Stimulus-based data collection in LDD

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Focus of the classes

The big picture on data collection issues in LDD in the plenary tomorrow morning!

Today:
• Overview of Himmelmann’s types of communicative events
• Focus on staged communicative events
• Typology of stimuli used to collect staged communicative events

Tomorrow afternoon:
• Examples for the use of different types of stimuli
• Widely held criticisms of stimuli and some arguments against them

Your turn

• What types of data have you already collected or intend to collect in the field?
• Did you use or do you plan to use any props?
• Are you aware of stimuli aiding fieldworkers in data collection? If yes, which stimuli are you aware of?
• Please take five minutes to think about these questions – we will discuss your findings as a group.
Documentation = a large, annotated corpus

Corpus (Himmelmann 1998)

- Elicitations
- Observed communicative events
- Staged communicative events

- Paradigms, wordlists, results of tests...
- Conversation, narratives, folk stories, proverbs...
- Descriptions of picture and video stimuli, games...

Data resulting from staged communicative events

Types of staged communicative events

- SCVs with verbal prompts:
  - "Tell me how you cultivate rice, please!"
  - "Can you explain how you use a VéloV?"
  - "What happens during a typical naming ceremony in your village?"

- SCVs with ‘aural’ stimuli:
  - The researcher tries to evoke an atmosphere that is typical for certain communicative situations by taking the consultant to a specific location, playing music, exposing them to smells, etc.

- SCV’s with nonverbal stimuli
  - The researchers uses pictures, games, and video clips in order to obtain linguistic data.
SCVs based on aural stimuli

Evoking situations
- Especially in contexts of severe language endangerment, the context of use for a number of communicative events may not exist any longer.
- Semi-speakers and rememberers may feel inhibited to simulate these communicative events.
- Evoking a speech situation may help them to recover memory and feel less shy about reproducing speech events from the past.

There are no prefabricated stimuli for this event type – it will depend on the creativity of the researcher!

Your turn
- Think about your field situation. Take five minutes to think about speech events that are not produced any more in the speech community, and how you might evoke a situation similar to the one in which they were used.
- Is this situation linked to a particular place, season, setting?
- Is it associated with particular music, rituals, food, smells?
- ...
- We will share our findings in the group.
Staged communicative events based on nonverbal stimuli

Types of stimuli

- Static stimuli:
  - Comics
  - Picture books
  - Photos
- Dynamic stimuli:
  - Acted videos
  - Animated videos
  - Staged life events
- Interactive stimuli:
  - Puzzle tasks
  - Map tasks
  - Matching games

Static stimuli

- Picture books
  - Topological relations picture book
  - Frog story
- Photos
  - Positional verbs picture book
- Comics
  - Calvin & Hobbes
  - Tintin
  - Asterix & Obelix
Dynamic stimuli
- Acted videos:
  - Staged events
  - Cut & Break
  - Pear film
- Animated videos:
  - Fish film
  - Event triads
  - ECOM clips

Interactive stimuli
- Matching/sorting games:
  - Basic colour terms
  - Munsell chips
  - Men and tree
  - Cluedo
- Puzzles:
  - Eisenbeiss/Matsuo puzzle
- Map tasks/route descriptions:
  - HCRC map task
  - Table top route description task

Advantages and limits of data based on stimuli
Your turn

- Can you imagine what the advantages of stimuli are compared to data collected with other methods?
- And can you imagine possible disadvantages and limits of use of stimuli?
- Please discuss with your neighbour for five minutes; we will compare your opinions in the group.

General advantages and disadvantages

- Advantages of stimuli:
  - Are highly controlled, quantifiable and comparable.
  - Yield phonologically, semantically and syntactically accurate data.
  - Are free from linguistic interference of the metalanguage and from misunderstandings of context.
- Disadvantages:
  - Cross-cultural applicability can be limited.
  - Use is limited to visually depictable scenes.
  - Do not allow a semasiological approach (investigation the different uses of a form), but only an onomasiological approach (studying the formal expression of a given function).

Static stimuli: advantages and limits

- Advantages:
  - Can be used for nonlinguistic categorisation tasks.
  - Are easy, cheap and low-tech to produce and use.
- Disadvantages:
  - A familiarity with culture-specific narrative and picture-reading conventions is required.
Dynamic stimuli: advantages and limits

**Advantages:**
- Allow the recreation of real-world events as they unfold over time.
- Can be replicated infinitely without any change in detail.

**Disadvantages:**
- Require the use of high-tech, which is often complicated if not impossible in the field.
- Depending on the abstractness of the stimulus, misunderstandings can occur.

Interactive stimuli: advantages and limits

**Advantages:**
- Allow controlled interaction of two or more speakers.
- Allow the masking of the linguistic purpose of the interaction.

**Disadvantages:**
- May create culturally inappropriate or strange situations.
- Since the true purpose of the interaction is normally not known to the consultants, misunderstandings occur easily.

Your turn

- Please form three groups.
- In each group, please pick one of the following linguistic domains for which you will design a stimulus:
  - An investigation of direct and indirect causation.
  - An investigation of colour terms.
  - An investigation of alienable and inalienable possession.
- Take 10 minutes to think about the linguistic parameters your stimulus needs to cover and come up with a description of a possible stimulus.
- We will present your results in the group.