

3. With the **sentence completion** technique, the investigator chooses a sentence from the existing corpus, removes parts of it, and asks the consultant to complete the sentence by adding anything that seems appropriate. This technique can, for example, be employed to elicit different types of complement or adverbial clauses, or to investigate the use of tense, aspect, and mood categories in complex sentences (Samarin 1967: 83).
4. The greatest variety of expressions can be elicited by asking the consultants to **create example sentences** for a particular word. Since there is always the danger that created examples sound unnatural, the best results are achieved when two or three native speakers work together. The disadvantage of this method is that the researcher has no control over the kinds of grammatical constructions the native speakers might use. On the other hand, these freely created utterances may reveal unexpected constructions that the researcher would never have thought of.
5. ↳ **Transformational elicitation** means that the interviewee is asked to transform one type of construction into another one, e.g. affirmative clauses into negative ones, statements into questions by asking ‘what would you say if this was not true?’ or ‘what would you ask if you did not know that it was X?’
6. The most difficult kind of elicitation is the **elicitation of paradigms**, but it is indispensable for inflecting languages, as even very large corpora do not supply all forms needed for a comprehensive presentation of inflectional paradigms in a reference grammar. I would recommend applying the substitution method first to parts of the paradigm and then, on the basis of the elicited data, explaining to the consultants what a paradigm is. One or the other consultant might then understand the nature of paradigms and be able to construct them by themselves. For example, one could first take a simple clause in the past tense with a 3rd person singular subject from the data, e.g. ‘the woman cooked the potatoes’, and ask the consultants to substitute 1st and 2nd person singular subjects for ‘the woman’ to make them aware of the grammatical category of person, then transform the singular arguments into plural arguments to understand how the category of number is formally expressed, and eventually substitute a few other verbs for the verb ‘cook’. After several of these past tense paradigms have been completed, one could ask what people would say to express that the woman always, now, or tomorrow would cook potatoes to elicit other tense/aspect categories. Bowerman (2008: 89f.) observes that consultants react very differently to paradigm elicitation, and that it might be necessary to do them ‘in small batches on different days, combined with other topics’.

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### 3.5.2.5 Shortcomings of elicitation

All fieldworkers agree that elicitation is a useful tool to quickly gather data in a controlled way, but that it cannot serve as the sole empirical basis for the grammatical analysis and description of a language. There are two reasons.

First, by definition, elicitation only provides examples of decontextualized isolated sentences, whereas natural speech is always embedded in the context of a particular speech situation. Consequently, elicited examples cannot show how the meaning of linguistic units is shaped by their context. Furthermore, elicitation fails to uncover any structures that only occur in contexts larger than sentences.

Second, elicitation focuses on certain linguistic phenomena the researchers are particularly interested in, so that they run the risk of missing those grammatical categories and constructions they have been unaware of (Chelliah 2001: 156; Gil 2001: 115). Mithun concludes:

But if the research is limited to eliciting translations of English vocabulary and syntactic constructions, collecting grammaticalities and checking off known typological diagnostics, we may