

Interview 'plus'

What is it?

A variation of a semi-structured interview which uses an artefact during interview to support guided recall.

Strengths

- Prompts discussion of actual learner behaviours and associated feelings and beliefs.
- Allows the learner to set the agenda for part of the interview.
- Artefacts learners have created, or events they initiated, are usually more revealing of personal practice and beliefs than tutor-led activities
- Artefacts support recall of real incidents to an extent that is far superior to a simple interview
- Less time-consuming for the researcher than observing learner behaviours in real time.
- Allows the learner opportunities for reflection and choice, leading to deeper responses.

Weaknesses

- Requires skilled interviewer to tease out beliefs, practices and feelings about the real incidents.
- Can take more time than other interview techniques e.g. in identifying appropriate artefacts and understanding their role in the learner's context
- Some learner artefacts are held in group learning spaces that present ethical difficulties: has the researcher gained permission to access the site?

Process

1. Learners are asked to prepare or bring something to talk about at interview:
 - Learner generated artefacts might be anything created in a learning context (such as progress files or coursework), something they have created for the researcher (diary or log) or a critical incident or event.
 - Researcher generated artefacts could include observation or transcripts of learners undertaking a task or software generated tracking data.
2. The researcher prepares a guided recall protocol to help elicit the issues of most interest.
3. During interview, the interviewer starts from, or quickly moves towards, the real behaviours involved in production of the artefact or in the critical incident.
4. Learners are asked to recall: what they did (their practice), why (their reasoning, motivation and strategies) and what the result was (their experience).

Examples from the Learner Experience projects

LexDis used interview 'plus' as part of their participatory research design. They spent some time working with learners to understand what artefacts they would like to bring to the project. Their preferred artefacts were examples of the strategies that they employed when using technology to support their learning.

The E4L project worked with learners to produce a personal list of technologies they used, which became an artefact for subsequent interviews to allow the researcher to discuss any changes in technology use and to ask about transitions.

