question in a more abstract way.

Later, Kiegelmann expanded the early version of the worksheet and incorporated into the sequence a new listening for social context, which is in itself split into two new aspects of separately “reading” and “listening” for social context (see the detailed elaboration of the expansion of the Listening Guide method by Kiegelmann, 2021). The listening for self, where all wordings about the speaker are coded and presented in form of a self-poem then becomes the fourth listening step (no. 4) in this version of the extended Listening Guide.

When following the main ideas of relational psychology further, attention to research relationships are central within qualitative empirical research. There are several points in time where the interactions, resonances and connotations of forming and maintaining research relationships can become relevant. For example, the process of acquiring research participants gets initiated by the researchers, their interests in the research impact on the form and content of how they seek participants. In addition, the researchers as initiators of the research relationships hold the power about which interests of the potential participants are addressed in the call for participants and which interests of the researchers remain disclosed. Conflicts of interests can become formative for the entire research process and are a question of research ethics (Kiegelmann, 2002, 2020). Furthermore, formal paperwork on informed consent and the way the agreement procedures get handled by both parties involved may shape the relationships further. In the worksheet, there is space for noting information about the setting and formation of research relationships in the listening step no. 0 (zero). This step also involves collecting and documenting geopolitical information relevant to the research relationships and to the research questions, such as current social discourses, times of war or economic backgrounds of the setting and persons within a research study.

## **7) Perspective for transfer of the extended Listening Guide to use with Japanese data**

The additional focus on more differentiated analysis of the social contexts of given research projects is helpful to further transfer relational psychology and the extended Listening Guide in transnational work. Several researchers have applied and modified the Listening Guide and used the approach internationally (see Gilligan, 2015 and Gilligan & Eddy, 2021; Yeo et al., 2023).

During the spring and summer of 2023, Kiegelmann & Tagaki (2023) worked on applying the extended Listening Guide on a selected sample of data collected by Tagaki (2023) in Japan. In this sample analysis, it was possible to show that in Japanese, the quality and connotation of self-statements and self-poems within the Listening Guide can be analyzed with Japanese data, which were translated into English for the collaborative analysis. Yet, adjustments to the Listening for self appear useful. Because in Japanese, the use of I (私) is less frequent than in English, additional phrases in the data, which transport information about a speaker can be coded as well and included into a self-poem. Tagaki and Kiegelmann discussed a few lines from the Japanese data with Japanese students. Applying the extended Listening Guide to a sample of data, they found for example that words about emotional quality of experience might meaningfully be

included into a self-poem, such as repeated words for notions of fear (こわいん or 怖いよ), see Kiegelmann & Tagaki (2023). Analyzing words, which transport more subtle meaning about a speaker in Japanese can be included into the self-poem for capturing information about how speakers present themselves and their relational experiences within qualitative data in psychological research. For this, the step of Listening for self can be modified in the Listening Guide.

## 8) Conclusion

The attached worksheet presents a tool for applying the extended Listening Guide in psychological research and for systematically track the results of each step of analysis within this qualitative research method. Embedded in the theoretical approach of relational psychology, intensive attention is given to minute details about information in research data about relational aspects within psychological experiences. The additional concentrated focus on social contexts supports to transfer the extended Listening Guide for use in transnational research projects such as joint analysis of data collected in Japanese language and within a Japanese setting, which later transnational teams of research work on while using English as a working language. Further elaboration of the transfer of the Listening Guide and the relational psychology approach is necessary.

## Acknowledgement

With appreciation to colleagues and students for intensive discussion of the extended Listening Guide and for testing the worksheets with Japanese, research data: Professor. M. Tagaki, Visiting Researcher. K. Tomoi, Doctoral students. S. Okano, J. Song, and Master student. K. Aizawa as well as Prof. Higashi and students Nakai-san and Ohashi-san. Special thanks to Tamara Denninger, M.Sc. from the Karlsruhe University of Education for feedback and editing.

## Funding

Internal travel grand from the University of Education Karlsruhe, Germany for visiting Taiwan and Japan in Spring 2023

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