



THE TOY GAME: A FIELD TECHNIQUE FOR COLLECTING NATURAL CONVERSATION AND PROSODY

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Toy Game protocol

Two players sit on opposite sides of a table with an occlusion between them, so that they cannot see each other. Each player is mic'ed, the recording device set up for stereo. Ideally, the session is also video-taped.

On the table in front of them is a sheet of paper and some small objects: toy animals, cups, other things. The objects themselves do not matter, as long as they are familiar to the players, and preferably there are a few of at least one or two of the items. It is also preferable to have some objects that can be put inside or on top of each other. The sheets of paper have three shapes drawn on it, circle, square, triangle. Both sheets are the same. Anything can be used here, this is simply the ground for placement of the objects.

The goal of the game is for both players to have the same arrangements on their sheets. How players proceed can be given some leeway, but in general players accomplish the task by taking turns asking questions, starting with one player, then the second player gets a turn. Turn taking is done to insure that both players are participating in as full a range of discourse as possible.

To begin: Players agree on the names of the items.

Object placement: The experimenter places an occlusion between the speakers and places items on each player's paper. The players cannot see each other's sheets and do not know if they have the same items or number of items, or where they are.

Three games are played

Part 1

This is a warm up game. The two players have the same items and same arrangement. Approximately 5 toys are used.

Part 2

The two players have same items and different arrangements, still using a small number of toys.

Part 3

Increase the number of toys. Players have different items, different arrangements.

It is our experience that people enjoy playing this game and understand it as a language game.