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# SAGE Research Methods: Doing Research Online

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1. **Short and accessible** accounts of **research methods** in the context of **real research projects**
2. **Pedagogically focused** to help students understand the practicalities of doing research
3. **Introductory in tone**: explanatory and jargon-free
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Main types of cases in the *Doing Research Online* collection include:

1. Cases **highlighting challenges of specific steps of research** e.g. data collection from Twitter; recruiting participants online; getting ethics committee approval for an innovative methodology; creating, managing and storing digital data effectively;
2. Cases about using **innovative digital methods** e.g. the use of gaming techniques for social research, virtual ethnography
3. Cases highlighting **challenges of redesigning research studies/adapting research plans** for online and what methodological implications this presents
4. Cases **highlighting challenges of online data analysis**, including qual, quant and big data

**Please discuss the focus of your case study with your editorial contact before you start writing.** If your case study deviates from the above topics this must be made clear to your editorial contact, who will be able to advise as to whether the focus is within the scope of this resource.

Each case study should include a brief overview of the entire project, but focus in-depth on just one or two stages or aspects of the research, for example data collection or data analysis.

Whilst each case study will be drawn from a specific research project, authors should seek to draw out lessons that are widely applicable. The aim of these case studies is to introduce the reader to the topic at hand and to provide **methodological guidance** and **practical insights** which can be **employed in their own research**.

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Case Study Title		<p><i>Title must include the method and research topic. For example, “Challenges in Using Social Media for Qualitative Social Research: Men’s Motivations for Illicit Recreational Drug Use”]</i></p> <p>Challenges of language, accessibility and ethics when conducting digital interviews in the virtual space.</p> <p><i>Key words: Language / accessibility / digital methods / online interviews</i></p>
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<p>Author bio.</p> <p><i>Please include a separate biography for each author. Maximum of 200 words per author.</i></p>		<p>Dr Teresa Piacentini: Teresa Piacentini is a Senior Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Glasgow. She researches and teaches about migration related topics and has worked in the field of asylum and refugee migration in Scotland since 2000. Her research and teaching focuses on broad questions of settlement, community, belonging and identity, solidarity, resistance and mobilizing practices, working closely with third sector and grass roots organizations in shaping research projects and in developing teaching materials.</p>
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<i>Alert your editorial contact if your field is not included prior to writing your entry.</i>	
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## Abstract

**The abstract should be a concise summary of your case study. What aspect of the research process, or specific methodological and practical challenges, will your case study address? It**

**should be succinct and enticing, and should incorporate key words and concepts discussed in the body of the text. Please do not cite references within the abstract.**

## **Abstract**

Qualitative interviews are embedded within a diverse ethical and practical landscape which needs to be managed, navigated and re-negotiated throughout the research endeavour. This landscape becomes much more complex and multi-layered when the research environment has been shifted from in-person face to face to the virtual space, particularly in the era of COVID-19. While methodological literature exploring online interviews provide how to guides in designing and manoeuvring the research process, language is rarely attended to, particularly the messiness of doing social research with speakers of a non-dominant language. Using the multi-method qualitative research project, [Scotland in Lockdown](#), this case study aims to focus on three aspects: (I) Digital interviews in virtual spaces; (II) making language visible in interviews; and (III) ensuring language accessibility in the digital context. While aiming to develop a digital research design that ensured participation is inclusive, accessible and dignified, the Scotland in Lockdown project was not without its methodological challenges. In this case study, we argue that online multilingual research increases accessibility, inclusivity and affords research opportunities which centralises the voices of the vulnerabilised in society. In doing so, the hierarchy and power dynamics omnipresent within qualitative research can be more readily side-stepped. However, we proceed with caution, recognising this as a demanding endeavour, both ethically and practically. Digital poverty, exclusion, poor internet connection, and ensuring voices and meaning are not lost in translation cannot be overlooked. If not approached cautiously and carefully, we risk reinforcing the limitations and silences we hoped to evade.

## **Learning Outcomes**

*Please refer back to these learning outcomes when writing your case study. Your case study must satisfy each proposed outcome. It is vital that you provide achievable and measurable learning outcomes. Please see the links below for guidance on writing effective learning outcomes:*

1. [Writing learning outcomes](#)
2. [Bloom's Taxonomy Action Verbs](#)

[Insert 3–5 learning outcomes under the following statement: “By the end of this case, students should be able to . . .”].

By the end of this guide, students should be able to . . .

## **Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this guide, you should be able to

1. Explain the value of the ethics of doing digital interviews in the virtual space.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of language as an accessibility challenge in conducting research online.
3. Identify necessary stages in organising multilingual online interviews.
4. Plan an interpreter-mediated or multilingual virtual interview research design.
5. Critically reflect on the ethics and politics of language in virtual research.

## **Case Study**

[Insert your case study here. The main body of the text should be between 2,000 and 5,000 words.]

*Headings and sub-headings add structure to the body of your case, enhance online discoverability and make your case easier to read on screen. This template includes suggested headings, you should also add your own according to the focus of your case study.*

**Each main section with a heading must be followed by a Section Summary.** Each Section Summary should consist of 2-3 bullet points, written out as full sentences, succinctly encapsulating the preceding section.

## Case Study

### Introduction

Within methodological literatures, the qualitative interview is presented as a method to be adopted by research projects which aim to centralise the voices of participants through face-to-face reciprocal dialogue (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018; Hesse-Biber, 2017; Pranee, 2020). However, this reflexive journey is not without ethical and practical dilemmas, particularly with vulnerabilised populations, that must be navigated and re-negotiated throughout the research process. Diffusing power imbalances, creating a non-hierarchical relationship, ensuring the interview process is collaborative and mutually beneficial, protecting the privacy and preventing harm, are just a few of the fundamental ethical requirements of qualitative interviewing put forward by methodological writers and thinkers (see Brinkmann & Kvale 2018; Liamputtong, 2020; Hesse-Biber, 2017; Oakley, 2016; Ravitch & Mittenfelner, 2020). **These ethical boundaries become even more blurred when the interview process is shifted from the physical to the virtual, namely online interviews, particularly within the context of multilingual research.** However, very little is written about the complexities of the digital space as a medium for data collection, and (in)accessibility to our participants when language becomes visible. In exploring the experiences of marginalised populations during a pandemic, the ‘Scotland in Lockdown’ project faced some of these challenges head on, which we aim to highlight and explore in this case-study, particularly focusing on: **(I) Digital interviews in virtual spaces; (II) making language visible in interviews; and (III) ensuring language accessibility in the digital context.**

Recruiting and conducting interviews in the virtual space is not new and there is an albeit limited existing body of literature offering comprehensive insights, processes and how to guides in the art of online research methods (i.e., Salmons, 2016; James & Busher, 2011; Sloan & Quan-Hasse, 2017). It is largely recognised that the virtual space is not the most conducive research environment for sensitive research with vulnerable populations. This is because the face-to-face dimension allows for



many of the previously mentioned ethical dilemmas to be diffused and managed, by facilitating essential rapport building elements which has been described as crucial to qualitative interviewing ( Liamputtong, 2020). While conducting research in virtual spaces was once an informed choice, COVID-19 necessitates a transition to online methods as in-person qualitative data collection has become thwarted by the restrictions created by social distancing.

A further layer of complexity is added when we consider the place of language in multilingual research with minority ethnic groups, people from migrant and refugee backgrounds. Language is often treated as a tangential, practical concern rather than a key accessibility issue. Therefore, making language visible in research becomes an ethical issue if we are to take seriously a desire to be inclusive of voices often silenced, by researchers, policy makers and others. If we consider the pivot to digital methods in response to the pandemic context of Covid-19 - and if we think of the digital context as presenting both challenges and opportunities - doing multilingual research online raises even more practical and ethical considerations relating to how we communicate and connect with research participants in the virtual realm.

Questions to think about:

- How to make language visible in your social research, not just in terms of ethics and politics but also in relation to accessibility?
- How to achieve this work using digital methods?

Section Summary:

1. Ethical consideration and navigation are pre-requisites to qualitative interviewing, which becomes more complex in the virtual space.
2. Language is considered as a practical rather than ethical concern.
3. Consideration of language increases accessibility and inclusion of silenced voices.

## Digital Interviews in Virtual Spaces

Conducting research online offers a multitude of methodological opportunities and options, as well as important additional ethical and practical considerations. Whilst the purpose of this case study is to explore digital interviews, before doing so, it is important to understand where the data resides and the relationship between the researcher and the participant in the blurred boundaries of virtual spaces. Salmons (2016) offers some assistance in doing so by defining online data as ‘elicited’. By this, Salmons (2016: 8) recognises the direct interaction between the researcher and the participant, where the researcher has ‘carefully planned and structured the elicitation to focus on specific questions, or it may be loosely structured to allow ideas to emerge through conversation’. This being said, Dowling (2015: 2) asks the following questions:

- ‘Can online interviews create as good a relationship as those conducted face to face?’
- Are online interviews better to explore sensitive topics with sensitive populations?

Some say there is no great transition between online and face-to-face, as both require the consideration and implementation of similar ethical standards, particularly in relation to informed consent, anonymity, privacy and confidentiality (Roberts et al., 2021; Dodds & Hess, 2010). While this might be true for some, there are clear challenges for the virtual. The most obvious but sometimes overlooked challenge is the digital divide and exclusion; unequal access to virtual devices, tools, and internet connectivity has become even more pronounced in the COVID-19 lockdown where the digital has become a requirement for contact, work and education (Holmes & Burgess, 2020, see also Armstrong et al 2020; Chaudhry, 2020). Thus, virtually conducted interviews either exclude large parts of the population, potentially the most marginalised and vulnerable, or run the risk of technical difficulties, delays and being cut off. This can, explain Hanna and Mwale (2017), affect the flow of the conversation and limit the opportunity for developing personal connections. Conversely, Roberts et al. (2021) argue that there is an unintended benefit of experiencing technical difficulties, where the challenge of solving them can increase the researcher and participant bond.

There is also the possibility to sidestep many of the ethical pitfalls of the sometimes unavoidable hierarchical and power-infused nature of in person interviews. One difficulty associated with face-to-face interviews can be the intrusiveness felt by the researched, especially if they must enter a space chosen by or occupied by the researcher. This can create feelings of intimidation and powerlessness. Hanna and Mwale (2017) argue that these issues can be sidestepped when interviews are conducted in online spaces as the participant is in a private place of their own choosing, inaccessible to the researcher.

### Making language visible in digital interviews

There is a tendency to assume we live in a monolingual society where little consideration is given to language in the research design process and the messiness of doing social research with speakers of a non-dominant language. With some notable exceptions (for example Temple, 1997, 2004, Shordike et al., 2010 Resch & Enzehofer, 2018, Piacentini 2019) there is scarce reference to ‘cross language’ research and the ethics of doing multilingual research in methodological literature and within research studies. Cross-language research is time consuming, complex, and more expensive, which is why it is tempting to exclude non-English speaking participants (Choi et al., 2012).

- Why is multilingual data collection important and what are the ethical and practical dilemmas?

Resch and Enzehofer (2018) argue that multilingual research allows the inclusion of communities who are already silenced and voiceless on grounds of language, religion and race. . Importantly, by excluding language from the research process, we are placing limitations on our research opportunities, removing from view, most likely, the populations most deeply affected by the phenomenon being explored and the expansion of our cultural awareness of particular communities.

Language inclusion however must be done reflexively and in an informed manner to ensure we do not reinforce the power hierarchies we aim to diffuse and silence the voices we hope to elevate. Language can also produce different practical scenarios for communicating interview data such as ; the

researcher sharing the same language as the participant, but translation being required when sharing findings; or the researcher and participant requiring an interpreter for interviews and translation of data for sharing findings (Nes et al., 2010, Shoredike et al., 2010). Whilst not the only possible scenarios, both of these show that the interpreter and the translation process cannot be underestimated or devalued. The interpreter is an essential part of the research process as the ‘first recipient of the material’ (Resch & Enzehofer, 2018: 132) and their involvement can affect the meaning-making process, risking loss of cultural references, metaphors and specificities (Nes et al., 2010).

Critical thinkers such as Temple and Young (2004: 162) argue that there are ‘hierarchies of language power’ and issues around ‘naming and speaking for others’ particularly when meaning and quality can get lost when translating to a ‘globalised standard English’ (Resch & Enzehofer, 2018:

141). ‘Language is power’ and those we hope to empower become dependent on others voicing their opinion (Temple & Young, 2004: 164). Avoiding these pitfalls can become even more difficult to manage in a virtual environment. We also agree with Resch and Enzehofer (2018) and Piacentini (2019) that we need to make the role of the interpreter transparent, so they do not become invisible within the research process.

### Section Summary

1. Conducting research online offers multiple opportunities, but also comes with additional ethical and practical hurdles.
2. The digital divide excludes the voices of marginalised and hard to reach communities.
3. Practical issues such as technical difficulties and poor internet connectivity can impact on the opportunity and the quality of the personal connection in qualitative interviewing.
4. Virtual interviews have the potential to tip the balance of power in favour of the participant by affording more decision-making opportunities.
5. While language promotes inclusion, researchers need to proceed with caution, particularly in relation to power and the role of the interpreter.

## **Project overview and context**

Our research project explored experiences and impacts of Covid-19 lockdown restrictions in Scotland. This was a multi-method qualitative research project (6 months) with four groups already exposed to higher levels of isolation, marginalization and exclusion: people having a disability or long-term health condition; people involved in criminal justice; refugees and people seeking asylum who were at risk of destitution; people surviving domestic abuse or sexual violence. As a rapid research project, the study aims were to understand and report on the impacts of Covid-19 restrictions as they are happening, in order to contribute to better responses to it. Adopting a feminist ethics of care (Cooper & Rogers 2015) towards research participants and research users, the study design was determined by the Covid-19 restrictions which transformed the project into a digital multiple-method research design with built-in flexibility to a rapidly changing social and health context and subsequently the development of agile data collection methods.

We conducted online interviews with people directly affected by one of the study issues or staff who worked in related services. Interviews are considered typical of doing research with these populations and we are experienced researchers in conducting face to face multilingual interviews, working in multiple languages in our research and working with interpreters in interpreter mediated interviews. What was new was adapting the research design to the digital context, raising some significant practical and ethical challenges for our interview methods. This case study will focus specifically on the challenges of language and accessibility with online interviews.

## **Research Design**

The study was designed to ensure accessibility and inclusivity from the outset. Because this research involved many considered so-called 'hard to reach' communities, there were ethical and practical challenges in doing remote forms of research, and possibilities including potentially reaching people who would not readily have participated in a face-to-face sit-down interview. Central to our research design was integrating the views and experiences of partner organizations with whom researchers had

established relationships into the development of the research design. It also allowed us to listen carefully to the issues they were facing supporting people from migrant communities, and to the impacts of the move to online service delivery and support in the Covid-19 context. Drawing on these relationships and centering the needs of organizations in relation to what they wanted to find out meant taking seriously their concerns around over consultation and research fatigue. This approach also helped us build into our research design an ethics of care towards research participants and project partners.

Due to heightening Covid-related restrictions, fieldwork was designed to be undertaken remotely. One of the consequences of doing research in this new restricted environment was the opportunity to collect data in diverse formats including audio, video, email and letters. We conducted 1-1 interviews via email, telephone and using zoom. Approximately thirty interviews were conducted with refugees, people seeking asylum and minority ethnic groups, of these approximately half were conducted with an interpreter.

We faced fundamental challenges and decisions around inclusivity, that is how to ensure a wide range of non-English speaking voices were included and heard. Even more crucially, we had to work out how to do this ethically, given that many potential research participants are people at the sharp end of immigration policy and are extremely marginalized already. By this we mean that they are excluded from working, from choice-based housing, from mainstream benefits, and so face extreme material and digital poverty. People in the asylum process are already living with rules subject to regular changes, waiting and unpredictability. They are forced to navigate complex bureaucratic systems, often with limited information, and lack of support. They live lives in fear and isolation, not feeling listened to, seen or valued. Lockdown further reduced opportunities for participation in local life in a context in which people are already marginalized and excluded (Armstrong et al., 2020).

When conducting interviews with people for whom English is a second, third or fourth language, or not a spoken language requires specific efforts to ensure participants are not excluded on the grounds of language. Whilst we were able to incorporate an interpreting and translation budget for interpreters we still faced practical challenges. . The remote nature of our interviews however presented challenges in practical terms, meaning we had to revert to quite basic telephone interpreting practices and as the project was underway, we needed to draw on a range of flexible contingency measures to ensure effective and ethical communication and participation. We were also able to draw on language skills within the research team to facilitate non-English language interviews. A practical, and political, issue that emerged was digital poverty. Digital poverty pre-existed the pandemic context but was nonetheless brought into much sharper relief during this period. Digital poverty and exclusion translate in very practical ways affecting how you reach populations and their ability to take part because of lack of devices or phone credit and lack of Wi-Fi. New forms of technological engagement created barriers to accessing participants, so real care had to be taken around assumptions concerning digital access.

A central methodological and ethical concern then for us was:

- How to develop a digital research design that ensured participation that is inclusive, accessible and dignified?

Section Summary:

1. The pivot to online methods spotlighted assumptions around accessibility and how the digital divide plays out in fieldwork.
2. Centring inclusivity and accessibility in the project design, ethics and delivery produced a flexible and responsive research design.
3. Working closely with project partners gave us a deep understanding and knowledge of the obstacles to participation and devise together ways to overcome these.
4. Working with interpreters and flexibly switching between phone and video call technologies for interviews ensured a wide range of voices and experiences were captured.

## Research Practicalities

The ethical process was complex due to the scale of the process. Ethical approval for the study was granted by the University of Glasgow Medical, Veterinary and Life Sciences (MVLS) Research Ethic Committee (Reference: 200190164). The project was grounded in a feminist ethics of care (Cooper & Rogers 2015), which understands people as fundamentally interconnected, and ways of caring for study participants as rooted in their articulation of their needs in that moment. Participants were thanked for their participation with a voucher, and efforts were made to ensure participants were not excluded on the grounds of language (using interpreters) or learning disability (working with carers or support workers to facilitate inclusion). Several support workers contacted us after interviews to communicate that those interviewees had felt listened to during interview. Our ethical commitments further included transparency, open communication and timely sharing of findings in accessible formats. As a result, we had an active blog throughout the project (<https://scotlandinlockdown.co.uk/news-blog/>), with regular blog posts ranging from methodological reflections to early discussion of impacts on populations, followed by more structured findings documents.

It was important for the research approach to be responsive to the evolving effects of the pandemic. Participants were often recruited through local grassroots organisations who worked with a specific population, such as gender focused organisations, homelessness charities or organisations supporting people in the asylum process. Ongoing conversations with organisations allowed us to be sensitive to the practical limitations of the evolving covid-context and flexible to the changing availability of participants.

We used a local social enterprise interpreting service for interviews requiring an interpreter. We researched good practice in working with interpreters (Scottish Government 2004, Temple & Moran 2007) and took care to explain the project to the social enterprise. We briefed the interpreter before



the interview to discuss the purpose of the project, to make sure they understand their role, to discuss confidentiality and any requests they may have for the interview process. Once agreed, the interpreter signed a confidentiality agreement before beginning each interview. A debrief was also held after each interview by the researcher, allowing space for reflection and to offer any feedback they have to the researcher.

Interpreted interviews could result in four people being present for each interview; the interviewee, the interviewer, and an interpreter and if the interviewee would like, a trusted person could attend. We found this created a positive and trusting group atmosphere, as often the participants had existing relationships, and it allowed for a comfortable interview process. We explained confidentiality and anonymity, how this would be upheld, and how would have access to the interview, including transcribers and translators. We recognise it is never possible to promise complete anonymity in research and the risks related to anonymity increases when more people attend the interview. Moreover, when conducting an interview via audio or video, it is not possible to be certain who can overhear the interview and whether the interviewee can speak freely throughout. It is important that everyone attending the interview is briefed and agrees, in either verbal or written format, to the terms of confidentiality.

All interviews usually lasted for approximately one hour, and not all required an interpreter. A few of the interpreter-mediated interviews were conducted by videocall, but because of limited access to appropriate devices most interviews were conducted by phone. The phone was set to loudspeaker to allow the digital voice recorder to pick up the audio. Moreover, this allowed the interviewer to review and take notes during the interview with ease. We tended not to use Skype as it required software and internet access that many interviewees did not have. Only two multilingual interviews took place via videocall (Zoom) using the digital resources of a partner organisation. Another partner organisation also conducted focus group discussions via videocall (Zoom) on our behalf, forwarding the

anonymised audio recording to us via the University password protected fileshare service. Once data collection was complete, interviews were translated and transcribed by a professional translation agency.

### Section Summary

1. An ethics of care approach does not end with ethical approval but must be woven through each stage of the research design.
2. It is important to be flexible and patient during recruitment to allow for your research to capture more diverse experiences, especially if you are working with 'harder to reach' communities.
3. If the interview has multiple attendees, such as interpreters and trusted people (the interviewee's friends, family or a representative from an organization) this can create a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. It can also raise issues of confidentiality and anonymity that must be addressed and explained in a clear and transparent way.
4. Extra time must be factored into digital interviews to allow for both technological problems and interpreter mediated communication before, during and after the interview itself.

## Methods in Action

It was sometimes difficult to arrange interviews via videocall with people who are seeking asylum due to State vulnerabilisation, destitution and digital exclusion. Working with organisations meant we were able to source appropriate IT equipment to facilitate interpreter-mediated videocall interviews, but this process took time.

When videocall was not an option, telephone interviews worked well. The researcher used the conference call function when an interpreter and a trusted person were virtually present for the interview. Conducting the interview remotely allowed for the interviewer to use aids that may not be

possible in a face-to-face interview, for example using hands free with the loudspeaker function made notetaking easier (notetaking during an interview can sometimes be off putting in the face-to-face context), whilst using the clock function for timekeeping. However, the quality of sound via loudspeaker was sometimes compromised by external sounds outwith our control.

The uncertain nature of life in lockdown meant every so often there were routine changes to scheduled interviews and people's availability, including the interpreter. On one occasion an interpreter was not arranged but clearly required. In this case, we offered to rearrange the interview, but the participant preferred to continue. We had anticipated this kind of scenario, and although we gave the participant the option to rearrange with an interpreter, we had also agreed we should be guided by the participant. But it undoubtedly made the interview more challenging, the interview was hard to follow and subsequently difficult to transcribe. It was not always straightforward to find interpreters for all languages spoken and in the end, access to appropriate interpreters and translation services dictated which participants could take part.

Relatedly we realised we had made some assumptions around the availability of interpreters and the translation services for less common languages into interview transcripts for coding purposes. As a result, one transcript only included the interviewee and the interpreter's dialogue and excluded the interviewee's responses from the transcript. Through this experience, we were reminded of how important it is to check that the translation agency used offers interpretation, transcription and translation services before booking the interview.

Completing the interviews by audio may have affected trust and the opportunity to build rapport, specifically in the beginning of the interview, as we could not see each other and read one another's body language and cues for speech. This can become more difficult to manage the more people that are on the call. This also created complex interview contexts where interviewers not only had to

navigate the intricacies of the virtual space, but also manage and ensure fidelity to the spoken language, particularly ensuring meaning is not lost or diluted in translation. In cases the interview became quite chaotic and dependent upon the interpreter's interpretation of the questions asked and answers given.

It is perhaps of no surprise given the covid-induced social isolation that some interviewees talked extensively and sometimes veered off topic. Bookending time for small talk at the beginning and end of the call and allowing time to find a rhythm with the interpreter, interviewee and trusted third person in the conversation helped things flow comfortably.

### Section Summary

1. Multi-lingual interviews are an enriching experience that requires careful planning.
2. It may not always be possible to arrange a video interview with vulnerablised populations, however it may be feasible through working in partnership with an organisation who can support the interviewee in accessing the resources needed to arrange this.
3. Conducting the interview by telephone or videocall requires an increased awareness for verbal and nonverbal cues to create and manage a comfortable flow of conversation.
4. It is important to make sure that both interpreting, and transcription are available before an interview in the second language is conducted.
5. Trying to build rapport and a personal connection is undoubtedly more complex in the digital realm but not impossible and making and taking time to reconnect using small talk is invaluable.

## **Practical Lessons Learned**

At each stage in this project, we were reminded that ethical awareness and management infuse the research process. Ethics had to be designed in and constantly reviewed to ensure inclusivity, accessibility, and attentiveness to power relations in fieldwork. The digital context provided us with

opportunities for participation, but it was also very demanding of everyone in terms of time and energy. Organisations we contacted for interviews were overstretched, whilst working in an often rapid-response way. To support their participation, we offered flexibility, checking with them what timings worked best and being ready for last-minute adjustments.

We were mindful of digital exclusion and did not assume everyone had equal access to the kinds of technologies or resources needed for digital interviews. We considered what we could offer to help ease participation, for example, mobile phone top ups as incentives and payment in kind for people's time.

We sought to develop rapport and trust with interviewees over the phone. For example, when conducting the interview, we would describe the room we were in. We found interviewees responded well to this, and some reciprocated and described what the space they were in was like in return. Similarly, when on a videocall, we would move the camera around the room so that the interviewee could see where we were.

We always factored in extra time for the transcription of multilingual interviews and the translation of interview materials and other documents, such as the plain language statement, consent form and confidentiality agreement. We made sure to have this all arranged before we started the interviews. This way, we could ensure interviewees were included readily in the research project and able to participate with a fuller, informed consent.

Relatedly, we were constantly reminded that transcription and interpretation were two different skillsets and sometimes we needed to approach different agencies for these services. If best practice is being followed, back translation should also be conducted on the transcript: a process whereby the

translated text is translated back into the source text to check for mistranslation. We would recommend that timing for this stage is also included into future research planning.

Throughout our project we were open to taking part in partner organisation activities and be guided by them on how best to recruit interviewees. This really helped us to build trust in the research process. For example, one of our project organisations invited researchers to attend virtual group activities. This allowed the researcher to introduce themselves, the research project, respond to questions, and invite people to take part. Other organisations recruited participants on the research team's behalf, using the 'plain language form' that we had made available in different languages to explain the project.

#### Section Summary

1. Be mindful that not everyone readily has access to the internet to take part in digital interviews, and they may need to travel to access these resources, or you may offer a mobile phone top up to allow them to participate.
2. Allow time at the beginning and end the interview for small talk as this can help with establishing a connection with interviewees. .
3. Translating interview transcripts is a timely process which requires a specific skillset, you must secure the time and skills for this before beginning the interview if this is required.
4. Consider that organisations you approach for your research may be very busy, listen to them, be open to their ideas and be flexible when working with them.

#### Conclusion

*Includes a round-up of the issues discussed in your case study. This should not be a discussion of conclusions drawn from the research findings, but should focus reflectively on the research methodology. Include just enough detail of your findings to enable the reader to understand how the method/approach you used could be utilized by others. Would you recommend using this method/approach or, on reflection, would you make difference choices in the future? **What can readers learn from your experience and apply to their own research?***

## Conclusion

In this case study we have sought to explore some of the practical, ethical and political dilemmas of language and accessibility when conducting interviews in the digital space. Undoubtedly the digital space offers opportunities for a wider range of voices to be included in research, but it also comes with limitations and restrictions. In our project we very quickly recognised the power of language to silence and of digital poverty to exclude. Although we are experienced researchers, from the very outset we were confronted with challenges in making our project inclusive of as many voices as possible, and in recruiting interviewees and creating a safe, accessible digital space for interpreted interviews. This required close working with partner organisations to identify good practices throughout the project. We took time and care to discuss processes as a research team and this meant regular check-ins and collectively developing standards. Microsoft TEAMS was a helpful platform in this regard with weekly drop-in meetings set up for the research team to talk through practical issues, ethical concerns, and as we began coding data, emergent themes that cut across the study and which were specific to each population. Partner organisations played an essential role not only in the development of the research methods, but also in the collection and analysis process. Stream Leads met regularly with partner organisations to ensure the research endeavour was reciprocal and mutually beneficial. The standards we developed together considered the practical components of arranging online interviews, booking interpreters and supporting interpreters and participants in the interview process, planning translation into the research design and ensuring time is scheduled for all this work. We listened to our participants and identified practical alternatives to videocall interviews that used the digital space creatively and pragmatically, encouraging rather than inhibiting participation. We found that carefully attending to language and accessibility laid solid foundations for trust, empathy and sensitivity in the digital space and for an ethics of care to be embedded.

Multilingual interviews are complicated, multi-layered and multidirectional and can be confusing, who is speaking when and for whom are practical, ethical and political questions throughout any research project, and they do not disappear in the digital space. Just because these kinds of interviews

are complex does not mean we should shy away from working in and through different languages in our research. What we hope to have shown here is that in the digital context, multilingual interviews continue to be central to promoting inclusivity, being ethical in fieldwork, and for raising our cultural awareness as researchers, challenging us to rethink our own positions as dominant language speakers, and as such they enriched the research process and project in many ways.

## Discussion Questions

[Insert three to five discussion questions on the methods described in your case study]

*Discussion questions should be suitable for eliciting debate and critical thinking. Avoid questions which require only a single-word answer such as “yes” or “no.”*

## Discussion Questions

1. How should you develop a digital research design that ensures participation is inclusive, accessible and dignified?
2. How can you mitigate the ethical and practical issues involved in conducting research in virtual space?
3. How can you ensure that voices and meanings are not lost and/or distorted in translation?
4. How might you reflect on overcoming the digital divide in your fieldwork?

## Multiple Choice Quiz Questions

[Insert three to five multiple choice quiz questions here. Each question should have only three possible answers (A, B, or C). Please indicate the correct answer by writing CORRECT after the relevant answer.]

*Multiple Choice Quiz Questions should test readers’ understanding of your case study, and should not require any previous knowledge. They should relate to the research methodology, rather than the research findings.*



## Multiple Choice Questions

**What accessibility issues are specific to online multilingual interviews?**

- A. There aren't any, most people have a smart phone for making video calls.
- B. The opportunity for participation in multilingual research is heavily shaped by digital inequalities and access to technologies. (CORRECT)
- C. Non-verbal cues that are so important for good communication can just as easily be picked up in a multilingual voice call.

**What practical considerations should you consider when working with an interpreter online?**

- A. You can rely on the interpreter to have in-depth knowledge of the topic and they will help guide you through the questions
- B. You don't need to plan as much time as interviews with an interpreter are usually finished faster.
- C. You need to plan time to brief the interpreter before the interview to discuss the purpose of the project, to make sure they understand their role, and discuss confidentiality and then debrief after the interview to check for any questions or issues. (CORRECT)

**What are the main ethical considerations when conducting interviews online?**

- A. As online interviews are conducted in a virtual space, there are no ethical issues.
- B. This is dependent on the research topic and population, but confidentiality, power, harm, and informed consent should be considered throughout the research process (CORRECT)
- C. Power and harm only as interviews that are conducted in virtual spaces do not create issues around anonymity and confidentiality.

### 1. Further Reading

Please ensure content is inclusive and represents diverse voices. In your references, further readings and web resources you should aim to represent a diversity of people. We have a global readership and we want students of a wide range of perspectives to see themselves reflected in our pedagogical materials.

[Insert list of up to six further readings here]

## Further Reading

- Armstrong, S. et al. (2020). Left out and locked down: impacts of COVID-19 for marginalised groups in Scotland. Project Report. University of Glasgow, Glasgow, Scotland.
- Temple, B. and Moran, R. (2006) *Doing Research with Refugees: Issues and Guidelines* Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Kara, H. & Khoo, SM (ed). (2020) *Researching in the Age of COVID-19, Volume I-III: Response and Reassessment, Care and Resilience and Creativity and Ethics, Rapid Responses*, Bristol Policy Press
- Salmons, J. (2016). *Doing Qualitative Research Online*. London: Sage Publications.
- Edwards, R. (1998). A critical examination of the use of interpreters in the qualitative research process. *Journal of ethnic and migration studies*, 24(1), 197-208.
- Berryman, M., SooHoo, S., & Nevin, A. (Eds.). (2013). *Culturally responsive methodologies*. Emerald Group Publishing.

## Web Resources

[Insert links to up to six relevant web resources here]

## Web Resources

- Helen Kara (2017) *Challenging the dominance of English*, available on: <https://helenkara.com/2017/06/27/challenging-the-dominance-of-english/>
- Episode 4: Costs and Benefits of Online Qualitative Data Collection, *Nvivo Podcast – Between the Data*, available on: <https://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo-qualitative-data-analysis-software/resources/nvivo-podcasts>
- Episode 7: The Place of Technology in Online Research: Interview with Dr. Nancy Baym, *Nvivo Podcast – Between the Data*, available on: <https://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo-qualitative-data-analysis-software/resources/nvivo-podcasts>

- Scotland In Lockdown project website (2020) [Scotland in Lockdown | How have Covid-19 measures affected your life? \(project website\)](#)

## References

[Insert bibliography of references cited in text here]

*References should conform to American Psychological Association (APA) style, 7<sup>th</sup> edition, and should contain the digital object identifier (DOI) where available. SAGE will not accept cases that are incorrectly referenced. Please ensure accuracy before submission. For help on reference styling see <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines>.*

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