

An overview of the evolution of some models of Language Work

Workshop 20: Language Work Outside Your Own Community

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Some models of engagement

(Rice 2006; Yamada 2010)

- “Ethical” Research
- Advocacy Research
- Empowerment Research
- Further steps towards reciprocity
 - Training models
 - Collaborative models

For every model

- Role of speakers / communities
- Ethical considerations
- Power dynamics

“Ethical” Research “on social subjects” (e.g. Samarin 1967)

Role of the speakers / communities

- The linguist uses an ‘informant’
 - “someone who interprets...and helps to bridge the gap”
 - typically regarded as “linguistically naïve”
 - not a useful contributor to analysis
 - In her graduate studies, Rice was taught that “an informant is like a machine – you put in a question and the machine spits back an answer”
- Samarin on Training an ‘informant’
 - “make the informant an enlightened, interested, and cooperative coworker”
 - Remember: “he has little capacity for abstract reasoning”; “because he does not see the relevance of analysis to the speech that everybody, even children, has obviously grasped...”
 - “inconsistencies and inaccuracies are to be expected” from informants.
- Community: Where you find an informant

“Ethical” Research “on social subjects” (e.g. Samarin 1967)

Ethical Considerations

- Primary responsibility is to support the linguist’s research
- Regarding informants/communities:
 - focus on “payment, avoiding deception, and attending to good criteria in choosing someone to work with”
- Rice (2006) terms this perspective “linguist-centered”

“Ethical” Research “on social subjects” (e.g. Samarin 1967)

Power dynamics

- the linguist takes a “position of power from which [s/he] can make all kinds of demands”
- “the rate of pay depend[s]...on the local conditions and not at all on the resources of the investigator”.
- Reciprocity is best motivated by “the respect the investigator maintains for himself and his endeavors”

Advocacy Research: “on and for subjects” (e.g. Sutton & Walsh (1979))

Role of the speakers / communities

- Work with ‘Consultants’ rather than “informants”
- The speaker has more value
 - participates more actively in the research
 - mediates between the research process and community needs and interests
- Linguists have a cooperative relationship with the community based on knowledge of local culture
 - Responsibility to the community beyond the researcher’s own agenda.

Advocacy Research: “on and for subjects” (e.g. Sutton & Walsh (1979))

Ethics

- “since the language belongs to the community, those with a primary right to the recordings and analyses of it are its speakers”
- The linguist is accountable for
 - providing a report useful to the community
 - dedication to working with the community on programs beneficial to it
 - (e.g. a bilingual education program).
- How such materials and programs are returned to or kept in the community is a complex topic that “must be worked out over time”
- The definition of ethics evolves to include community relationships
 - Not merely individual relationships as a means of data collection
 - Addressing – and including in the research goals - the needs of the communities.

Advocacy Research: “on and for subjects” (e.g. Sutton & Walsh (1979))

Power dynamics

- Any changes here? Looks like the academic is still in charge...

Empowerment Research: on the language, for the speakers, *with* the speakers
(e.g. Grinevald 1998, many others)

Role of the speakers / communities

- Speakers are ‘teachers’ because “they have knowledge that the linguist does not have”
- Speakers are also ‘collaborators’ in the empowerment model
 - Speakers work together with the researcher(s) as co-workers towards a common goal.
- Linguists have a cooperative relationship with the community

Empowerment Research: on the language, for the speakers, *with* the speakers
(e.g. Grinevald 1998, many others)

Ethics

- The work should be beneficial to all groups and/or individuals involved
- The ethical responsibility of a researcher is to the **people** and **materials** they study and work with
 - Even when it might override the goals and interests of the researcher
 - even to the point of discontinuing a project if conflict arises

Empowerment Research: on the language, for the speakers, *with* the speakers
(e.g. Grinevald 1998, many others)

Power dynamics

- It is “the job of the fieldworker to learn to be an excellent student”
 - Of the language
 - Of the culture and cultural interactions
 - Of the larger context in which the community is imbedded
- Use of this model has likely been due in part to “pressure on researchers from Aboriginal communities”
 - This is especially true in the North American context
 - It is not so common in South America...

Empowerment Research: on the language, for the speakers, *with* the speakers
(e.g. Grinevald 1998, many others)

Power dynamics

- Aim: Place power in the hands of the community and its members
- It is “the job of the fieldworker to learn to be an excellent student”
 - Of the language
 - Of the culture and cultural interactions
 - Of the larger context in which the community is imbedded
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Further steps towards reciprocity: Hale (1972), Nida (1981), Hale & Hinton (2001), Grinevald (1998), Craig (1993), Yamada 2007, 2010)

- Hale 1972: “control over the language work really comes to rest entirely within the community”
- Speakers/Linguists share their individual preferences and goals
- All are **equal** contributors to linguistic research in the community
 - This does not mean everybody does the same thing
 - It means everybody has an equal voice when it is time to make decisions
- Two variants
 - The “training” model
 - The “specialization” model

Continuing evolution of models

- CIESAS Sureste: A version of The Training Model
- Individuals go through specific training... [to] take over the role of linguist
 - Develop the abilities to do abstract analyses
 - Understand and contribute to linguistic theory
 - Become academics
- Speakers are in charge of their own research

Continuing evolution of models

A version of The “specialization” model: “Collaborative Linguistic Fieldwork: Practical application of the empowerment model” (Yamada 2007)

- The Linguist is part of a community-based team
- Team members specialize in particular tasks (may require training)
 - Recording
 - Transcribing
 - Grammatical analysis
 - Creating pedagogical materials
 - Etc.
- The linguist and speakers work together, each contributing their expertise
- Each member of the team knows something of each of the areas, and each member has expertise in at least one area

What do you think?

Is there a place for US/European grad students in these models?
What else should we be asking?

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