

Language Work Outside of Your Own Community

Spike Gildea & Jaime Pérez González

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Who are you? Who is “The Community”?

1. How do I prepare myself to conduct work on a language outside of my own community?

- Know yourself
 - Know why you’re there
 - Unpacking biases
 - Reflect on your positionality
 - Exploratory
- Know the community
 - Learn as much as you can about the community prior to work, but expect anything!
 - Try to visit the community before doing research there
 - Do your research — don’t expect the community to educate you
 - Understanding permissions (boundaries) and how dynamics change, looking at existing case studies
 - Build a relationship with the community to carry out a project that is beneficial to them at every step

2. Are there general principles that guide successful language work outside of my own community?

- Personal principles
 - Checking assumptions at the door
 - Being respectful and open to criticism
 - Be respectful (this will look different for every community)
 - Have an open mind
 - Be practical
- Principles of community engagement
 - Putting the community first
 - Centering the community
 - Make community needs a part of your goals
 - Knowing the language belongs to the community
 - Avoid language and practices that frame community as an object of study
- If someone wants to talk to you, go for it!

3. What ethical principles do I need to know about language work?

- About languages in language work
 - Treat languages holistically (not as objects of study)
 - Access restriction: who has access to the “material” stories
- About communities in language work
 - Permission
 - Respecting autonomy and sovereignty
 - Non-othering/exotifying
 - Don't impose personal culture to studied culture
 - Understand perspective
 - Non-transactional/ongoing relations
 - Don't trauma porn people
 - How to interact with members of the community in a polite way
 - Know the social codes (towards elders, for example)

4. What ethical principles do I need to know about the community?

- Know your history
 - The community's past experience with outsiders in language work
- Know how to treat people
 - Politeness/etiquette
 - Social dynamics across age/gender/etc.
 - Cultural norms/taboo
 - Respectful practices (intros, etc.)
- The engagement between ethics and practical aspects of the work
 - Appropriate compensation for speaker involvement
 - Supporting the community after “project” ends
 - The community's goals for the future