

or pictures of the same sort). This helps orient the participant to what it is that you are hoping to get from them. It is an important step, because the kind of description you get can be qualitatively different when the consultant does not know what is expected of them.

2.4.2 What procedures can I use to elicit descriptions?

The simplest method is free description. Show participants the stimuli and ask them to describe the relevant stimulus. You can use the stimulus materials to elicit metalinguistic judgements too. As well as knowing what the most salient description is, you may wish to establish whether another descriptor could be used with that stimulus. This can be useful data but, as discussed in the Introduction, there are limitations to this method of data gathering. To illustrate, Labov (1978) showed speakers line drawings of containers and then asked them either to describe the dishes or to judge whether a drawing could be labelled *cup* or *mug*. He found that the data from free descriptions could be scaled to produce a perfect set of implication hierarchies. But explicit judgements did not show this regularity and were much messier overall (although see Malt et al. 2008 for a case where naming data and judgements do converge to reveal category structure).

It is important, however, not to mix procedures. If you are collecting free descriptions, do not ask explicit metalinguistic questions in the middle of the procedure. By asking for a reflective answer, you change the task from a purely linguistic task to a metalinguistic one, which can encourage strategic responding (see e.g. the discussion in Hellwig 2006). If you want to do both, complete the free description task, and then go back and ask for any metalinguistic judgements later. Always run free description tasks before any metalinguistic tasks, for the same reasons.

Another method to collect language data is to use a ‘matching game’ (Clark and Wilkes-Gibbs 1986). In this procedure, you have two sets of the non-linguistic stimuli and two participants. One set of materials is given to a ‘director’, the other set to a ‘matcher’. They are screened off from one another so that they cannot see each other's stimuli. The director has to describe the materials one at a time such that the matcher can find the corresponding stimulus in their own set. Since participants are screened from each other, they have to rely purely on the verbal descriptions to complete the task. They can discuss each stimulus as long as they like, until they are both satisfied that they have a match, at which point they set aside that match and move on to the next one. When all stimuli are ‘matched’, the barrier between the participants is lifted and the consultants can compare their cards to see how many matched. This method will produce rich linguistic responses. The procedure eliminates the researcher from the linguistic interaction, and so speakers are interacting with each other in a free manner, and without having to tailor their language for a non-native speaker. Under this procedure, the speech event is no longer an interview but rather a collaborative endeavor between native speakers. Because the game is the focus, rather than the linguistic response, it is highly unlikely that consultants will be engaging in any kind of metalinguistic responding. So there are advantages to this method over a standard free description paradigm. On the other hand, there are limitations. The responses will not be as standard and therefore it can make interpretation trickier. The practicalities involved may also be difficult: two consultants need to be coordinated, the screen and recording need to be in place, you must monitor the matches/mismatches, etc.

2.4.3 How should I record the responses?

The ideal way to record responses is with an audio or video recording. Trying to note what people are saying while they are saying them is slow, clumsy, and error-prone. It slows down the elicitation process, and in the worst-case scenario participants will produce responses tailored to your activity. They produce simpler formulations because they see that you are struggling to write down what they are saying. Moreover, you have to make on-the-fly decisions about what the relevant response token is. By recording responses, you can later, with reflection, parcel out the bits of the response that are of interest.