

## **“Language Situations”: Targeting register-bound choices for contact dialects**

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For dialects belonging to informal registers, it is notoriously difficult to elicit data that is representative of speakers’ natural behaviour. Controlled methods such as grammaticality judgments or picture matching yield diverging results, even with peer-group fieldworkers (Buchstaller/Corrigan 2011). Furthermore, as Polinsky (2015) points out for heritage dialects, responses require critical thinking about language that can be challenging for informal dialect use. This problem is particularly pronounced for new dialects emerging in contact settings, which will often be perceived as “incorrect” language. Elicitation methods, such as description tasks, sociolinguistic interviews, or group discussions, provide more naturalistic data; however, they still tap into only a small part of speakers’ repertoires. Ethnographic methods and self-recordings yield broader data, but since speakers’ (socio-)linguistic behaviour is not controlled, the amount of data must be considerable to be informative for analyses, making this costly in terms of time and money.

In our paper, we describe a “Language Situations” method that combines the advantages of controlled elicitations with those of spontaneous data collection. In this design, participants are familiarised with a fictional event. They are asked to imagine being a witness to this event and describe it by acting out different communicative situations. We show that the method is powerful enough to yield comparable, naturalistic data, and register-bound choices for the same speaker, e.g., noncanonical verb-third order in an urban German contact-dialect setting, vs. standard verb-second in formal language use:

- (1) “Danach        ich höre so        Bamm.”  
         afterwards I        hear such.a boom
- (2) “Dann lag    sie    halt auf dem Boden.”  
         then    lay she    just on the floor

We discuss results of applying this method to investigate linguistic innovations in contact dialects associated with multilingual peer-groups, focussing on evidence from different language-contact settings for German, in Germany and Namibia.