



DESIGNER OBSERVATION

Activity type Idea

On page 180 of the textbook there is a list of observation studies in which students have to say if they are naturalistic or controlled/covert or overt/participant or non-participant.

To reinforce these definitions, let's work the other way! Ask students to make three pairs of cards:

- Naturalistic observation / number 1 on reverse side
- Controlled observation / number 1 on reverse side
- Covert observation / number 2 on reverse side
- Overt observation / number 2 on reverse side
- Participant observation / number 3 on reverse side
- Non-participant observation / number 3 on reverse side
- Students work in pairs:
 - Place the cards with number face up.
 - One person chooses three cards, one number 1, one number 2 and one number 3, and turns each over.
 - The partner has to design (briefly) an observation study that fits these descriptions – writing down the description. He/she must NOT base it on one that has already been written – it must be quite different.
 - Partners swap roles and continue for 15 minutes – see how many each couple can do.

Practical use

Class exercise in pairs

Additional notes

You require postcards – six cards per student pair.

handout number

6.16

TYPES OF OBSERVATION

Activity type Evaluation

Using the textbook for support, students are asked to make a summary table containing definitions, advantages and disadvantages of the types of observation.

They need to be encouraged to use their own words here and not just copy! One way to do this is to ask students to identify key words rather than write answers in full sentences.

Practical use

Class exercise in pairs or individually

Additional notes

Using a table for this should help them see the relationship between the pairs very clearly, i.e. covert/overt, participant/non-participant and controlled/

naturalistic. The motivation for understanding this is of course that they get to know that the advantage of one is a disadvantage of the other – less to learn!

Answers

Overt	Allows informed consent to be collected.	May not be natural behaviour as they know they are being observed.
Covert	Should mean that the behaviour observed is natural	Informed consent is not sought.
Participant observation	Allows increased insight into the situation being observed.	Less objectivity.
Non-participant observation	Allows the researcher to be more objective	Will not have the same level of insight into the situation as a participant observer would have.
Controlled observation	Can observe participant's responses in relation to specific situations, e.g. Strange Situation.	Findings are less generalisable as the situation is not capturing natural behaviour in its usual context.
Naturalistic observation	High external validity (and hence generalisability).	Lack of control makes replication difficult.