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Background
The field manuals were originally intended as working documents for internal use only. They were supplemented by verbal instructions and additional guidelines in many cases. If you have questions about using the materials, or comments on the viability in various field situations, feel free to get in touch with the authors.

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6. Picture series for positional verbs:
Eliciting the verbal component in locative descriptions[1]

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(with an appendix by Stephen C. Levinson)

Purpose

This elicitation instrument is similar to the Topological Relations Picture Series[2] in that it was also designed to help researchers to (i) identify a language's resources for encoding static topological relations; (ii) delimit the pragmatics of use of such resources; and (iii) determine the semantics of select spatial terms. The current instrument, however, is intended to complement the findings from the earlier series. The focus here is on the exploration of the predicative component, rather than the 'adpositional' component, in locative descriptions, especially the contrastive elicitation of positional verbs in locative descriptions.

The starting point is the typology of languages proposed by David Wilkins (Annual Report 1998) on the basis of the predicates that occur in a language's Basic Locative Construction (BLC). This typology was slightly modified by Steve Levinson. According to Levinson's version of the typology, the first language type distinguished does not use any verb in the BLC (Type 0). The second language type uses a single (general) predicate in the BLC (Type I). There are two subtypes: Type I a, languages that use a Copula such as English, Tamil and German, and Type I b, languages in which a dedicated locative verb is used in the BLC, e.g. Ewe, Chinese and Turkish. The third language type includes languages like Likpe and Tzeltal in which there is a large or unlimited set of verbs used in the BLC (Type II). Finally, there are languages like Arremte, Rossel, Goemai and Dutch in which a small set of three or four contrasting positional or posture verbs are used in the BLC (Type III). Specific hypotheses concerning each of these types have been put forward by Levinson, and these form the relevant intellectual background to the design and understanding of the current elicitation instrument. These hypotheses have been included in an appendix to this chapter.

The present elicitation tool is meant to aid researchers working especially on languages of Type II and III identify the relevant verbs and to help verify and expand on some of the hypotheses that have been developed so far with respect to such languages. For single verb languages such as English, Ewe or Turkish, the tool can help researchers document and understand positional verbs in the language and how the use of these may contrast with the use of the general verb in the BLC. For instance, some of the photos in this series have elicited the verb 'drape' in English as a more explicit description of figure-ground relationship. That is, a general description like "The strip of cloth is on the edge of the basket" can have a more specific descriptive counterpart "The strip of cloth is draped over the edge of the basket". In short, this tool should assist us in getting a clearer understanding of the uses, dimensions and prototype structure of positional or spatial configurational verbs in the languages we work on.

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[2] The Topological Relations Picture Series, originally designed by Melissa Bowerman and expanded in collaboration with Eric Pederson, has become known informally as "Bow-Ped". The first description of the task appears in Space Stimuli Kit 1.2, but a more explicit description written by Eric Pederson, David Wilkins and Melissa Bowerman is also available.

Design

The Picture Series for Positional Verbs consists of a (randomly ordered[3]) series of 68 photographs of real objects in specific configurations (in this way it differs from the Topological Relations Picture Series which uses line drawings). Each picture depicts a relation between a Figure and a Ground. We have tried to keep the objects as culturally neutral as possible, and we have placed a small and constant set of Figures in various relations to a small and constant set of Grounds. The Figures are: stick; beans, cassava roots; rope; cloth; ball; pot; and bottle. The Grounds are: rock, the ground, tree, tree stump, table, and basket.[4] The intention is not to simply elicit descriptions of each photo, but rather to use the picture series to stimulate discussion about how to linguistically represent such relationships. That is, the photographs are primarily intended as examples of the relationships.

The Figures were selected according to a number of factors. One of these is the number of main axes involved: 1-Dimensional, e.g. stick, 2-Dimensional, e.g. cloth, or 3-Dimensional, e.g. bottle or pot. Another factor is whether there is a canonical orientation inherent to the figure or object. Thus bottles and pots have such an orientation but balls do not. Other factors had to do with whether the Figure is a natural (e.g., cassava (root)) or a cultural kind (e.g. bottle); whether it is rigid (e.g. stick) or flexible (e.g. rope, cloth); and whether it is 'tall' (e.g. bottle) or 'squat' (e.g. pot). Another major variation across figures was whether there was only one Figure object or whether there were several Figure objects (e.g. one stick versus two sticks versus three or more sticks).

Some relevant features of the Ground object were also consciously varied. Thus we have used natural entities (e.g. rock) as well as artifacts (e.g. table). Another consideration was whether the Ground object was a container (e.g. basket) or a flat surface (e.g. table) or whether it is the ground (e.g. earth or floor).

As far as the relations between the figure and the Ground are concerned, a number of oppositions are represented. The range of constantly varying positional relations was inspired by the inventory of a multi-verb Type II language which uses about 10 positional verbs in its Basic Locative Construction. The positional relations that the photos have tried to instantiate may be roughly captured by the English glosses: 'be (sitting) on', 'stand', 'lie', 'hang from', 'dangle over', 'lean', 'be across', 'be (contained) in', 'be next to and touching', 'be fixed (planted) in'.

One issue of concern is what positional verb description is used when multiple figures are in mixed positions. Thus, in a number of cases where multiple Figures are related to one Ground, some are in one position and others are in another position (e.g.

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[3] In ordering the pictures, we have avoided grouping seemingly similar scenes together, to forestall the formation of a "set" on the speaker's part, and, more generally, to minimize effects of sequencing on speakers' intuitions.

[4] To be more precise, we should be talking about general Figure types and general Ground types, since the actual instantiation of each of the Figures and Grounds may be variable across photographs. That is to say, a Figure labeled "cloth", for instance, is represented in the pictures by 'a strip of red cloth', 'a dish cloth' (a tea towel), and 'a table cloth'. Similarly, a Ground labeled 'ground', for instance, includes 'dirt ground' and 'brick pavement'. These variations could easily be viewed by speakers as distinct types, and so researchers must be aware of this variation. Ideally the Figure and Ground tokens would have remained the same across all photos, but this proved impractical.

Photo 46: Seven bottles on a table, 4 lying and 3 standing). This is meant to elicit the presuppositional vs. the assertive use of the verbs, especially in Type III languages (i.e., in a language where one among several positional verbs must be selected a speaker might be able to felicitously say "There are seven bottles standing on the table, four are lying and three are standing" since the first use of 'stand' is the canonical existential for bottles while the second is the specific assertive use).

Table 1 gives an overview of the range of distinctions covered by the pictures. Since there are numerous gaps in the grid, researchers can use this table to help generate further distinctions to elicit. An ordered list of the photos, giving information regarding figure, figure quantity, ground, and "relation" is provided at the end of this chapter.

FIGURES

	stick	rope	cloth	bottle	pot	cassavas	beans	ball
basket	across: (43-sg) leaning: (13-sg)	across: (19-sg) dangling over: (63-sg) hanging: (27-sg)	across: (24-sg) dangling over: (2-sg "strip") (16-sg "full")	in (lying): (22-sg) in (standing): (62-sg) (67-sg) mixed postions (upright and upside down: (60-pl)		lying: (53-pl) mixed postions (standing/lying): (5-pl)		in: (56-dl)
tree stump	across: (61-sg) leaning:(31-sg) fixed upright: (38-sg)	across: (54-sg) dangling: (45-sg) around: (36-sg)	on: (34-sg) leaning: (68-sg)		on: (12-sg) next to and touching: (40-sg)	on (lying): (23-sg) (47-pl) next to and touching:(65-pl)		
table	across: (17-sg) lying: (6-sg)	dangling: (41-sg)	on: (4-sg folded) dangling/hanging: (49-sg) hanging/lying: (30-sg) lying: (14-sg)	lying: (37-sg) (52-pl) mixed positions (standing/lying): (46-pl)			on: (25-pl)	on: (8-pl)(18-pl) (21-sg)
tree	across: (66-sg) leaning: (1-sg) hanging from: (55-sg)	across: (57-sg) hanging from: (33-sg)	hanging from: (59-sg) (64-sg)		"hanging in": (29-sg upside down) (48-sg upright)			in: (44-sg)
rock	across: (35-sg)	across: (3-sg) around: (15-sg)	lying: (32-sg)	standing: (10-sg) lying: (26-sg)				on: (50-sg)
ground ("earth')	in: (9-dl)(20-sg)			fixed in: (28-pl) (58-sg)		lying: (42-pl) (51-pl)	on: (11-pl)	on: (7-sg)(39-pl)

(left margin label: **G R O U N D S**)

TABLE 1 (number of pictures given in brackets followed by indication of singularity versus plurality of figure)

Number of consultants
For comparability minimally three, preferably five and ideally ten

Procedure
Sessions should be audiotaped, if possible. (Videotaping is unnecessary unless there is a secondary research question for which this would be appropriate.) Allow at least 3 hours per consultant to complete the whole series. There is no need to exhaust the speaker, the task can be done over several sessions.

For each picture, the intended Figure object has been identified by a term at the bottom of the page, and this is followed immediately by a term in brackets giving the intended ground. Thus "21. ball (table)" indicates that in photograph 21 the intended figure is a ball and the intended ground is a table.

Since the relations are more important than the pictures in this task, the researcher should i) carefully look through all the pictures before embarking on a session, ii) identify which objects or uses of objects are likely to be unfamiliar within the field situation, and iii) think of reasonable alternative objects that would preserve the original intended relation and Figure-Ground parameters.

Just as for the Topological Relations Picture Series, we are interested in responses to the search question "Where is X?" (X = Figure). The pictures (or the locally appropriate alternatives) are shown to consultants and the search question is posed in the research language. The first response to such a question should be recorded but other ways of answering the same question with respect to the picture should also be explored. We are interested in full utterances so that we can adequately describe the predicative component in such responses to where questions. Try to maintain interest in alternative ways of saying things, and take breaks if necessary. The picture book explicitly represents a number of contrastive relationships and the researcher should exploit this. When the consultant uses a new expression, the researcher should ask whether it can also apply to already-discussed scenes that the researcher judges to be possibly relevant for the comparison.

. Researchers are urged to investigate descriptions of scenes that are not represented in the picture book. Wherever possible, real life objects should be used to elicit some of these alternates.

Further distinctions to elicit
It was not possible for us to include pictures that depicted certain scenes that we are particularly interested in. These fall into two types: (a) fire and water as ground; (b) containment of object in a cupboard or box such that the respondent cannot see the figure, but knows where it is (although they are not sure of the position). In the case of 'fire' and 'water' as ground, we are interested in naturally occurring grounds that provide an interesting contrast as far as 'containment' is concerned (will medium specific postural verbs emerge?). As far as 'closed' non-visible containment (in cupboard and box) are concerned, we are interested in default descriptions of the location of things like bottles and pots or cloth in a box or a cupboard irrespective of the position in which they are in the box. In this latter case one can explore whether knowledge of position versus mere knowledge of location makes a difference. The following table (Table 2) can help to generate relevant alternates.

FIGURES

GROUND		stick	rope	cloth	bottle	pot	cassavas	beans	ball
	fire	in:				suspend-ed above: on: in:	in:		
	water-	on: in: at bottom:	on: in: at bottom:	on: at bottom:	on: at bottom:			on in at bottom	on:
	cupboard			in:	in:	in:	in:		in:
	box			in:	in:	in:	in:		in:

TABLE 2

ORDERED LIST OF PHOTOS AND THEIR DESCRIPTION

Photo Number	Figure	Figure Quantity	Ground	"Relation"	Background
1.	stick	1; sg	tree	leaning	outside (woods)
2.	cloth	1; sg	basket	dangling over	outside (bricks)
3.	rope	1; sg	rock	across	outside (bricks)
4.	cloth	1: sg	table	on (folded)	inside (carpet)
5.	cassavas	7; pl	basket	mixed positions standing/lying	outside (woods)
6.	stick	1; sg	table	lying.	inside (carpet)
7.	ball	1; sg	ground (forest soil)	on	outside (woods)
8.	balls; 3 big ones, 5 small ones	8; pl	table	on	inside (carpet)
9.	sticks	2; dl	ground (forest soil)	in	outside (woods)
10.	bottle	1; sg	rock	standing	outside (bricks)
11.	beans	pl	ground (bricks)	on	outside
12.	pot	1; sg	tree stump	on (upside down)	outside (woods)
13.	stick	1; sg	basket	leaning	outside (woods)
14.	cloth	1; sg	table	on	inside (carpet)
15.	rope	1; sg	rock	around	outside (bricks)
16.	cloth	1; sg	basket	dangling	outside (bricks)
17.	stick	1; sg	table	across	inside (carpet)
18.	balls	5; pl	table	on	inside (carpet)
19.	rope	1; sg	basket	across	outside (bricks)
20.	stick	1; sg	ground (forest soil)	in	outside (woods)
21.	ball	1; sg	table	on	inside (carpet)
22.	bottle	1; sg	basket	in (lying)	outside (woods)
23.	cassava	1; sg	tree stump	on (lying)	outside (woods)
24.	cloth	1; sg	basket	across	outside (bricks)
25.	beans	pl	table	on	inside (carpet)
26.	bottle	1; sg	rock	on (lying)	outside (bricks)
27.	rope	1; sg	basket	hanging	outside (bricks)

28.	bottles	3; pl	ground	in	outside (woods)
29.	pot	1; sg	tree	"hanging in" (upside down)	outside (woods)
30.	cloth	1; sg	table	dangling over ?	inside (carpet)
31.	stick	1; sg	tree stump	leaning	outside (woods)
32.	cloth	1; sg	rock	lying	outside (bricks)
33.	rope	1; sg	tree	hanging from	outside (woods)
34.	cloth	1; sg	tree stump	on (folded)	outside (woods)
35.	stick	1; sg	rock	across	outside (bricks)
36.	rope	1; sg	tree stump	around	outside (woods)
37.	bottle	1; sg	table	on (lying)	inside (carpet)
38.	stick	1; sg	tree stump	fixed upright	outside (woods)
39.	balls; 3 big ones and 3 small ones	6; pl	ground	on	outside (woods)
40.	pot	1; sg	tree stump	next to and touching	outside (woods)
41.	rope	1; sg	table	dangling over	inside (carpet)
42.	cassavas	4; pl	ground (forest soil)	on (lying)	outside (woods)
43.	stick	1; sg	basket	across	outside
44.	ball	1; sg	tree	in	outside (woods)
45.	rope	1; sg	tree stump	dangling	outside (woods)
46.	bottles	7; pl	table	3 standing and 4 lying	inside (carpet)
47.	cassavas	3; pl	tree stump	on (lying)	outside (woods)
48.	pot	1; sg	tree	hanging in	outside (woods)
49.	cloth	1; sg	table	dangling/hanging	inside (carpet)
50.	ball	1; sg	rock	on	outside (bricks)
51.	cassavas	7; pl	ground (forest soil)	lying (on top of eachother)	outside (woods)
52.	bottles	7; pl	table	on (lying)	inside (carpet)
53.	cassavas	5; pl	basket	in (lying)	outside (woods)
54.	rope	1; sg	tree stump	across	outside (woods)
55.	stick	1; sg	tree	hanging from	outside (woods)
56.	balls	2; dl	basket	in	inside (carpet)
57.	rope	1; sg	tree	across	outside (woods)
58.	bottle	1; sg	ground	fixed in	outside (woods)
59.	cloth	1; sg	tree	hanging from	outside (woods)
60.	bottles	7; pl	basket	in: 4 standing upright and 3 standing upside down	outside (woods)
61.	stick	1; sg	tree stump	across	outside (woods)
62.	bottle	1; sg	basket	in (standing)	outside (woods)
63.	rope	1; sg	basket	dangling over	outside (bricks)
64.	cloth	1; sg	tree	hanging from	outside (woods)
65.	cassavas	5; pl	tree stump	next to and touching	outside (woods)
66.	stick	1; sg	tree	across	outside (woods)
67.	bottle	1; sg	basket	in (standing upside down)	outside (woods)
68.	cloth	1; sg	tree stump	leaning	outside (woods)