

WorldCALL2023 Methodology: Participant Observation

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Abstract

In Real Life (IRL) streaming is a rapidly-growing practice of Internet broadcasting real-time video footage of daily routines, social events, personal interactions, and travel adventures. This participatory form of social media allows for a high degree of viewer interaction and collaboration through text-based chats with the streamer. Previous studies have examined the affordances of live-streaming in language learning, however, there is a notable gap in the literature regarding IRL streaming and language learning. As IRL streaming takes place “in real life,” there is ample opportunity for authentic language exposure and cultural immersion in every-day contexts, as well as affordances for interactive learning through the real-time chat function to communicate with both the streamer and other viewers.

This qualitative study uses participant observation to investigate what happens when Japanese university students use IRL streaming as a novel approach to English language learning. When learners were given a unique opportunity to immerse themselves in authentic, real-life language contexts they engaged in interactive learning to participate, ask questions, and receive immediate feedback, enhancing their engagement and motivation. They also were able to engage in the target language culture, gaining insights into cultural nuances, expressions, and customs.

This paper also discusses the pedagogical implications for learner autonomy, cultural competence development, and integrating livestream-based activities in the language learning curriculum. Ethical considerations of IRL streaming are also covered, discussing the inherently necessary issues of consent, privacy norms, and varying local regulations.

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Introduction

a research methodology where the researcher is immersed in the day-to-day activities of the participants. The objective is usually to record conduct under the widest range of possible settings. In this way, PO differs from naturalistic observation, because the latter does not involve interaction between the researcher and participants. PO was historically associated with a form of research in which the researcher resides for extended periods of time in a small community. Currently, PO is used in a wide variety of settings, and over varied periods of time, from single interactions to many years. <https://research.utoronto.ca/participant-observation>

a “method for collecting information about people and matters related to them in some situation” (jorgensen2020Principles)

Historical Roots

bruyn1966human mccall1969Issues spradley1980Participant
hammersley1983Ethnography jerolmack2018Approaches

Outline of Methodology and Related Strategies and Procedures

jorgensen1989Participant atkinson1998Ethnography
atkinson2007Ethnography jorgensen2015Participant

Use in Education

bogdan2007Qualitative conway2014Oxford curtis2013Research
delamont2016Fieldwork johnson2016Communitybased
conteh2020Researching beach2018Ethnography ruecker2019Navigating

Justification

- enables the researcher to provide exceptionally detailed qualitative descriptions of what human beings think, feel, and do in concrete everyday life situations and settings.
- Participant observation usually enables the researcher to describe what is happening, what or who is involved in the situation, when and where events

transpire, how they occur, and why—from the perspective of people in social life—things happen as they do in particular situations.

- Participant observation is useful for scrutinizing human interaction and processes, relationships among people and events, the social organization of human existence, patterns, continuities, as well as disruptions, and the immediate social and cultural contexts in which human life unfolds. It is especially well suited for describing the meanings people attribute to the worlds in which they live and interact with one another. Participant observation is an especially appropriate method of inquiry when: (1) very little is known about some phenomenon, such as a newly formed group or social movement, African American folklore, emotion work, children's play, improvised human conduct (such as jazz music), or most any other little studied scholarly topic; (2) differences exist between the views of people who
- Usually conducted by Case Study Design

Best Practices

- Be open and honest: Share your intentions with your interlocutors
(nabhan-warren2022Participant)

(lareau2022Intensive):

- selection bias: some people are more likely than others to agree to be interviewed
- connect to research question: think how a range of participants could vary

Guidelines

(lareau2022Intensive):

- focus on interactional processes
- Schedule visits: budget and time constraints (guided by researchers' interest and participants' preferences)
- research questions help guide the visits

- spatial positionality
- write up fieldnotes after each visit (one page), next day more detailed
- review emerging analytic themes and fieldwork challenges
- never schedule visits if there is not time for fieldnotes (2 to 1 writing vs. visits)
- balancing intrusion vs. data collection