REGULATIONS ON USE

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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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'Fish traps' task

Nick Enfield

This task is designed to elicit virtual 3D 'models' created in gesture space using iconic and other representational gestures. This task has been piloted with Lao speakers, where two speakers were asked to explain the meaning of terms referring to different kinds of fish trap mechanisms. The task elicited complex performances involving a range of iconic gestures, and with especially interesting use of (a) the 'model/diagram' in gesture space as a virtual object, (b) the non-dominant hand as a prosodic/semiotic anchor, (c) a range of different techniques (indexical and iconic) for evoking meaning with the hand, and (d) the use of nearby objects and parts of the body as semiotic 'props'. (Contact Nick Enfield for elaboration of the background to, and results of, this task.)

Two Lao speakers spontaneously make identical two-handed gesture early in their descriptions of a *sòòn5* fish trap.

The basic procedure is to set up a pair of consultants for video recording, according to recommendations at the beginning of this field manual, and ask them to describe a number of artefacts of comparable size and complexity to the Lao fish traps—i.e. between the size of a human head and a human body, and with a range of different parts, with different functions. (Other example artefacts are engines, lathes, looms, traps, musical instruments—these will need to be determined depending on the culture and knowledge of consultants.) It may be most appropriate to work with people with specialist knowledge—then the task of explaining the mechanism involved is more likely to be a genuine communication task.

Each description need only be a minute or two long. It is recommended to record explanations from three speakers.

Please contact Nick Enfield if you run this task.