

There's madness in their method(ology)

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There you are talking to a psychology undergraduate about your research when it suddenly dawns on you that you are talking two different languages - methodologically speaking. You thought you understood what the student was saying but little did you know that they thought you meant something else entirely. So here is the latest set of helpful translations to help you get by.

Methodological Term Undergraduate student translation

<i>Bar chart</i>	Timetable of events for Student Union pub crawl
<i>Cardinal numbers</i>	The Vatican's lottery selections
<i>Central tendency</i>	Liberal Democrat supporter
<i>Chi Square</i>	Japanese tourist attraction
<i>Class interval</i>	Five minute fag break in lecture
<i>Cluster analysis</i>	Study of crowd behaviour
<i>Collaborative research</i>	Student excuse for copying each other
<i>Content analysis</i>	The art of skim reading journal papers
<i>Contingency tables</i>	Spare office furniture
<i>Controlled observation</i>	Drug free and sober while watching TV
<i>Cross sectional research</i>	Did the whole project in one afternoon
<i>Dependent variable</i>	A what?
<i>Disclosure</i>	Mediocre film starring Demi Moore
<i>Dissertation abstract</i>	Yes it is a bit, isn't it?!
<i>Double blind study</i>	Neither student or supervisor knew what the hell was going on during the project
<i>Ecological validity</i>	Research carried out by a member of <i>Greenpeace</i>
<i>Experimenter effects</i>	Hangover
<i>Exploratory research</i>	Only managed to run two subjects
<i>Independent t-test</i>	Statistical test done without help from anyone else

<i>In depth case study</i>	Mum's life story
<i>Indirect observation</i>	A friend of a friend told me
<i>Inferential statistics</i>	Guessed whether the result was significant
<i>Inter-rater reliability</i>	Made up and agreed the results with their best friend
<i>Invasion of privacy</i>	Supervisor checking raw data and reading through the appendices
<i>Longitudinal research</i>	Took more than three weeks to do the project
<i>Matched pair</i>	First two people who signed up for an experiment
<i>Mean</i>	Most common description of the project marker
<i>Median</i>	Person who claims they can talk to the dead
<i>Multiple regression</i>	Something for a paraphiliac no doubt
<i>Multivariate statistics</i>	Most common cause of hyperventilation in undergraduate students
<i>Naturalistic observation</i>	Research done in the pub
<i>Non-treatment group</i>	NHS patients
<i>Observer bias</i>	Manchester United fan
<i>Opportunity sample</i>	The five people who were conned into taking part
<i>Order effects</i>	Remembering whose round it is in the pub
<i>Parametric</i>	Ambulance driver
<i>Path analysis</i>	<i>Gardener's Question Time</i>
<i>Predictive validity</i>	Co-author of the study was Uri Geller
<i>Psychometric tests</i>	Psychology examinations
<i>p value</i>	Price of toilet use in London train stations
<i>Qualitative project</i>	Option to avoid doing statistics
<i>Random number tables</i>	Examination hall layout
<i>Random sample</i>	Using non-psychology students
<i>Repeated measures</i>	Answering all exam questions with the same material
<i>Role-play</i>	Pretending to be a 2i student in front of supervisor
<i>Self-selected sample</i>	Choosing all your family and friends to take part
<i>Semantic differential</i>	Was he the goalkeeper in the 1972 Polish World Cup Squad?

<i>Snowball sampling</i>	Drinking Advocaat and lemonade in the pub all evening
<i>Social desirability</i>	Inviting subjects for a drink in the pub afterwards
<i>Standard deviation</i>	Occasional bondage with partner
<i>Standard error</i>	Using ANOVA to analyse everything at every opportunity in the vain hope of impressing supervisor
<i>Standardised procedure</i>	Experiment that always defaults to Murphy's Law
<i>Subject pool</i>	University swimming baths
<i>Survey</i>	Something done in a house before moving in
<i>Target population</i>	The Conservative Party
<i>Test-retest reliability</i>	Getting best friend to check analysed data
<i>Three-way ANOVA</i>	Three students trying to analyse project results
<i>Type 1 error</i>	Name, supervisor and title of project wrongly spelt on dissertation
<i>Type 2 error</i>	Forgetting to press "save" after four hours of data inputting
<i>Unstructured interview</i>	Supervision meeting

N.B. About half of these have been published previously. See :

Griffiths, M.D. (1997). Madness in their method(ology) - Part 1. *The Psychologist : Bulletin of the British Psychological Society*, 10, 130.

Griffiths, M.D. (1997). Madness in their method(ology) - Part 2. *The Psychologist : Bulletin of the British Psychological Society*, 10, 175.