



The Oxford Handbook of Linguistic Fieldwork

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CHAPTER

2 A Guide to Stimulus-Based Elicitation for Semantic Categories

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Abstract

Fieldwork is the collection of primary data outside of the controlled environments of the laboratory or library, and is the province of many scientists: biologists, geologists, anthropologists, as well as linguists. Traditional linguistic fieldwork has relied heavily on elicitation and observation, with a view to producing a grammar, dictionary, and texts. This is often accompanied by mining texts, i.e., narratives by speakers, for naturalistic examples. This sort of data can fruitfully elucidate lexical and constructional resources within a language, their formal properties, the kinds of expressions that occur, and so on. The article sets out a guide to the various stages of constructing a non-linguistic stimulus set in order to investigate semantic categories within a language. This should furnish a novice to this field with some of the key concepts and issues so that they can construct their own study. The focus in this article is how to use non-linguistic stimuli for a more thorough investigation of local semantic categories. Semantics is at the heart of linguistic description. The field linguist attempts to identify the sound units that convey distinctions in meaning — the lexical and grammatical classes that can be grouped together and distinguished for function, and so on. The bulk of this article sets out a guide to the various stages of constructing a non-linguistic stimulus set in order to investigate semantic categories within a language. This should furnish a novice to this field with some of the key concepts and issues so that they can construct their own study.

Keywords: [data collection](#), [semantics](#), [non-linguistic stimulus](#), [linguistic fieldwork](#), [lexical resource](#)

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