

Lexical and story collection

1 Lexical collection

Words have different *senses*. A key consideration in lexical consideration is: Are you really getting the sense that you had in mind? E.g. if you ask for 'bank,' will you get a river bank or a financial bank? (This is an extreme case, but the general concern extends to many words.)

- Elicit words within a shared semantic field. This at least helps control for some ambiguity.
 - Useful concept lists at <http://concepticon.clld.org/>
 - See also WordNet (demonstrated later)
- Ask for antonyms (“the opposite”), hyponyms (more specific types), hypernyms (broader categories)
- Set up tasks that are designed to elicit many unknown words
 - Describe parts of a picture
 - Fill in a map or diagram (human body, family tree, etc.)

Submit a transcription of the elicited words, together with materials used (if any).

2 Naturalistic (story) collection

Some linguistic phenomena are best studied using — or absolutely require — naturalistic, long-form data: for example, the detailed description of tense/aspect, pro-drop, ellipsis, topicalization, discourse particles, etc. The goal is naturalistic, long-form, but (somewhat) predictable and controlled recordings. Examples of tasks include:

(1) Storytelling:

- a. The consultant could be asked to narrate an established story. Useful materials:
 - <http://totemfieldstoryboards.org/>: Burton and Matthewson 2015 (on IVLE) discuss their use.
 - Katie Sardinha’s <http://story-builder.ca>
- b. Alternatively, the consultant could speak as a particular character. You could also take a comic book and white out the speech bubbles.
- c. Best if the story has a traditional narrative arc: begin by introducing characters, follows a logical sequence of events, and leads to a conclusion.

(2) **Describing:**

- a. The consultant could be asked to describe what is happening in pictures or a video.
- b. Example of carefully controlled pictures: Ben Bruening's scope fieldwork materials <http://udel.edu/~bruening/scopeproject/scopeproject.html>
- c. Compared to telling a story, there may be more variation in what gets described. This may later make your task of identifying what was said more difficult.

(3) **Playing a game:**

- a. Many games involve "partial information" — one player has some information that the other is seeking.
- b. Could also get statements of desire, commands, ...
- c. (But these tasks generally require multiple speakers of the language.)

Session planning begins in the same way as for structured elicitation: identifying themes, brainstorming hypotheses and questions, then thinking of individual test cases that will help you address these questions. Then, *design the task to try to elicit such test cases*:

- if setting up a story or describing a scene, design the narrative so that the desired structure comes as a natural consequence in the story.
- if playing a game, the game could be set up so that certain events occur.

After your story (or other naturalistic) collection, you will submit a transcript. Try to split the speech up into sentences and align them with what you think their English translations might be. Three-line glosses are not necessary. You can also work with the consultant later to further study the recording, by playing the audio back to the consultant sentence-by-sentence and translating the sentences or asking about particular phrases.

References

Burton, Strang, and Lisa Matthewson. 2015. Targeted construction storyboards in semantic fieldwork. In *Methodologies in semantic fieldwork*, ed. M. Ryan Bochnak and Lisa Matthewson, 135–156. Oxford University Press.