

RECRUITING AND ENGAGING PARTICIPANTS: METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

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Recruiting participants has always been a major challenge in data collection for research in Applied Linguistics and other disciplines that involves human-beings. However, challenges can be turned into opportunities when researchers activate potential participants' motivation to engage in research by creating a win-win situation. This paper describes data collection and analysis within a mixed-method one-year longitudinal study on Secondary 6 students' out-of-class English learning experience in shadow education (private supplementary tutoring) in Hong Kong. It began with an initial questionnaire which also served to recruit case-study participants who were invited to share their experience in four one-to-one interviews and a focus-group interview, followed by their writing of two reflective essays. The response rate in the pilot study was extremely low, but after rewording the invitation in the questionnaire, among 2,000 respondents, over 500 "applied" to participate in the case studies. In the end, 22 were selected. They actively engaged in the research process and data analysis, and co-constructed their narratives with the researcher. This paper presentation highlights key methodological issues in recruiting and engaging research participants in data collection and data analysis through the power of persuasive language in invitation and insider-outsider communication with the participants.