

DOCUMENTARY LINGUISTICS I

prof. Nicole Nau, UAM winter 2017/2018

Sixth lecture
14 November 2017

TOPICS OF THE DAY

- ❖ Organization: USOS, tasks
- ❖ Types of texts, genres, registers
- ❖ How to collect (spoken) texts of different genres

CATEGORIZATION OF TEXTS INTO TYPES, GENRES, REGISTERS ETC.

- What are genres and registers?
- How many genres and registers are there?
- Are genres and registers universal or language specific?
- How can one establish language specific genres?
- Why do we need such a categorization in language documentation?

TEXT TYPE, GENRE, REGISTER...

Douglas Biber & Susan Conrad. 2009. *Register, genre, and style*. CUP.

«We use the terms register, genre, and style to refer to **three different perspectives** of text varieties.»

register perspective: analyzing linguistic characteristics of texts and the situation of use of the variety

genre perspective: focuses on the conventional structures used to construct a complete text within the variety

style perspective: linguistic characteristics reflecting aesthetic preferences, associated with particular authors or historical periods

HOW MANY REGISTERS AND GENRES ARE THERE?

«Since genres and registers are **not universal**, but culture and language specific categories, the identification of genres and registers requires a thorough **linguistic analysis** of texts which starts with sorting the texts according to their **production circumstances**. Subsequently one searches these groups of texts for **fixed expressions** that mark their structure and for **variant frequencies** of certain linguistic features.»

«The theoretical problem of Himmelmann's ideal LD is that **registers and other varieties of speech can only be identified by corpus linguistic analyses of language usage in different speech situations**, which, obviously, presupposes the existence of a corpus. Only after texts have been recorded in different speech situations, transcribed, and translated, can we formulate hypotheses about genre and register distinctions and start a genre and register analysis.»

Mosel, Ulrike, in press. Corpus compilation and exploitation in language documentation projects. To appear in *The Oxford Handbook of Endangered Languages*.

HOW CAN WE IDENTIFY LANGUAGE SPECIFIC GENRES AND REGISTERS?

«There is no universal way of categorizing ‘natural’ speech events or OCEs [observed communicative events].

Therefore, **a good heuristic** to capture the repertoire of a speech community is to aim at including those speech events that are recognised by its members (for instance by **having a name in the language**), and to characterise these events in terms of parameters employed in the **ethnography of speaking**» (Lüpke. 2010)

Table 1: OCEs as a cline from unplanned to planned, after Himmelmann (1998: 180)

Lüpke
(2010)
after
Himmelmann
(1998)

| Parameter | Major types | Examples |
|-----------|----------------|---|
| unplanned | exclamative | 'ouch!' 'fire!' |
| | directive | 'scalpel!' |
| | conversational | greetings small talk chat |
| | monological | discussion interview narrative description speech |
| planned | ritual | formal address litany |

WILLIAM FOLEY'S (2003) RECOMMENDATION

- ❖ stay close to the **full range of data**, all register and genre types;
- ❖ avoid differential evaluation of some text types over others, but search out the **native estimations** and their rationales for such [...];
- ❖ when developing a description on the basis of these data, **be prepared for inconsistencies** and contradictions.
- ❖ [...] the language practices of any speech community, no matter how small or monolithic [...], are never homogeneous. **Variation is the rule**; don't paper over this.

«Unfortunately, what we describe of the threatened languages of many small language communities is often all that will be passed on of them to their descendents. We owe it to them to provide the '**thickest description**' we are capable of.»

TRADITIONAL DISTINCTION OF DISCOURSE TYPES (FROM RHETORICS)

- ❖ narration
- ❖ description
- ❖ exposition
- ❖ argumentation

G. Pianese: «Spoken Discourse: Types», in *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, ed. Keith Brown *et al.*, 2nd ed., Oxford, Elsevier, 2006, vol. XII, pp. 84-88.

GENRES DISTINGUISHED BY PAYNE (1997)

PAYNE, THOMAS. 1997. DESCRIBING MORPHOSYNTAX. A GUIDE FOR FIELD LINGUISTS. CUP

- ❖ Conversation

- ❖ Narrative

 - ❖ Personal experience

 - ❖ Historical

 - ❖ Folk stories

 - ❖ Mythology

- ❖ Horatory (attempts to get the hearer to do sth.)

- ❖ Procedural (how to do something) – seldom a natural genre

- ❖ Expository (attempt to explain something) – uncommon genre

- ❖ Descriptive – uncommon genre

- ❖ Ritual speech

OLAC DISCOURSE TYPES

[HTTP://WWW.LANGUAGE-ARCHIVES.ORG/REC/DISCOURSE.HTML](http://www.language-archives.org/rec/discourse.html)


Dialogue: An interactive discourse with two or more participants. Examples: conversations, interviews, correspondence, consultations, greetings and leave-takings

Narrative: A monologic discourse which represents temporally organized events. Examples: historical, traditional, and personal narratives, myths, folktales, fables, and humorous stories

Procedural discourse: An explanation or description of a method, process, or situation having ordered steps. Examples: recipes, instructions, and plans.

Report: A factual account of some event or circumstance. Examples: news reports, essays, and commentaries

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Formulaic Discourse: The resource is a ritually or conventionally structured discourse. Examples: prayers, curses, blessings, charms, curing rituals, marriage vows, and oaths.

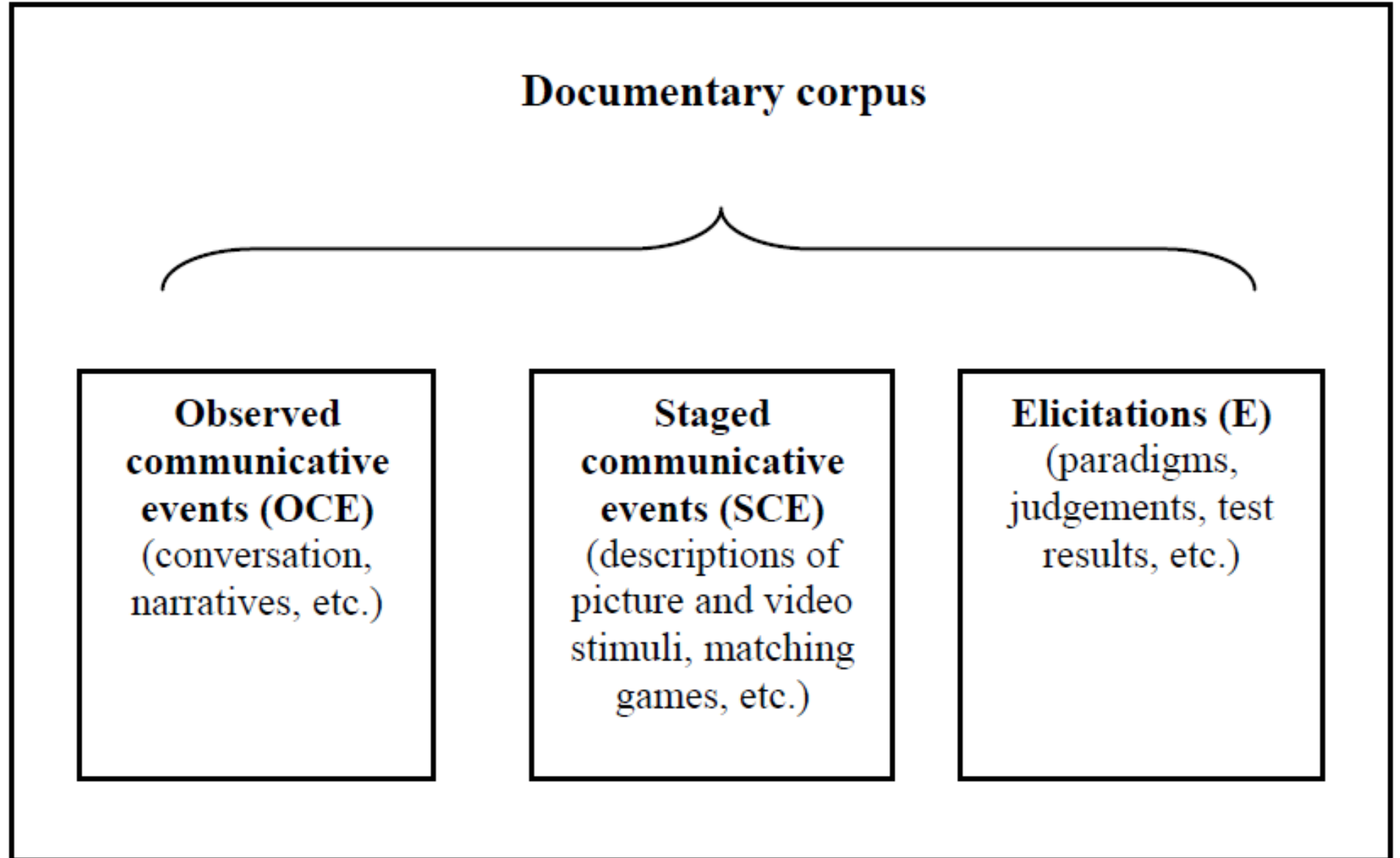
Oratory: Public speaking, or of speaking eloquently according to rules or conventions. Examples: sermons, lectures, political speeches, and invocations.

Other: Drama, Ludic Discourse, Singing, Unintelligible Speech.

HOW TO COLLECT DATA FOR A LANGUAGE DOCUMENTATION (FOCUS ON SPOKEN LANGUAGE)

- How can we make people talk?
- How can we trigger certain discourse types?
- How can we elicit certain linguistic data (vocabulary, grammatical constructions)?

Lüpke
(2010)
after
Himmelmann
(1998)



«SCEs have no immediate ecological validity: they are communicative events ‘staged’ for the purpose of the research. In that respect, they are very close to elicitations, which are also brought about through direct influence of researchers and motivated by their research interests only. On the other hand, SCEs do not involve direct linguistic influence, since speakers are free to elaborate at will on a verbal prompt like ‘Tell me how you pick mangoes, please’ or to describe a visual prompt in their own words.»
(Lüpke 2010)

THE (NARRATIVE, SOCIOLINGUISTIC) INTERVIEW

- ❖ Who is a good interviewer?
- ❖ What should interviewers avoid?
- ❖ What are good topics?
- ❖ How can we make interviewees «forget» about the interview situation? (and why should we?)

Labov, William. 1972. Some principles of linguistic methodology. *Language in Society* 1: 97-120

NATALIA SCHILLING: SURVEYS AND INTERVIEWS (2013)

«[...] it really is difficult to devise a better instrument than the sociolinguistic interview in terms of efficiently obtaining large quantities of high-quality recorded speech that closely approximates everyday speech. [...] most researchers have found that interviewer control readily falls away, as interviewees warm up to their topics and as interviewers realize that in the field they are no longer the 'experts' they may be in the academy, but rather are 'learners' who must cede power to their research participants, the only ones who hold expert knowledge of the communities of study» (111)

In: R. J. Podesva & D. Sharma: Research methods in linguistics. CUP

STAGING CONVERSATIONS AND DIALOGS

❖ Prompts for group conversations: Examples from the MPI fieldmanuals:

How people reason about moral: Gunter Senft (2003)

<http://fieldmanuals.mpi.nl/volumes/2003-1/reasoning-in-language/>

How people talk about kinship: Enfield & Levinson (2003)

<http://fieldmanuals.mpi.nl/volumes/2003-1/interview-on-kinship/>

❖ Tasks, for example Map Task

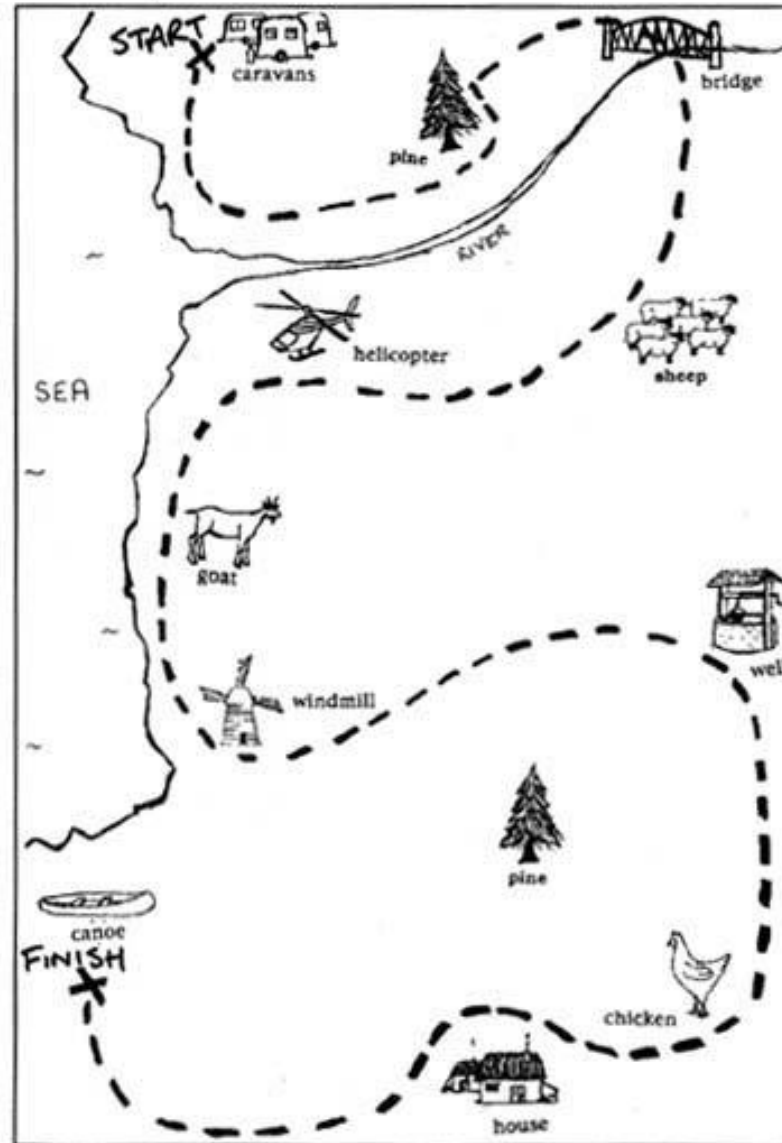
<http://groups.inf.ed.ac.uk/maptask/index.html>

EXAMPLE STORY FROM SENFT (2003): PROMPT FOR «REASONING» IN A CONVERSATION

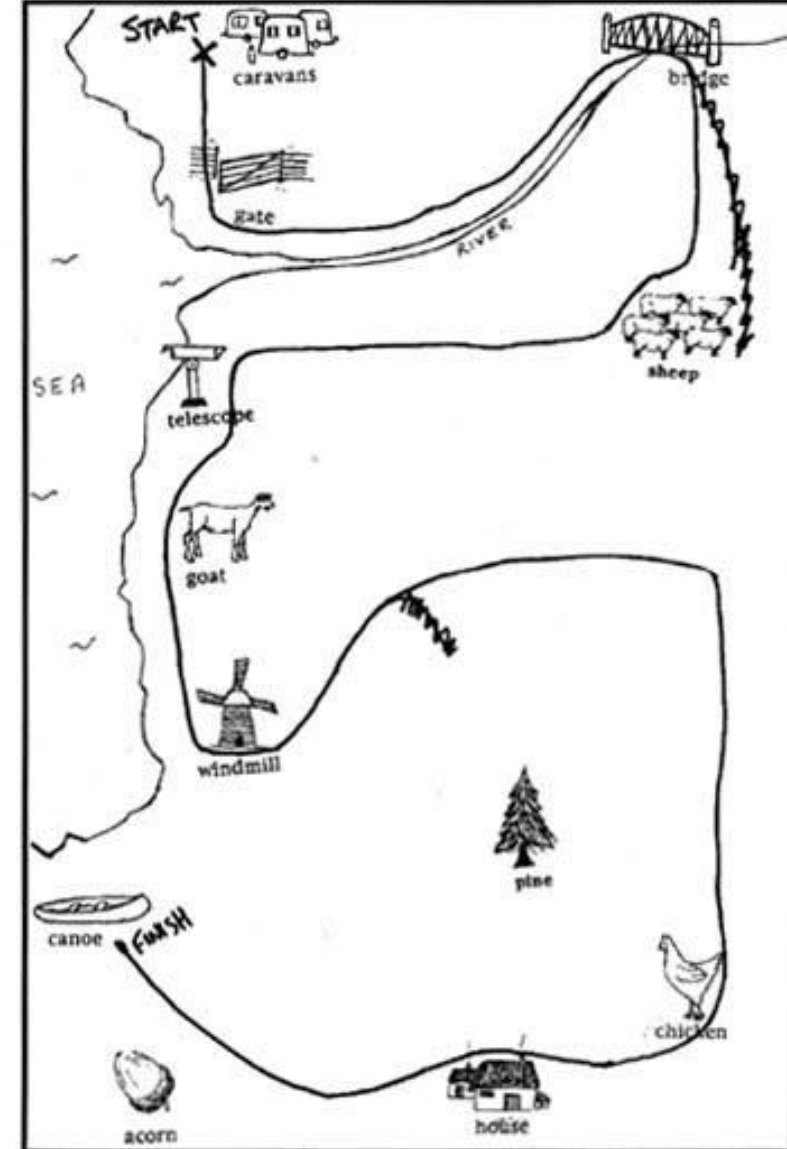
Once upon a time there was a rich man, but all the other people did not have any money whatsoever. Once the poor people from the village came to him and wanted to sell fish (or corn, yams, whatever) to him because they needed the money for a feast. The rich man told them that he would buy lobsters and pay five Kina (or whatever) for each lobster. The people went fishing and caught many lobsters, but when they wanted to sell them to the rich man, he said he would pay them only three Kina for one lobster. What will the people do now?

Map #1A (Caravans): Maps from Aphasic Dialogue between GM & MB

IG's Map



IF's map



Example
for the
Map
Task

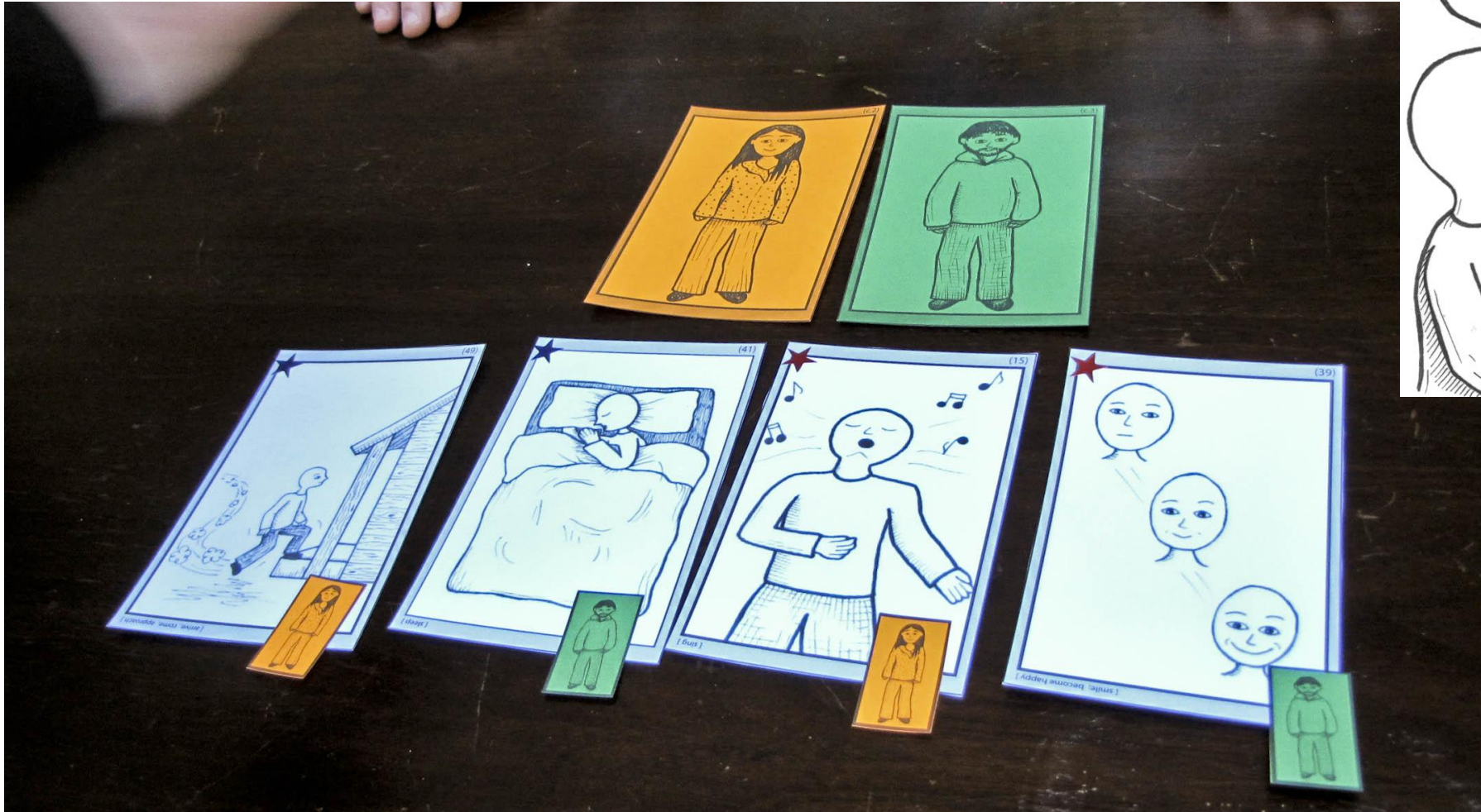
STAGING NARRATIVES WITH STIMULI

- picture prompts: create stories with pictures, cards, objects...
- retelling a picture book, ex. “Frog, Where are you?” by Mayer (1969) – «**Frog stories**» (book available here: [https://www.phil-fak.uni-duesseldorf.de/fileadmin/Redaktion/Institute/Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft/Frogstory-2_01.pdf](https://www.phil-fak.uni-duesseldorf.de/fileadmin/Redaktion/Institute/Allgemeine_Sprachwissenschaft/Frogstory-2_01.pdf))
- retelling films (ex. «**Pear story**», by Wallace Chafe in the 197, see <http://www.pearstories.org/>)

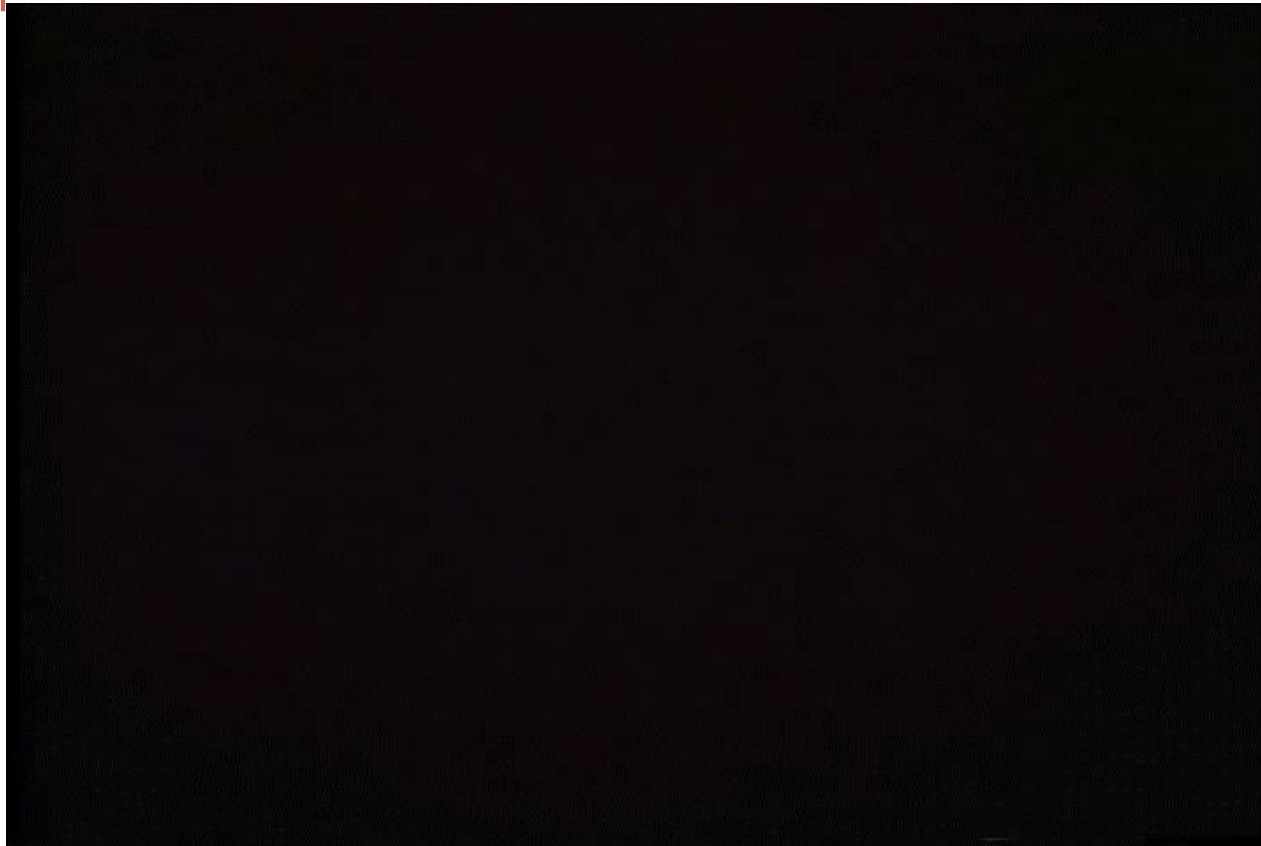
More controlled stories

- Provide a version of a well-known story (such as Cinderella)
- Translate a written story into your language
- Read and paraphrase a written story

STORYBUILDER.CA



PEAR STORIES (WWW.PEARSTORIES.ORG)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bRNSTxTpG7U>

- 1.1 All right,
- 1.2 well--,
- 1.3 the first scene is about [.9]
there's a man up in the tree.
- 2.1 It's a pear tree..and u--h it shows him ..
he's[.35] picking the pears.
- 3.1 [1.l[.7]A--nd]he's not really ..
doesn't seem to be paying all that much attention
[.55?because [.45]you know the pears fall,
and..he doesn't really notice,
- 3.2 [1.6?and [.5]]anyway,
- 3.3 he comes down with a load of pears,
- 3.4 and he[.25]puts them into the basket,



these sound files are here (material for
Chapter 10): <http://titus.uni-frankfurt.de/ld/>

STAGING DESCRIPTIONS, EXPLANATIONS

EXAMPLE: BIRCHBARK DISHES IN NEGIDAL

[HTTPS://ELAR.SOAS.AC.UK/RECORD/MPT1084914](https://elar.soas.ac.uk/record/mpt1084914)

«Daria Nadeina shows four birchbark vessels, explains how they are made and what they are used for. This was recorded in the living room of Daria Nadeina's house. The recording was planned – while photographing drying fish skins one day BP noticed birch bark vessels in a corner and had asked Daria Nadeina to tell about their uses in Negidal.»

«Furthermore, we are depositing 10 photos of the vessels, plus a transcribed audio file recorded during clarification of the transcription and glosses, in which DIN explains how and why they weigh down the collected birchbark.»

ELICITATION OF WORDS AND SENTENCES

- ❖ translational elicitation

- ❖ word lists

- ❖ questionnaires with sentences -> example: „Wenker Sätze“ for German dialects (<https://regionalsprache.de/>)

- ❖ scenario questionnaire -> example: Östen Dahl, questionnaire on tense and aspect (https://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/tools-at-lingboard/pdf/Dahl_Tense&aspectsystems.pdf)

- ❖ giving contexts

«When you get something done that was hard work all by yourself and your friend was standing around without helping, you say _____.»

(from the Linguistic Atlas of the Gulf States, cited after Schilling 2013: 102)

❖ **non-translational elicitation**

- ❖ using stimuli, e.g. films (see <http://fieldmanuals.mpi.nl>)
- ❖ using the object language

Example: MPI video clips on „Cut and break“

Videos on YouTube:

Fieldwork in India (from minute 9: use of the Cut and break videos; from minute 21: elicitation of words)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JF5Vjtzl6qE>

Daniel Everett, Monolingual fieldwork

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sYpWp7g7XWU>

REFERENCES (RECOMMENDED READING)

Lüpke, Friederike. 2010. “Research Methods in Language Documentation.” In *Language Documentation and Description*, edited by Austin, Peter K., 7:55–104. London: SOAS.

Friederike Lüpke’s slides at: http://www.powershow.com/view/51472-ZmZIM/Fieldwork_consultation_and_elicitation_methods_powerpoint_ppt_presentation

Foley, William A. 2003. “Genre, Register and Language Documentation in Literate and Preliterate Communities.” In *Language Documentation and Description*, edited by Peter K. Austin, 1:85–98. London: SOAS.

Nathalie Schilling: Surveys and interviews (in: Podesva & Sharma, eds. 2013. *Research Methods in Linguistics*)