



# Elicitation in linguistic fieldwork – or how to capture a speaker's view of the world

Annika Tjuka

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

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# Overview

Linguistic fieldwork

Elicitation

Materials

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Study of the Vietnamese tense system

Conclusion

# Linguistic fieldwork

# Linguistic fieldwork

What would a linguist do?

- ▶ go to a remote island and document an unknown language
- ▶ meet with an informant in an office and collect data of her native language

## Linguistic fieldwork in Berlin

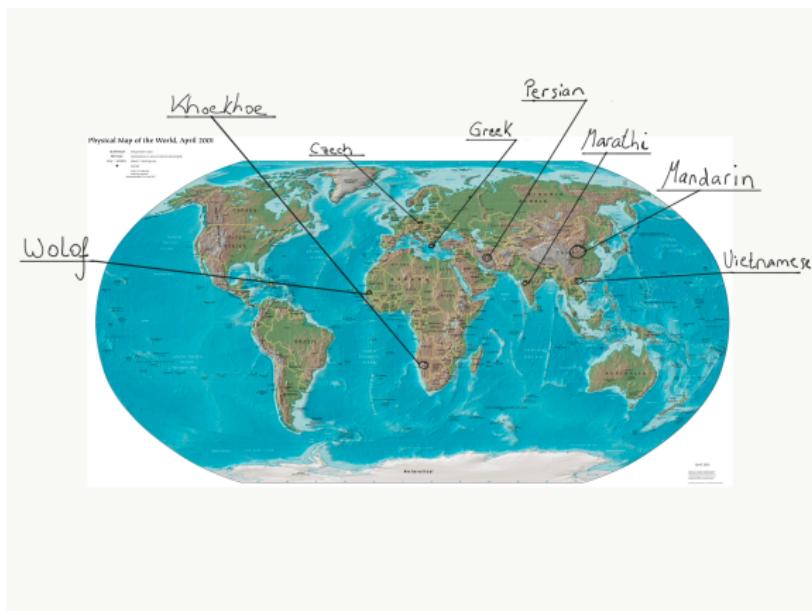


Figure: Map of the languages I investigate in my Master's thesis.

# Elicitation

# Elicitation

- ▶ not just a simple translation task
- ▶ generate natural, not frequent contexts
- ▶ collect data of targeted linguistic structures

## Elicitation Materials

# Elicitation material - MelaTAMP project

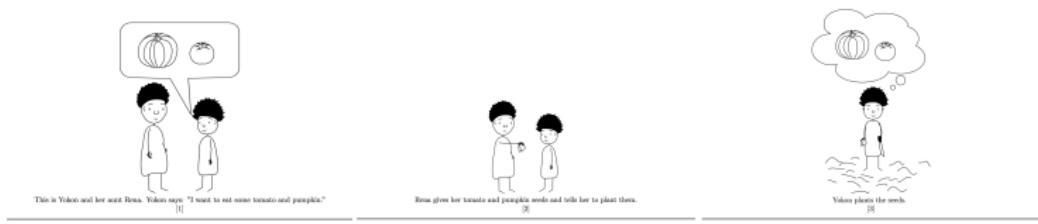


Figure: Story board "Tomato and Pumpkin" (von Prince 2018).

## Elicitation material - Master's thesis

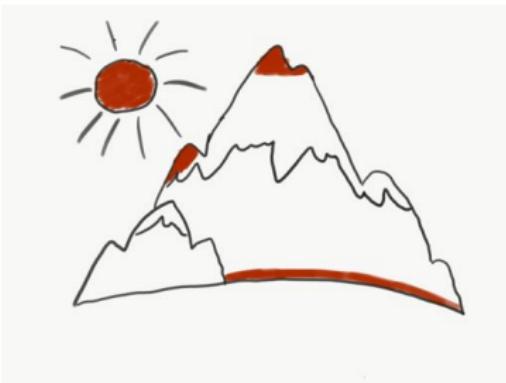
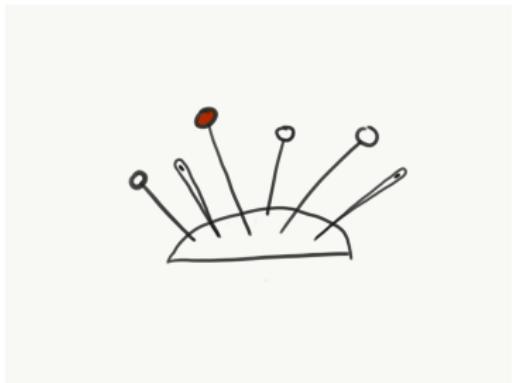


Figure: Sketches of the metaphors "Stecknadelkopf" and "the foot of the mountain".

## Elicitation material - Study of the Vietnamese tense system

Sarah and Joe are looking through a photo album. Sarah sees a photo of Joe standing in front of the Statue of Liberty. Sarah asks Joe: „Did you go to New York last year?“ Joe answers:  
**„Yes, I went to New York last year.“**

## Data processing

## Data processing

- ▶ annotating the audio files in ELAN



```
\ref 06043.002
\tx matiu mostat ai ro ne,
\mb m"atiu mo- stat ai ro ne
\ge coconut 3sg- start one then uh
\ps n      agr- vi   pro conj interj
\ft the coconuts started there, then

\clause assertion
\time past
\mood factual
\event bounded
\polarity positive
```

- ▶ tagging the data to make it searchable



- ▶ making the data available in e.g. ANNIS

# Study of the Vietnamese tense system

## Tense and aspect in Vietnamese

Vietnamese is known to be a tenseless language. BUT there are tense and aspect markers in Vietnamese:

- ▶ *sẽ* (future marker)
- ▶ *đã* (past marker)
- ▶ *đang* (progressive marker)

## Research questions

- ▶ Do Vietnamese native speakers use tense and aspect markers in spoken conversations?
- ▶ And if so, are these markers optional or obligatory in contexts which differ in terms of time reference and aspect?

## Participants

- ▶ 3 male participants, all Vietnamese native speakers with English as their second language (after the age of 6)
- ▶ Age: 18-25 years
- ▶ One speaker of the northern dialect and two speakers of the southern dialect

## Elicitation study – Results

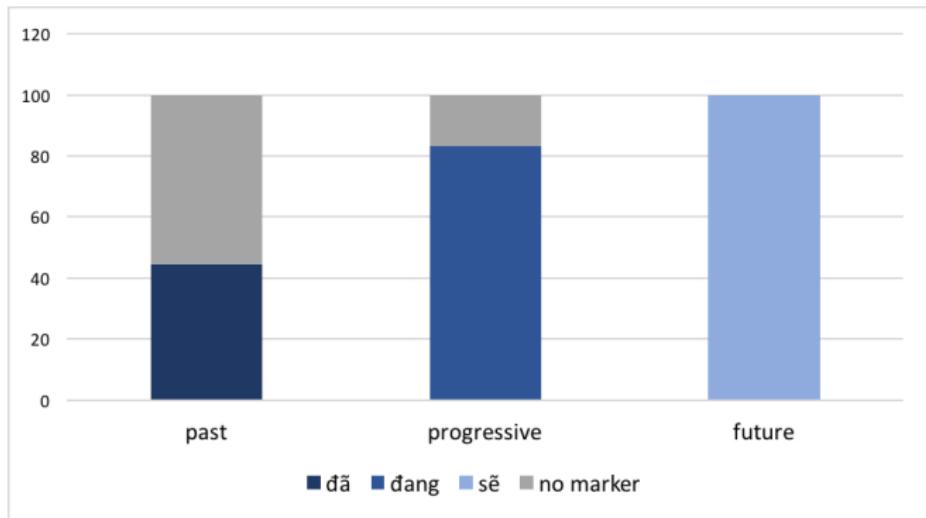


Figure: Results of elicitation study

## Results

- ▶ optionality of tense and aspect markers in Vietnamese differs clearly between markers
- ▶ further research on the future marker *sẽ* could prove that it is obligatory → supporting the hypothesis that Vietnamese isn't a tenseless language after all

# Conclusion

## Conclusion

- ▶ for linguistic fieldwork you don't necessarily have to go to far places
- ▶ elicitation helps us to investigate a certain linguistic phenomenon
- ▶ it is important to work in an ethical manner with respect to the language, the community, and the profession (Bowern 2008)
- ▶ in working with different languages we get a clearer picture how humans can view the world

## References

- ▶ Bowern, Claire (2008): Linguistic fieldwork: A practical guide. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- ▶ Tjuka, Annika (tbd.): Body part metaphors as a window to cognition: A cross-linguistic study of object and landscape terms. unpublished.
- ▶ von Prince, Kilu (2018): Tomato and Pumpkin (MelaTAMP storyboards). doi: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1231836>

## Pictures

- ▶ <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datei:Weltkarte.jpg>
- ▶ [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Multimodal\\_Annotation\\_-\\_Example\\_with\\_Grenelle\\_Corpus.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Multimodal_Annotation_-_Example_with_Grenelle_Corpus.png)
- ▶ <https://wikis.hu-berlin.de/melatamp/Tagset>
- ▶ <http://corpus-tools.org/annis/>