
Observation & Interview

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Key Themes

After discussing with the group we found these main themes throughout the observations and interviews:

- Participatory v. non-participatory observation
- Successful/unsuccessful interviewing techniques

Observation #1

- Theme: Age and gender differences in communication
- Situation: Local primary school, 2nd grade, 8-9 year-old pupils, a Monday afternoon music class
- The class teacher as an *informant*
- Method: Participatory observation & Non-participatory observation
- Different starting points; pre-assumptions

Observation #2

- Theme: Social interaction in multicultural event
- Situation: International Tea Party Event, 2 - 3.30pm on 21/03/2016 at Multicultural Center Gloria
- Informants are participants in the event
- Method: Participatory observation

Participatory vs. Non-participatory observation

- Participatory
 - The researcher is involved in the knowledge production, positionality
 - More sensible and thoughtful reactions and more holistic observations due to having more knowledge of the context
 - More in-depth understanding of the situation and the context, an insider's eye, neutrality
 - Yet, knowledge might lead to expectations that might hinder the objectivity as a researcher? Boundaries?
- Non-participatory
 - No pre-assumptions or expectations?
 - More open to the situations that occur?
 - Yet, 'an outsider', superficiality, boundaries
- Observations made by the researcher are hugely affected by their role in the specific context → Reflexivity!

Participatory observation

- Interaction with the people at the International Tea Party, while conducting the observation
- This participatory observation differed from the other because:
 - This was the first time for both of us to visit Gloria, so we both had open minds about what the situation would be like and were both able to observe rather objectively.
 - In the other one there was background knowledge which supplied the observer with assumptions
 - The event had a theme (anti-racism) which may have lead us subconsciously to try and break away from any prejudices we hold
- In this observation the lack of background knowledge was useful because we were able to observe objectively and in a relaxed way. We did not have an agenda to meet.

Interview #1

- Theme: Immigrants & Finns (pre- and post-assumptions)
- Situation: Multicultural Center Gloria, a 30-something woman from Iran
- A semi-structured interview

Interview #2

- Theme: Finnish educational system as a migrant
- Situation: Interview with an international master's student from the Phillipines for 15 mins in a private room
- An informal structured interview

Data collection gone *wrong*

- Not receiving data that you wanted or searched for
- Due to ...
 - the interview situation was poorly constructed? 'atmosphere of sharing' was not established?
 - the interviewee did not feel like sharing her thoughts as we are Finns asking about Finns?
 - she spoke the truth and really did not have any pre-assumptions?
 - problems with communication, researcher was not clear enough with her questions
 - the researcher's poor preparation and 'wrong' questions?
 - the researcher's lack of probing: sticking to the interview questions and missing many good opportunities for follow up questions

How to do better next time?

- Need to pay more attention to:
 - Rapport: eye-contact, sociality
 - Motivation: pitching, grooming, appeal
 - Security: neutrality, sensitivity, anonymity
 - Clarity: process, intent, theme
- Important to ask the right questions and probe!
 - Use open-ended questions that are still specific enough
 - Ask non-leading questions
 - The importance of probing!

Data collection went well

- We received a lot of information specifically about the topic we were interested in: migrants perception of the education system
- We were able to follow the preplanned questions and did not have to prompt the interviewee
 - Interviewee was very interested in the topic: As a student he had a lot to say about the education system
 - Some of the questions were follow ups to things the interviewee had expressed, which allowed for the interviewee to go even more in depth on the topics that were of interest to him
 - The interviewee was quite dominant in terms of participation in the interview, he had a lot to say and was not afraid to express his opinions in detail
 - Interviewee was relaxed: the setting was quiet and private
 - The interview topic was universal and not too personal

Reasons for Success

- Use of open-ended and non-leading questions
 - “What was your expectation of the education system?”
 - “Did it meet your expectations?”
 - “Would you mind talking about the learning culture between your home country and Finland?”
- Use of *restatement*
 - of what the interviewee said- to reassure the interviewer's interest in the interviewees responses
 - this also left room for the interviewee to guide the discussion towards the topics he found most interesting
- Harnessing *participation*
 - The interviewee was assertive and analytical- he was able to make connections and comparisons of his native culture and the Finnish culture

References:

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