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# **Towards a sociology of the interpreter's workplace:**

**An examination of methodological  
issues in the study of situated action in  
the conference interpreting domain**



# Towards a sociology of the interpreter's workplace

## OVERVIEW

- **Background**
- **Methodology**
- **Scope**



## Towards a sociology of the interpreter's workplace

**Why a sociology of interpreting?**



## Towards a sociology of the interpreter's workplace

### **METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS**

**1. Participant Observation**

**2. Institutional Ethnography**



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### **Why Participant Observation?**

‘(...) [to study] the processes, relationships among people and events, the organization of people and events, continuities over time, and patterns, as well as the immediate socio-cultural contexts in which human existence unfolds’.

(Jorgensen, 1989: 12)



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### When ?

- the phenomenon is relatively unknown
- important differences exist between the views of 'outsiders' and 'insiders'
- the phenomenon is hidden from public view

(Jorgensen, 1989: 12)



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‘Most human settings (...) do not give up the insider's world of meaning and action except to a person willing to become a member. The deeper meanings of most forms of human existence are not displayed for outsiders. They are available primarily to people for whom these meanings constitute a way of life’.

(Jorgensen, 1989: p. 60)



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### **Interpreters as participant observers**

- Unique perspective as the 'insider outsider'
- Ethical boundaries
- Too subjective?





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### **The task of ethnography**

'[to describe] a culture, social system or social world conceived as bounded and internally structured'

(Hammersley, 1992:24)



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### **SCOPE**

**Descriptions vs practical concerns**