Stimulus-based data collection in LDD

3L Summerschool 2008
Friederike Lüpke

THE HANS RAUSING
Endangered Languages Project

SOAS
University of London
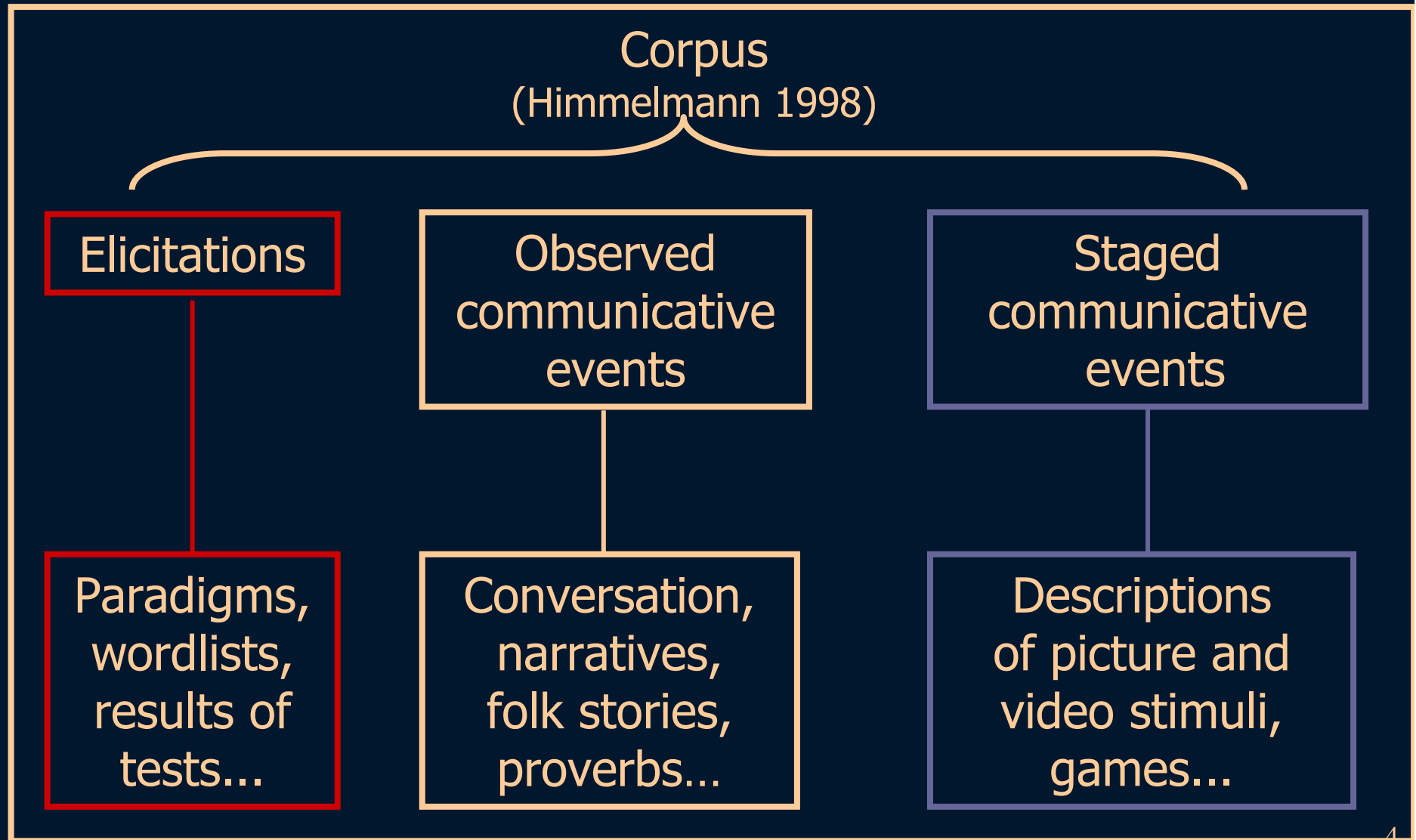
Focus of the classes

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

- Today:
  - Overview of Himmelmann's types of communcative 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 communcative 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!
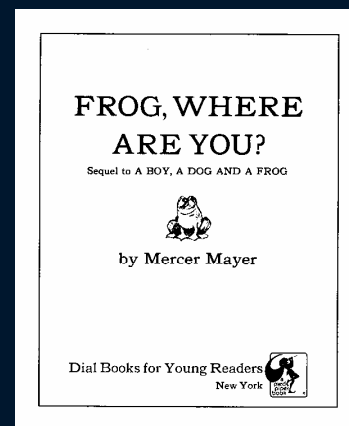
Your turn

- 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:
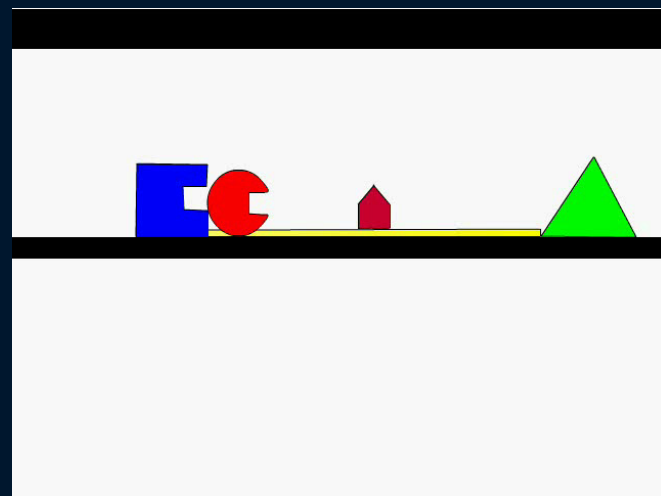 - Puzzle tasks
  - Map tasks
  - Matching games

FROG, WHERE ARE YOU?
Sequel to A BOY, A DOG AND A FROG
by Mercer Mayer
Dial Books for Young Readers
New York
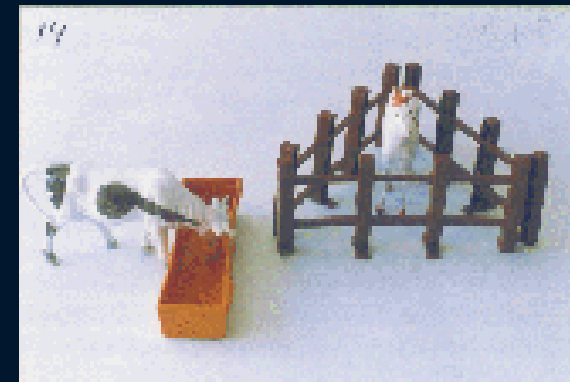
Static stimuli

- Picture books
  - Topological relations picture book
  - Frog story
- Photos
  - Positional verbs picture book
- Comics
  - Calvin & Hobbes
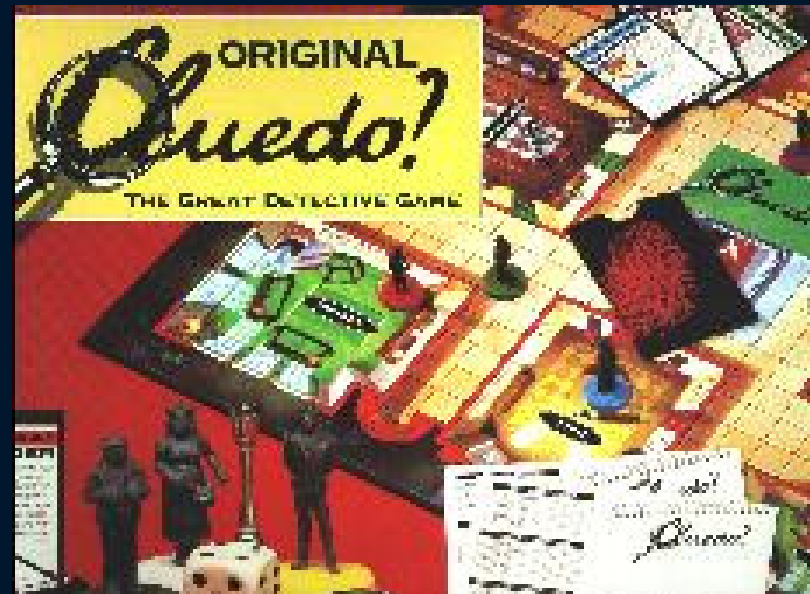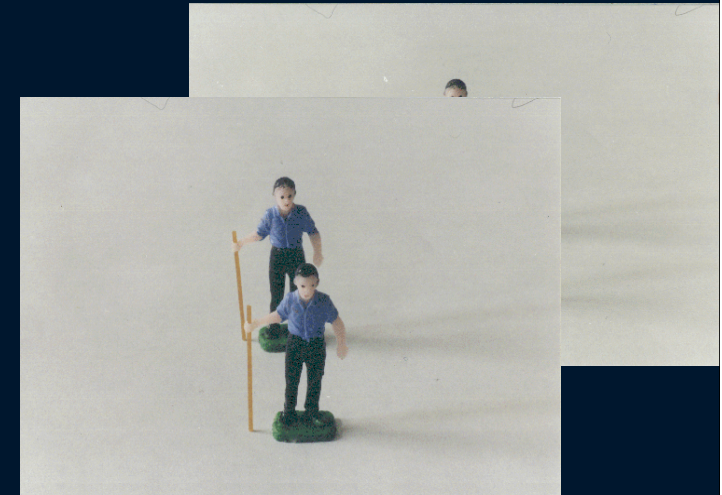 - Tintin
  - Asterix & Obelix

Dynamic stimuli

- Acted videos:
  - Staged events
  - Cut & Break
  - Pear film
- Animated videos:
  - Fish film
  - Event triads
  - ECOM clips

Interactive stimuli

- Matching/sorting games 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 semasiologial approach (investigation the different uses of a form), but only an onomasiological approach (studying the formal expression of a given function)
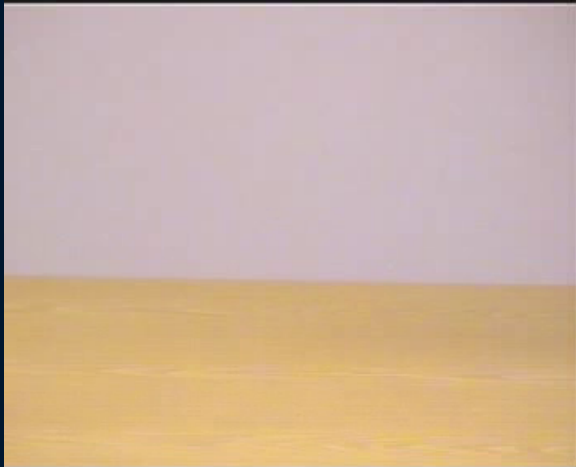
Static stimuli: advantages and limits

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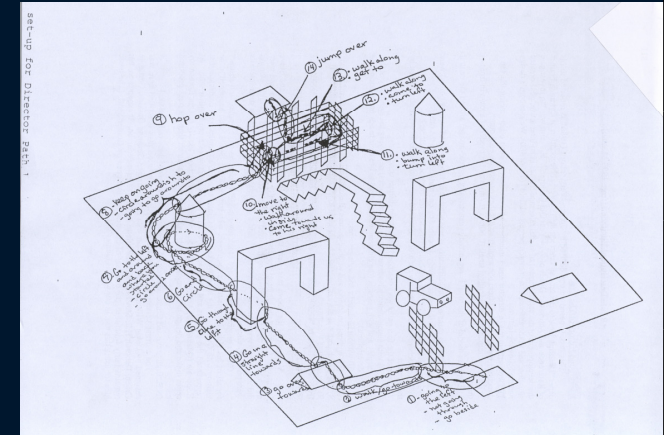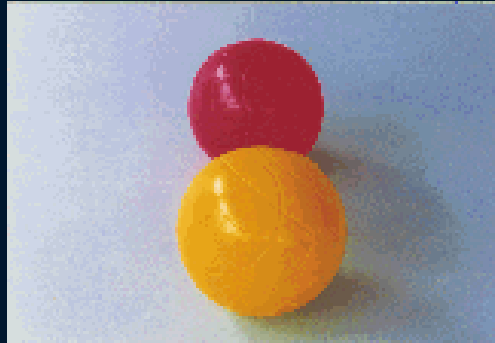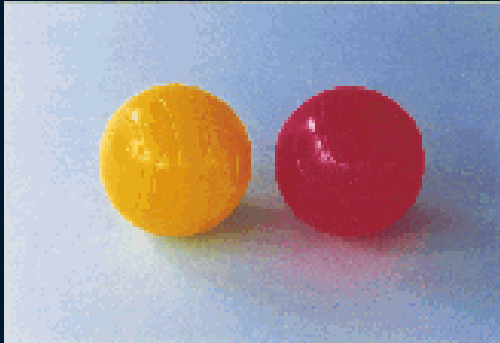
- **Advantages:**
  - Allow controlled interaction of two or more speakers.
  - Allow the masking of the linguistic purpose of the interaction.

- **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 hink 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.