# Natural parallel data, clause linkage and psychosocial cognition: the Family Problems Picture Task.

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An important problem for typology is how to ensure the cross-linguistic comparability of data, while maximizing the naturalness and authenticity of the language sample. Questionnaires tend to generate stilted examples, and presuppose the set of categories to begin with. Standardised stimuli avoid translation problems, but become cumbersome when seeking to elicit multiclausal constructions. Parallel texts, such as translations of the Bible or Alice in Wonderland, are increasingly being used, but they too are skewed to some extent by the linguistic choices made in the original language. Perhaps the best method so far is to use movie or story book stimuli, like the Pear Stories or the Frog Story, but these cut out dialogue and remove speaker initiative.

In this paper I outline a data-gathering method which we have been developing as part of a project examining the way grammars encode categories of psychosocial cognition. This impacts on clause combining in a number of ways, most obviously in the encoding of complementation strategies (intimately involved in the representation of other minds, and more generally of mental attitudes), quotation constructions, purposive clauses, and certain types of adverbial clauses such as those encoding apprehension or sequences of events unexpected by the speaker or one of the described participants.

Our task involves a set of pictures (the 'Family Problems Picture Set'), that can be assembled into a coherent story in a number of possible ways. In the first stage, they are shown one at a time, in a randomised order, to pairs of speakers, who are given the task of describing their contents (often involving negotiation and inter-speaker questioning). In the second stage, the speakers are asked to work out the order in which the cards should be put – this often generates lively dialogue about causal and temporal relations, motives and causes and so forth. In the third stage, one or more additional speakers are brought in as an audience, and the first two speakers are asked to tell them the story they have assembled. In an optional fourth stage, this can be rerun but with the story told in the first person.

This task has a number of interesting characteristics, including the way it varies what information is given to the various parties at different stages, the way it calls forth alternations of dialogue and monologue, and the capturing of repetition, selection, streamlining and elaboration in the process of producing a story. Most importantly, it avoids taking any one language as a starting point for comparison, allowing speakers of each language to make their own selections in what information to include.

In this talk I will introduce the task in detail and outline a number of interesting results in the field of clause combining, drawing on data from a range of languages including Iwaidja, Dalabon, German, Duna and Japanese. By presenting this at the first full project meeting I hope to make available a data-gathering tool that other team members may find useful to use, in order to assemble a body of comparable cross-linguistic data for the project.