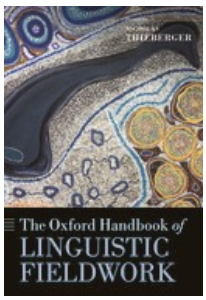

The Oxford Handbook of Linguistic Fieldwork

Nicholas Thieberger (ed.)

https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199571888.001.0001

Published: 2011 **Online ISBN:** 9780191744112 **Print ISBN:** 9780199571888

CHAPTER

18 Ethical Issues in Linguistic Fieldwork

Keren Rice

https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199571888.013.0019 Pages 406–429

Published: 18 September 2012

Abstract

This article exemplifies some of the ethical issues that abound the linguistic fieldwork. In the past decade or so, there has been a resurgence of attention to ethics in linguistic fieldwork. It is surprising to find the huge amount of literature existing on the scholarly aspects of ethics in fieldwork — namely the imperative for fieldwork on endangered languages in order to have records of the languages. This surge of interest around ethics in linguistic fieldwork is likely closely related to the impact of changes in social science research more generally on linguistics, where there has been increased interest in participatory action and community-based research in recent years, as well as to the developing influence of indigenous methodologies on linguistic fieldwork. Many linguistic fieldworkers, like others in social science areas, are attempting to move away from an 'expert subject' model to more collaborative types of research. The study examines ethics with respect to ethic codes, individuals, codes, communities, languages beginning with a dictionary definition of ethics followed by research with people. This is followed by an overview of ethical codes relevant to linguistic fieldwork focusing on traditional questions. Subsequently the article questions concerning the responsibilities of the linguist in the field.

Keywords: ethical issue, linguistic fieldwork, ethics, social science, ethical codes

Subject: Linguistic Anthropology, Linguistics

Series: Oxford Handbooks

Collection: Oxford Handbooks Online

18.1 Introduction[1]

In the past decade or so, there has been a resurgence of attention to ethics in linguistic fieldwork. When I was asked to speak on the subject of ethics in fieldwork in 1999, I was surprised to see how much literature I could find on the scholarly aspects of ethics in fieldwork—namely the imperative for fieldwork on endangered languages in order to have records of the languages. I was equally surprised to learn that, with rare exceptions, very little had been written on the relationships between the linguistic fieldworker and the people with whom she or he engages. Over the past decade there has been an increasing amount written on ethics in fieldwork, focusing on responsibilities not only with respect to languages but also with respect to individuals and communities, and to knowledge systems. This surge of interest around ethics in linguistic fieldwork is likely closely related to the impact of changes in social science research more generally on linguistics, where there has been increased interest in participatory action and community-based research in ↳ recent years, as well as to the developing influence of indigenous methodologies on linguistic fieldwork. Many linguistic fieldworkers, like others in social science areas, are attempting to move away from an 'expert subject' model to more collaborative types of research. At the same time, the situation of language endangerment, and the development of documentary linguistics as a field, have led to a call for recording and archiving a broad range of language materials, in an attempt to capture the speech of a community. Tensions can arise between these different developments in linguistic fieldwork.

p. 408

In this chapter, I examine ethics with respect to ethics codes, individuals, communities, languages, and knowledge systems, setting out questions to be considered with respect to each. I begin in §18.2 with a dictionary definition of ethics, and then introduce some ethics codes and how they develop what ethics means with respect to research with people. Following this (§18.3) I narrow the focus, providing an overview of some of the ethics codes that are of relevance to fieldworkers. I then address ethics in linguistic fieldwork, focusing on fairly traditional questions (§18.4). Following this I turn to a different type of question, examining ethics with respect to language (§18.5.1) and ethics with respect to knowledge systems (§18.5.2) —areas that raise additional questions, especially concerning the responsibilities of the linguist in the field.

It is important to note from the start that there are no simple answers to ethical questions. Ethics is the substance of centuries of debate by philosophers and others, and anyone entering a fieldwork setting where they are living in a different culture with different norms will have to think deeply about many issues, many of them with ethics at their core. Different individuals, settings, and times lead to different decisions about these complex issues.

18.2 What is Ethics? A Broad Perspective

What is ethics? A dictionary provides the following definition: 'the moral principles by which a person is guided.'[2] This definition includes terms that are not straightforward to understand—what is 'moral'?—and leaves quite open what these moral principles are.

Formal ethics codes attempt to make concrete what is meant by this rather abstract notion of moral principles. An important set of principles is set out in the Belmont Report, a 1979 report from the US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare which attempts to summarize basic ethical principles and guidelines for ↳ research involving human participants and forms the foundation for many of the ethics codes that have been developed in the social sciences in the United States. The Belmont Report presents three basic principles for ethical research: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. The first of these principles concerns the protection of the autonomy of all people, treating them with respect and protecting those with limited autonomy. Consequences of this are notions of informed consent, privacy, confidentiality, and protection for vulnerable participants, among others. The second principle states that it

p. 409

is important both to maximize benefits to research and minimize risks to research participants, realized as statements such as ‘Do no harm’, ‘Promote good’, and ‘Reduce risks’. The third principle, justice, is designed to ensure that procedures be reasonable, non-exploitative, and fairly administered.

Other ethics codes share the core of these principles, developing them in different ways. To take a single example, a recent revised statement on ethical conduct for research with humans by the Canadian Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics (December 2010) takes respect for the value of human dignity as its starting point and identifies three core principles, respect for persons, concern for welfare, and justice. The policy statement acknowledges that these principles must be interpreted in the context of a particular community. It also stresses that concern for welfare includes physical, mental, and spiritual health, involving the quality of life in all its aspects.

Respect for persons, beneficence, justice, and welfare are far-reaching principles that likely receive general agreement cross-culturally, subject to local interpretation, and they frame the discussion that follows in this paper. Building on these principles, many ethics codes have been developed, and I turn to a discussion of some of these.

18.3 Understanding Ethics: Ethics Codes

In this section, I briefly summarize three ethics protocols, two written by academic societies and one written as a guide for health researchers doing research in Aboriginal communities in Canada.

I begin with the ethics code of the American Anthropological Association which has had an ethics code evolving over time. The paragraph below is the preamble to the latest version, approved in February 2009.

> Anthropological researchers, teachers and practitioners are members of many different communities, each with its own moral rules or codes of ethics. Anthropologists have moral obligations as members of other groups, such as the family, religion, and community, as well as the profession. They also have obligations to the scholarly discipline, to the wider ↳ society and culture, and to the human species, other species, and the environment. Furthermore, fieldworkers may develop close relationships with persons or animals with whom they work, generating an additional level of ethical considerations. In a field of such complex involvements and obligations, it is inevitable that misunderstandings, conflicts, and the need to make choices among apparently incompatible values will arise. Anthropologists are responsible for grappling with such difficulties and struggling to resolve them in ways compatible with the principles stated here.

p. 410

This code recognizes that there are different codes of ethics in different groups, and that anthropological researchers have moral obligations to the groups they work with. These responsibilities are developed more fully in later sections of the code: researchers have the responsibility to avoid harm or wrong, to respect the well-being of people, and to consult actively with affected individuals or groups with the goal of establishing a working relationship that can be beneficial to all involved. The preamble also introduces a second type of ethics: in addition to its stress on obligations to people, whatever the group might be, it identifies obligation to the scholarly discipline. This echoes one part of beneficence, as laid out in the Belmont report—the part that focuses on benefits to research.

These different responsibilities are echoed in the recent ethics code developed by the Linguistic Society of America (LSA). The LSA code notes, among other responsibilities, responsibility to both individuals and communities and responsibility to scholarship as key in ethics. It has a number of specific provisions that are applicable to fieldwork, and I cite relevant sections below (Linguistic Society of America ethics statement 2009: 2–3).

> Linguists should do everything in their power to ensure that their research poses no threat to the well-being of research participants.
>
> - Research participants have the right to control whether their actions are recorded in such a way that they can be connected with their personal identity. They also have the right to control who will have access to the resulting data, with full knowledge of the potential consequences.
> - Linguists are responsible for obtaining the informed consent of those who provide them with data (regardless of whether and how that consent is documented), for maintaining any expected confidentiality in storing data and reporting findings, and for ensuring that any individual's participation in their research is completely voluntary at every stage.
> - Linguists should carefully consider whether compensation of some kind is appropriate, be it remuneration for time and effort, or use of their knowledge and expertise to benefit participants or their communities.
>
> While acknowledging that what constitutes the relevant community is a complex issue, we urge linguists to consider how their research affects not only individual research participants, but also the wider community. In general, linguists should strive to determine what will be constructive for all those involved in a research encounter, taking into account the community's cultural norms and values.
>
> Ideal frameworks for interaction with outside researchers vary depending on a community's
p. 411 particular culture and history. In many communities, responsibility for linguistic and ↳ cultural knowledge is viewed as corporate, so that individual community members are not in a position to consent to share materials with outsiders, and linguists must try to determine whether there are individuals who can legitimately represent the community in working out the terms of research. Some communities regard language, oral literature, and other forms of cultural knowledge as valuable intellectual property whose ownershp should be respected by outsiders; in such cases linguists should comply with community wishes regarding access, archiving, and distribution of results. Other communities are eager to share such knowledge in the context of a long-term relationship of reciprocity and exchange. In all cases where the community has an investment in language research, the aims of an investigation should be clearly discussed with the community and community involvement sought from the earliest stages of project planning.

Turning from the codes developed by academic associations to those written by groups that have often been the targets of research, generally without directing the research, we find similar principles to those outlined above and some additional principles as well, and I focus here on the latter. The Canadian Institutes of Health Research ethics guidelines for researchers working in Aboriginal health begin by saying that a researcher should understand and respect Aboriginal world views, including responsibilities towards traditional and sacred knowledge. The guidelines address the need to understand and respect the community's jurisdiction over the conduct of research, and the need to provide for an option for participatory research. The guidelines speak to the importance of working with community leaders as well as individuals in gaining free, prior, and informed consent to carry out research involving traditional and sacred knowledge. Other articles address the need to seek guidance from community knowledge holders; the inherent rights of Aboriginal peoples and their communities to cultural knowledge, sacred knowledge, and cultural practices and traditions which are shared with the researcher; intellectual property; the importance that research benefit a community as well as a researcher; the need for a researcher to support education and training; the importance of ongoing communication with the community; and the role of the community in interpretation of data as well as in acknowledgement of community members. Thus this code

focuses on responsibilities not just to the individual but also to communities and their practices, and on collaboration in research. We will see many of the principles of this protocol echoed throughout this chapter.

The large-scale picture of ethics that we get through a study of ethics codes is useful—in thinking about ethics, a researcher is thinking about dignity, about respect, about justice, about welfare, about individuals, about communities, about knowledge. We realize these principles through institutionalizing policies that require informed consent, examine confidentiality, and deal with management of data, for instance. While the codes are problematic in numerous ways (see e.g. Rieschild 2003 and the report of the Social Sciences And Humanities Research Ethics Special Working Committee 2004), the codes at their best remind us that ethics is not monolithic but multi-faceted, and that ethics principles must be ↳ interpreted relative to societal norms. They nevertheless are framed very broadly. The core ethics principles are sometimes put in other ways that are, perhaps, more easily interpretable—another way of stating them is: 'Do no harm, do some good, and show respect.' Bowern (2008: 148) develops these ideas in her statement of what ethics is: she defines ethics as 'a way of working that you, the research community and the language community think is appropriate'. These more informal notions of ethics, too, require attention in order to understand how they translate into ethical behaviour, and this is especially the case when working with people from a different culture, where the researcher must strive to learn as much as possible about the culture so as to limit the amount of unintended harm, to understand whether actions actually might lead to overall good, and to ensure an appropriate notion of respect. In the next sections I examine some specific questions that a fieldworker might want to think about in terms of linguistic fieldwork with people and communities, languages, and worldviews in hoping to adhere to these principles and understanding what it means to be appropriate.

p. 412

18.4 Ethics in the Field

I will begin again at a broad level—university-based ethics protocols—and then turn to ethics on the ground, organizing the discussion around a series of questions addressing issues that arise out of the various general principles introduced in §18.2. The following are some of the sources on ethics in linguistic fieldwork: textbooks by Bowern (2008), Crowley (2007), and Tsunoda (2005); articles by Austin (2010a), Dwyer (2006), and Rice (2006); and the special issue of *Language and Communication* edited by Innes and Debenport (2010). For some general references on ethics in fieldwork, Cameron et al. (1992), Cameron (1998), Clifford and Marcus (1986), Czaykowska-Higgins (2009), Fluehr-Lobban (1991), Geertz (1968), Shaw (2004), and Yamada (2007) are particularly valuable. See also the appendix to this chapter for some additional references.

18.4.1 What about before the fieldwork begins?

A fieldworker from a university, be they an instructor or a student, will likely have to go through a process within their university to have an ethics protocol approved. While ethics protocols differ somewhat from place to place, the core questions that they ask are similar, and are aimed at meeting the types of principles discussed above—affording dignity, beneficence, respect, showing concern for welfare.

p. 413

These protocols require that the researcher answer questions in a number of areas. Protocols typically involve questions about the research and how it will be conducted. They ask about how participants will be recruited for the research, and how they will be selected and compensated. They question whether the material to be studied is sensitive or not. They inquire about possible risks to participants in the research, be they physical, psychological/emotional, or social. They query whether deception is involved. They ask about possible harms and benefits of the research to the participants. They inquire about informed consent and

how it will be achieved and maintained. They ask about confidentiality, and they inquire about anonymity. They raise questions about what will be done with the materials gathered.

These questions as they are framed in an ethics protocol are often difficult to interpret, and it is important to keep in mind the significance of the general principles that underlie the particular questions that one is asked to answer to have the ethics protocol approved. They can also be difficult to answer. In many cases the questions are not really quite right for linguistic fieldwork, or for qualitative research more generally (see e.g. Social Sciences And Humanities Research Ethics Special Working Committee 2004 for challenges for qualitative research, and Rieschild 2003 for specific challenges in linguistic fieldwork); and in addition, in most cases there is not a single way of behaving ethically, especially in cross-cultural research: what is considered to be not sensitive by one person or one community may be considered to be sensitive by another; what is appropriate methodology in one place is inappropriate in another. Preparing the ethics protocol thus takes care and thought, and it is important to keep in mind that the basic principles that underlie the complex protocol are actually the end point.

While completing the ethics protocol may be a challenge for someone doing fieldwork, at the same time the protocol helps in reflecting about the types of ethical and moral issues that might arise in fieldwork. The types of questions are likely to be asked in some form or another by any group that you are working with. People generally want to understand research in which they are involved: they need to agree freely to be part of the research, understanding its possible consequences; they need to decide who they want the results of the research made available to, and so on.

It is possible that the unit that reviews an ethics protocol might require additional information beyond the core issues discussed above. For instance, they may want an indication of support from the community or communities that you are planning to go to.[3] It is important to seek this support early on in any case, whether required by the unit that reviews the ethics protocols or not—seeking support from the community leads to engagement with that community beginning early in the process, before actual fieldwork begins. It is the start of the building of a relationship. Much of ethics involves building respectful, reciprocal
p. 414 relationships, and ↳ engagement with a community from the start is an indication that the researcher understands the importance of these values.

In addition to getting a formal ethics protocol approved, there are other things to be done before the fieldwork actually begins. As a linguist, it is natural to want to learn as much as possible about the language of study or closely related languages and about linguistics. A second type of preparation is probably of even greater importance: read as much as possible about the culture of where you are going and talk with people, as many as possible, who are from the area and who have been involved in work in the area. This type of preparation is invaluble in helping you to avoid unintentional harm, in understanding whether your actions might produce good, and in helping to ensure that respect is not naïve. People familiar with the area can give you invaluable advice about many of the issues raised in the next sections. Some communities are pleased to have researchers, and embrace their presence. In other communities, there is much suspicion of researchers, their goals, and their values. To some degree, how you are received depends on the history of research in a community. Some communities are struggling with their own problems, making it difficult to welcome an outsider; some might say no to researchers at a particular time, but welcome them at another time. Flexibility is important.

A first trip to a community will undoubtedly bring many unexpected things, but at the same time you will have had an opportunity to think in advance about many things if you prepare as fully as possible.

In many cases, completing the university ethics protocol and preparation through reading and talking is not sufficient to begin fieldwork. Some communities require that you have their permission before you can go to the community. Whether your own university requires it or not, it is important to find out if you can simply

show up in a community, or if the community might want to review your research plans before giving you permission to carry out your research there.

18.4.2 Getting started in the community

What happens on reaching the field? This is an exciting time, and often a very anxious time as well. Hopefully through the preparation of the ethics protocol for the university, and through talking with people and reading, you are not entering a community cold, with the community having no knowledge of your impending arrival and you having no knowledge of the community beyond the language(s) spoken there. You have support (at least on paper), and you know who to meet when you first get there. What kind of ethical issues must you deal with? I focus here on people who are beginning fieldwork in a particular
p. 415 location, and especially ↳ on the novice fieldworker, rather than those who have already been involved in fieldwork in a community.

There are many aspects of fieldwork which at first sight may seem to be practical problems but which nevertheless raise questions of ethics that require careful consideration, and I raise some here, in the form of questions. There are no single, and often no simple, answers to these questions. Not all will be applicable in all circumstances, but overall these are issues that you are likely to face.

There are questions about settling in to a community.

Where should I live? This might seem like an odd question to ask when talking about ethics, but it can be important, if you have a choice. Where you live can affect who you interact with on an informal basis, and can affect what people think of you and how they interpret your goals, making it harder or easier to carry out the work. You might live with a family, in a rented space, in a hotel. There are issues of safety to be taken into account—safety both for you and for community members. For instance, there might be risks to a young woman living alone rather than with a family. There might be political consequences of living with a particular family that could have a detrimental effect on the work. A gay man might be uncomfortable in some settings. Safety issues within a community might suggest that it is preferable to live in a larger community, travelling in to the community to work. Advice is helpful when it is possible to get it, as each of these choices can have consequences for the fieldworker, for relationships with the community, and for the work to be done.

Unless you live on your own and do all your own food preparation, there are other issues you might face. If you are a vegetarian in a community where moose meat is highly valued, you might want to think about whether it would be interpreted as disrespectful for you to refuse moose meat that you are offered. If food considered a delicacy seems disgusting to you, you might consider the consequences of turning it down. While seemingly small, such issues can loom large in how people think of you, and are willing to cooperate with you. Balancing your needs and community expectations can be a challenge, but most find that it is well worth the while for all involved to consider such seemingly small things.

There are questions that relate to an ethics protocol.

Are there any kinds of permissions needed? My ethics protocol was approved in my home university. Can I just get started right away? Often there are other kinds of permissions that are needed, and in some instances, the university-approved ethics protocol, although necessary, can be the least important of all. In some places it is necessary to get a licence from the government in order to do research. This can take some time, and needs to be done before fieldwork can begin. Some communities might have their own written or oral ethics protocol procedures, defined in their terms. Once you arrive in a community, it might be important to meet with a chief or a king or an elder or some other local authority to get support and approval from them for
p. 416 your research. There might be gifts that need to be ↳ given. Community protocols are often unwritten, but

asking questions and trying to understand these protocols is important to be able to even begin to do research within a community. Again, work in advance can be an enormous asset in getting this 'right.'

There are questions that relate to the fieldwork directly.

Who do I work with? Very often people will be recommended to you, or even arrangements made for you to work with a particular person or people. Sometimes there are people in the community who are regarded as the ones that researchers should work with. Some of these people might be ideal for someone beginning work on the language; others might be better for someone at a more advanced stage. You might not have a choice about who you work with, especially at the beginning, and you may need to find ways of reassessing a working relationship somewhere along the way. Who you work with, just like who you live with, may be political in a way that can be difficult to understand, and this can affect your work. While it is probably best to try to limit your involvement in the politics of a community, often involving very old and complex issues, sometimes it is difficult to know that this is what is going on. Political issues may be stated in a variety of terms; for instance, arguments about choices in orthography may find their roots in differences between groups within a community.

From another perspective, sometimes people who would be good to work with have other jobs. It is important to consider whether it is ethical to draw them away from other work for work that is likely to be of short term.

What do I tell people about my funding? You might have funding to do your research. There may be a perception that as a researcher, you are well off. And this might be true, from the perspective of the community, even if it is not true from your perspective. There may also be negative perceptions about certain funding sources. For instance, in a community where there are tensions with the government, funding from a government agency might make community members associate you with the government, and think that you might be sent to report on their activities. A community may have tried unsuccessfully to get funding for language work and wonder why you, with little or no knowledge of the language or culture, were successful in this while they were not, and this could inhibit the work. Trying to understand what the issues are might help you in finding a way to discuss them.

How do I tell people about what I am doing? What does linguistic work mean? What are people interested in? How can I explain what I do? When people engage in a project, they want to know what they are agreeing to do. It is important to find a way of explaining the work that you hope to do in terms that are accessible, and in ways that people might be able to engage in. In many communities you will need to find plain language in which you explain what you are doing and what your interests are. For instance, suppose that you want to carry out a phonetic study on a particular type of laryngeal contrast and require that people tell you if
p. 417 sounds ↳ are the same or different. People might push back, saying that you are trying to change the language or take away the language by asking these questions, and you might need to explain why this work could be important for them. Perhaps the research might relate to language programs that are in the schools, and trying to find a way that those learning the language as a second language are able to pronounce properly. If you are working collaboratively with the community (see later sections), this perhaps becomes easier, while introducing other challenges.

How much should I pay? There may be rates of pay that are generally accepted within a community, and it is likely important that you are in line with those. In some communities, people may be expected to work with a researcher without being paid, especially if the research is deemed to be of value to the community. There might be community standards about how different people are recompensed. Money might not be the most appropriate way of paying—gifts might be considered to be a more appropriate means of recompense, or an exchange of services. Establishing an appropriate means and rate of pay are part of showing respect. Once I was instructed by the band council of a community not to pay people, with the council telling people to give

their time freely. When I returned to that community two years later, people told me that they would be happy to work, but only for pay.

It can be complicated within your home university to get funds released from a grant if you have one if you are paying with gifts, or if people are unwilling to sign that they have received payment. You most likely need to meet community standards, so this is something to work out with your university.

What about informed consent? In getting an ethics protocol approved, informed consent is an important issue. It is necessary to think about how you will deal with issues of consent before you begin fieldwork, but this becomes real once you are actually engaged in the fieldwork. While what is most important is probably what underlies informed consent, it is useful to begin with a brief discussion of the mechanics of getting informed consent, as this is not necessarily as straightforward as asking someone to sign a document—the type of informed consent that is often anticipated by ethics boards.

Informed consent can be indicated in various ways. A signature is one way of showing consent, but oral consent is usually possible as well. Some people may not have written literacy, and some may be reluctant to give their signature on what appears to be an official-looking document out of concern for what the consequences might be. In general, people are willing to provide oral consent if they wish to be engaged in the work. Sometimes, where speakers agree to recording, a researcher might record a statement of consent in place of written agreement.

What underlies consent is really what is important: the people who work with you need to understand what they are agreeing to do, and you need to find ways of explaining this clearly, in plain language, as discussed
p. 418 above. In an ongoing project, it is important to revisit issues of consent, as things will likely change over the
↳ duration of a project as the kinds of work change, as you become better known in the community.

When you seek informed consent, it is important that people know what they are consenting to. Linguistic fieldwork generally involves recordings, and consent must be sought to record (some people do not wish to be recorded; in some communities recording is not acceptable). This is only a first step, though. People must also be informed about how the materials might be used. At one extreme, will they be made freely available on the internet? At the other extreme, will they be available only to the researcher on a password-protected site? If the latter, what does this mean? Can they be used for commercial purposes? What are potential future uses? Issues of consent need to be negotiated and, generally, renegotiated as the research progresses. (See also Newman, Chapter 19 below.)

And what about confidentiality? In developing your ethics protocol, you had to discuss confidentiality. Many times in linguistic work, individuals want to be recognized by name, generally for stories, and often for elicited material as well. It is important to talk about this with people with whom you work, and to continue to talk about it, as people might change their minds, or want to be acknowledged for some materials but not for others. It is not good to make assumptions, or to generalize from one person, as not everyone will want the same thing, not every community will be the same, and an individual might feel differently about being identified depending on the material involved.

Confidentiality can be viewed in a second way. In addition to an interpretation of confidentiality as anonymity, discussed above, confidentiality can demand that information be kept private. For instance, there might be stories that are not meant for outsiders and that someone is willing to tell you, but does not want you to share with any others. In many Australian cultures, naming and showing pictures of people who have died is taboo, and if someone gives you such information, it may well be done believing that you will not share the knowledge with any others.

The above discussion is based on a model in which the researcher controls the agenda: the researcher determines, in advance, how things like informed consent will be handled, discussing these only later with

the participants in the research, the researcher determines what the research agenda is. As mentioned in the introduction, recent years have seen the development of other ways of dong research, namely working with a community to determine common goals and objectives. This shift in paradigms raises a host of other very important ethical issues, and I address some of these next.

What responsibilities do I have as a researcher? What is the role for a researcher in this community at this particular point in time? At one time, a researcher basically set out his or her own approach, recognizing the core ethical principles outlined earlier. This may still be the agenda, with the researcher defining the project and community members participating in it in a traditional way. However, recent years have seen careful
p. 419 thinking about research, taking into account a wide range of ↳ issues that are briefly introduced above in the discussion of the Canadian Institute for Health Research guidelines for research with Aboriginal peoples. In discussion of postcolonial and indigenous ethics, there are themes that echo—more symmetric relationships between outside researcher and community; involvement of academic and community researchers in research projects with each serving as active members of a team, when appropriate, working together to determine a common agenda; responsibility of a researcher to help a community meet its own goals if asked. The obligations include working to understand each party's ethical and moral expectations of the other, and responsibilities on both sides. Grenoble and Whaley (2006) provide an overview of responsibilities of linguistics to communities with which they work (some recent works that address this topic include Amery 2006; Austin 2010a; Berardo and Yamamoto 2007; Czaykowska-Higgins 2009; Dobrin 2008; Dorian 2010; Grenoble 2009; Grinevald 2007; Hale and Hinton 2001; Himmelmann 1998; 2008; some papers in Innes and Debenport 2010; Otsuka and Wong 2007; Rice 2009; Shaw 2004; Speas 2009; Thieberger and Musgrave 2006; and Yamada 2007).

It is important to understand the role that you are able to play in a community at a particular point in time and what is expected of you. You might be expected to do something for the community. This could be a task like cooking for someone, or cleaning roads, or helping people with their income tax forms. In some cases, linguists are asked to help to develop orthographies, to participate in training people to make practical dictionaries, or to assist in creating language surveys or to provide language awareness workshops for teachers in the school. You might be asked to teach people how to digitize tapes, or how to use a video recorder, or to transcribe placenames. It is important to keep in mind what is realistic. Are you in the community for a month? What knowledge of the language and culture do you have? For instance, if you are just beginning fieldwork on a language that you know nothing about, the chances are good that work on developing an orthography is not realistic, while teaching how to archive materials may well be possible if you have that knowledge.

Researchers and communities do not always share perceptions about what their work is: communities may often have expectations of researchers that are not shared by the researchers, and vice versa. For instance, the linguist may expect to do linguistic fieldwork, with elicitation and recording of various genres of speech and gathering of some sociolinguistic material, while the community may expect curriculum materials; the community may expect the linguist to learn to speak the language, while the linguist may expect to learn about the language. Your role needs to be discussed, and negotiated.

If a more equitable research model is the goal, how are the responsibilities determined? What is the responsibility of the researcher to train community members, and of community members to train the researcher? There is no
p. 420 simple or straightforward answer to these questions. Basically, be open to talking, and to ↳ thinking as a team, negotiating and dividing up responsibilities, recognizing strengths; be open to reconsidering responsibilities as time goes on. Such a model takes time to develop—it can thrive when people have built up relationships with each other and there is some trust and understanding. Research unfolds differently in different communities, and is different at different times. Where you are in your own career can have an effect, as can the state of things in the community. These questions are further addressed in §18.5.

The above are some of the ethical issues that you will need to think about in relating to people and communities. As already discussed, there are no single answers: different communities, different researchers, different contexts within a community, different times, and changing external forces all have a great effect on fieldwork (see Holton 2009 for a comparison of how different he found the notion of ethical fieldwork in two different communities; see also Dobrin 2008). Early fieldwork is a type of adaptation to a new situation. As in any change, it is a challenge for an outsider to build a place for him- or herself within a new community, and the challenges are probably enhanced when the outsider seeks to control or is not really able to 'hear' a community.

18.5 Ethics with Respect to Scholarship

The principles identified in the ethics codes target not only people, both individuals and communities, but also scholarship, and I now turn to this. In linguistic work, it is worth thinking about ethics with respect to scholarship in two different ways: ethics with respect to languages and ethics with respect to knowledge systems.

18.5.1 Ethics and languages

As discussed in the introduction, the realization of the previously unforeseen rate of language endangerment led to a call to linguists to work with speakers of languages that were disappearing. Much of the early discussion about the necessity for research on endangered languages is framed in terms of moral responsibility, with statements of the following types: a linguist has a responsibility to record a language because each language is a storehouse of knowledge, an encoding of a peoples' culture and history; language diversity is to be valued (see e.g. Hale et al. 1992; Crystal 2000; Nettle and Romaine 2000; Harrison 2007).
p. 421 Such reasons for ↳ research on languages are clear in statements found for various programs that support research on endangered languages that were developed in the later part of the previous century and the earliest years of this one. For instance, the following quotation about the Documenting Endangered Languages program, sponsored by the National Science Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities in the United Sates of America, talks to the need to rescue languages:

> 'This is a rescue mission to save endangered languages,' said NEH Chairman Bruce Cole. 'Language is the DNA of a culture, and it is the vehicle for the traditions, customs, stories, history, and beliefs of a people. A lost language is a lost culture. Fortunately, with the aid of modern technology and these federal funds, linguistic scholars can document and record these languages before they become extinct.'[4]

The website for the Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Documentation Program includes the following statement, 'Because every lost word means another lost world',[5] speaking to the tragedy of language loss. The concern in these quotations is with languages and the moral responsibility to study languages: this is ethics with respect to scholarship and knowledge systems, as outlined in the ethics codes discussed in §18.5.2.

The recognition of the extent of language endangerment at the end of the twentieth century, coupled with enormous advances in technology in terms of ability to record both audio and video and to store vast amounts of data, has led to the establishment of a field that has come to be known as documentary linguistics (e.g. Himmelmann 1998; 2008; Woodbury 2003; 2011; articles in Gippert, Himmelmann, and Mosel 2006). Language documentation involves data collection, transcription, and translation. The products of language documentation include edited fieldnotes and, more fundamentally, text collections, with the aim of recording the linguistic practices and traditions of a speech community. Texts of all genres,

representing all types of major communicative events (exclamative, directive, conversational, monological, ritual) gathered through participant observation, elicitation, and recording, are the focus, with texts transcribed and translated.

Many ethical issues arise with documentation of languages, both technological and human. Technology allows for easy recording, both audio and video, and for archiving of materials. Again I ask a series of questions, beginning with issues that are largely technical, and moving to those that are more human.

What kind of equipment should I use to record? While technology might not be obvious as an ethical issue, brief discussion is worthwhile. You want to make recordings that are of the highest quality and that will be of lasting duration. This means using equipment that is appropriate for this, and also appropriate for the
p. 422 particular circumstances in which you are living. While audio recordings are ↳ often sufficient, in many cases video recordings provide fuller information about communicative events, including gesture systems and non-verbal interactions between participants, that enhances the understanding of the language.

Yet what if an individual or a community is not keen to be recorded? What if audio recordings are acceptable, but video recordings are considered taboo? Best practice in language documentation and what is acceptable in a community may be in conflict, and your recording equipment may be left to languish, at least for a while, as surreptitious recording is not acceptable.

Who can I record? Recall from earlier discussion that it is necessary to have consent of speakers to record; recording should not be done illicitly. Some people might be fine with audio recording but not video recording, but not vice versa; some might not welcome any recording, at least not at the beginning, although they will still be willing to work with you. You, working with community members, will have to decide how to handle each of the types of situations that might arise.

In some communities it might not be acceptable for a woman to work with men, or for a man to work with women. In some places it might be appropriate to work with groups, at least at certain stages.

Again, as with other aspects of scholarship, there might be conflicts between what the field of linguistics considers to be best practice and what is acceptable in a community.

What do I need to record? In order to create what might be called an ethical corpus from the perspective of linguistics, you want to aim at a corpus that is diverse in terms of communicative events, gathered in ways appropriate to the particular materials, and carefully checked with speakers (see Himmelmann 1998; 2008; Woodbury 2003; 2011).

A corpus should consist of a range of materials. What if people are not interested in having this kind of range of communicative events documented? Your ability to develop such a corpus will depend to a large degree on your relationship with people in the community—as noted already, human issues and technological issues cannot be separated, but rather intersect with each other in complex ways.

For someone new to a community, it may be very difficult to meet the demands of documentary linguistics as described above. From the viewpoint of members of the community, people do not know you, and may well not understand just what your goals are or what you will do with the materials that you collect. They do not know what, if anything, you know of the language, of the culture, of cultural constraints. From your viewpoint, if this is a language you have never studied, this will be obvious to people. In order to build up the type of varied corpus that you might like to have, time is needed. Creating the corpus involves the time required to do the recordings and for you to become reasonably familiar with the materials—for instance, with many forms of speech and even elicitation, it may be that the material given in early days of fieldwork is simplified, taking into account that the speakers realize that you as the listener are not knowledgeable
p. 423 about the ↳ language, or the culture. Creating the corpus also involves the time needed for you and people

you work with to develop a relationship where there is some degree of trust about what you are doing and what you will do with the materials.

Even when you are familiar in a community, there might be people who do not want to tell stories, but may well be happy to be involved with elicitation, and vice versa. Some people might willingly engage in conversations that are recorded; others might reject this. People might change what they are willing to do over time. There are some types of texts that people might not wish to share, or might be willing to share but not have recorded, or have recorded but only with restricted access conditions. This is particularly the case with sacred texts, which often are not to be shared with outsiders. What is considered sacred requires an understanding—it might not be what you think. For instance, there are historical events that are not told to outsiders in some communities. Once a researcher has developed a strong relationship with a community, it might be possible to record this type of speech, with consent and agreement on accessibility.

There might be other reasons why people are reluctant to share texts. That reluctance might be due to many factors. The particular speaker might question his or her competence in the language. They might feel that they are not a storyteller, or that the particular story you would like to record is not their story to tell. They might feel that the content is not appropriate to tell an outsider. And there might be other reasons as well. For instance, in many North American communities, there are stories that can be told only in the winter: it is inappropriate for the storyteller to tell those stories at other times of the year. An understanding of cultural norms might help you to understand why there is a reluctance to engage in what you hoped you could do.

It is imperative to respect the rights and decisions of people in the community even if you disagree, as discussed already. If you do not have permission to record material, be it audio recording or notes on paper or a computer, it is unethical to do so, no matter how much you think that the material would be a wonderful addition to your corpus. If someone is willing to be recorded and have their tapes archived but does not want their language to be included in research products, whether those products be stories for children in the community, a dictionary, a grammar, or a research article or book, this is to be respected. And if individuals and a community are keen to have materials made public and published, issues of authorship and copyright also require discussion.

How about archiving the data that I record? Language documentation requires that data be archived safely and securely, with the best attempts you can make to store the data permanently (see e.g. Himmelmann 1998; Bird and Simons 2003; Austin 2006; Aristar-Dry 2009; Nathan 2010). This is complex: data needs to be digitized; it needs to be archived; it needs to be migrated to new formats as they arise so that it continues to be accessible. It is important to have data archived in more than one place in case something happens to one
p. 424 of the copies. There are a ↳ number of places that archive linguistic data now, and talking with them in advance of fieldwork will help sort out these complex questions, leading to an understanding of current practices.

Where to archive can be an issue. A community might want material archived with them, and not elsewhere; a local museum may be an appropriate place to archive rather than a specific linguistic archive. Again, these alternatives need to be discussed.

Once the data is archived, can anyone access it? If best practices are to archive data and make it accessible, one might think that this should take priority. However, as discussed earlier, permissions for access are very important. Individual speakers or communities may choose to make all data accessible, or may place very severe restrictions on what is accessible. Someone might choose to make available some types of stories, but block access to other types such as sacred stories. Certain types of information might be available only to family, or only to women; recordings might be made available only after a time delay.

The ethical issues around recording at first appear to be quite simple—kinds of equipment to use, necessity to gather a varied and rich corpus, obligation to archive following best practices. These are part of ethical conduct with respect to scholarship in the field. Yet these technological issues cannot be viewed in isolation from the individuals and communities involved, and what might appear to be straightforward is actually part of the process of working together and building respect.

What if people do not want recordings archived at all? As discussed earlier, it is up to an individual and a community to decide what they want done with recordings that are made of them. While from the perspective of linguistics as a science there is a mandate to record and archive, this may well not be the goal of the community.

What about ownership of the research findings? Questions of intellectual property can loom large in fieldwork; see Dwyer (2006) and Austin (2010a) for some discussion, as well as Newman (2007, and in Chapter 19 below) on copyright. Who owns the data, the recordings, the content? In some cases individuals and communities might freely allow you to use any data; in other communities they might ask that you get permission for each sentence that you would like to use in an article that you write. You also need to consider authorship on articles—when you have worked extensively with someone, should they be a co-author on work where you have done the analysis? Independent of such questions, best practice in linguistic research is to acknowledge the contributions of speakers if they desire it.

p. 425

18.5.2 Ethics and knowledge systems

Many of the languages that are endangered today are spoken by peoples who have been deeply affected by colonization. Recent years have seen the development of indigenous research, with an attempt to shift the focus of research paradigms involving indigenous peoples towards areas such as traditional knowledge and ways of knowing, recognizing different epistemological traditions and systems and, as discussed earlier, developing ethical standards for research (for work in this area, see e.g. Bach 2003; Battiste and Henderson 2000; Brown and Strega 2005; Cyr 1999; Gil 2001; Manatowa-Bailey 2007; Nevins 2004; Smith 1999; Wilson 2008). There is a focus on respect and responsibility in research, and on reciprocity, as outlined in the earlier discussion of the Canadian Institutes for Health Research ethics guidelines for work with Aboriginal peoples.

As the value of different knowledge systems has come to be recognized, it has also become evident that different knowledge systems may make different demands. Thus, what is considered to be scientific, what is considered to be important to study, what is recognized as interesting or important, may well differ between you and members of a community in which you are working when you are raised in different systems of knowledge. The purposes of serving scholarship narrowly defined as university-driven, western-tradition scholarship, and those of the community are not necessarily one and the same. Two distinct worldviews can be in conflict with one another, with different types of knowledge valued or privileged by different intellectual traditions. For instance, the linguist might feel that recording as large a corpus as possible is important not only for science, but for the community itself down the road, if it ever wants to work to revitalize its language. That language revitalization projects depend on having excellent documentation of a language is clear: the well-known revitalization projects with the Wampanoag (Ash, Fermino, and Hale 2001) and Myaamia (Leonard 2007) communities in the United States of America and the Kaurna community (Amery 2000) in Australia, for instance, depend on the quality of materials available. However, a community might feel that the time for the language is past, and it is not interested in participating in this endeavor—or is perhaps even actively opposed to this (e.g. Manatowa-Bailey 2007), while others might view languages as sleeping, to be awakened at the appropriate moment (e.g. Leonard 2008). As a less radical example, a linguist may feel that the highest priority in creating a dictionary is to produce the most comprehensive, detailed dictionary possible. A community might want to have a more

encyclopedic dictionary, with less coverage but giving priority to cultural information that is considered to be important. A linguist might feel that the detailed documentation described above must be privileged above all else; a community might feel that certain types of cultural knowledge are most important, and aim to focus narrowly on what they would like to record. From a more core linguistic perspective, views on what
p. 426 is ↳ important about language may differ. You may think that what is important about a language is its morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, while members of the community might value knowledge of its phonetics and lexicon.

Recognition that there are different knowledge systems leads to a number of questions.

What if the goals of the community and the goals of the researcher do not mesh? Is it appropriate for the researcher to try to persuade the community that his/her goals are the right ones? Is it appropriate for the community to insist on its goals? Is it possible for the two to work together to discover where there are overlapping goals and work from these together, respecting the needs of each to work on their own goals as well? What is my accountability to the community? There are extremes in how linguists undertake fieldwork. At one extreme, there is the linguist who flies into a community and collects their data. For someone who has already developed a relationship with a community, this likely does not raise any danger signals. But for someone going to a community without having already developed a relationship with people there, this will often create problems. Such a type of fieldwork might be helpful in terms of getting a particular type of data. However, it takes a while of working with people for each of you to figure out what the other is all about, what each of your strengths are, and so on. So quick trips simply to get data probably do not result in the best-quality data. And fly-in/fly-out fieldwork will not work in most communities because there is not an opportunity to develop the relationships that help to make ongoing fieldwork possible for you or for those who might follow you.

At another extreme, in some cases the community has had control of the research agenda. Wilkins (1992) addresses his work in Australia, identifying advantages to this type of research—personal growth, academic growth in learning things that he would not have learned otherwise. At the same time, the time to complete a degree is longer, he did not work on the questions that he originally brought with him, and he lost his scholarship funding.

Different kinds of balances exist. Czaykowska-Higgins (2009) outlines different ways of working with different communities in a community-based research project, and Holton (2009) details his very different experiences in Alaska and Indonesia, pointing to the local nature of ethical responsibilities.

The questions that introduce this section have no single answers, but many linguists and communities have found ways, over time, of defining common goals and respecting those that are not in common; people who have engaged in such work generally report that it is for the better for all. Often as linguists work with speakers, they come to find the fundamental similarities that exist in their goals, and work through the differences. Again, this takes time and patience. Working together often allows for common goals to be found. As a simple example, suppose that you want to record autobiographies because you are interested in getting first person forms, and the community wants stories in the language for the school. It might be
p. 427 possible to accomplish both of these, with you ↳ working together with teachers to do your part of creating the school materials while they work together with you to assist you in obtaining the recordings that you want.

18.6 Summary

I have surveyed some of the ethical issues that arise in fieldwork, framing them in terms of individuals, communities, and scholarship with respect to languages and knowledge systems. To talk in generalities, ethical behaviour can be said to be based in a number of 'r' words—respect, relationships, reciprocity, and responsibility. Being ethical means thinking about these. It involves people from different cultures, often with quite different ways of viewing the world, working together to try to understand one another, recognizing that what is considered appropriate for one may not be for the other.

In a paper on ethics in cooperative fieldwork, Dwyer (2006) sets out what she calls ethical principles for language documentation that summarize much of what I have written:

> Do no harm (including unintentional harm).
>
> Harm must be specified in the local context.
>
> Reciprocity and equity.
>
> Establish consultative, continuously negotiated, respectful relationships.
>
> Do some good (for the community as well as for science).
>
> Obtain informed consent before initiating research.
>
> Archive and disseminate your data and results.
>
> (One might add to this final statement 'if this is approved by relevant people'.)

Doing ethical research is a challenge. It involves thinking and learning and being willing to adapt and to change. It involves not just treating people well, but also respecting their knowledge and learning to see something where you might have thought that there was nothing. It involves reconceptualizing ways of viewing the world. In many ways engaging in long-term fieldwork is like engaging in a long-term relationship such as a marriage. There are good times and difficult times; there are times when one or the other is ready to give up. There is a difference, however, in that the researcher is often an outsider to a community (there are, as one might imagine, many ethical issues that arise for a researcher who is an insider in a community), and generally from a dominant culture in global terms. This places a responsibility on the researcher to try to understand the different ethical systems, and to respect and honor the cultural values in the broadest of senses. When there have traditionally been major power differences between the
p. 428 culture of ↳ the community of the researcher and that of the community where the research is being done, there may be sensitive issues, and trying to understand what those are and find ways of working to overcome the power differentials is very important—part of what equal moral status is all about. For both parties involved, there can be struggles in overcoming the historical imbalances, and reconfiguring them. Fieldwork is not for everyone; among those who take it on, especially in a cooperative framework, many find it to be highly rewarding, and engaging with the complex ethical issues is one of the rewards.

18.7 Appendix

This appendix collects a number of references of interest for their discussion of various aspects of ethics in linguistics fieldwork.

General sources on ethics in linguistic fieldwork include textbooks on field methods, ranging from the older books by Bouquiaux and Thomas (1992), Kibrik (1977), and Samarin (1967) to the recent texts including

Bowern (2008), Chelliah and de Reuse (2010), Crowley (2007), and Tsunoda (2005), this last one on language revitalization. The collection by Newman and Ratliff (2001) includes general information about ethics in fieldwork. Some articles provide an overview of ethics in linguistic fieldwork, including Austin (2010a), Dwyer (2006), and Rice (2006). A recent issue of *Language and Communication*, edited by Innes and Debenport (2010), addresses ethical dimensions of language documentation, with articles on legacy resources, responsibility in documentation, informed consent, privacy, and cultural property, among others.

For detailed discussion of documentary linguistics, see Himmelmann (1998; 2008), Woodbury (2003; 2011), Austin (2010b), and the articles in Gippert, Himmelmann, and Mosel (2006).

There is recent literature on the responsibility of linguists towards communities. Grenoble and Whaley (2006) provide an overview; see also Amery (2006), Austin (2010a), Berardo and Yamamoto (2007), Bobaljik (1998), Comrie (2007), Craig (1992; (1993; 1997), Czaykowska-Higgins (2009), Dimmendaal (2001), Dobrin (2008), Dorian (2010), England (1992), Gerdts (1998; 2010), Grenoble (2009), Grinevald (1998; 2007), Hale and Hinton (2001), Hale (1965), Himmelmann (1998; 2008), Holton (2009), Labov (1972c; 1982), Nagy (2000), articles in Ostler (2007), Otsuka and Wong (2007), Rice (2009), Shaw (2004), Speas (2009), Sutton and Walsh (1979), Thieberger and Musgrave (2006), Valiquette (1998), Wilkins (1992), Wolfram (1993), Wolfram and Shilling-Estes (1995), and Yamada (2007), among others.

p. 429 For general work on social science paradigms and ethical responsibilities, see Cameron et al. (1992) and Cameron (1998) as well as Clifford and Marcus (1986), Fluehr-Lobban (1991; 2003) and Geertz (1968).

Works on decolonizing and indigenous research methodologies include Brown and Strega (2005), Smith (1999), and Wilson (2008), among many others.

On different paradigms of knowledge, from different perspectives, see Assembly of First Nations (1990; 1992; 2000), Bach (2003), Battiste and Henderson (2000), Collins (1998), Cree School Board (n.d.), Cyr (1999), Gil (2001), Hale and Hinton (2001), Hale (1972), Harrison (2007), Manatowa-Bailey (2007), Nevins (2004), Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), Smith (2000), and Smith (1999), as well as discussion in other sources.

Ethics codes with respect to linguistics are discussed in Rieschild (2003). See also Social Sciences And Humanities Research Ethics Special Working Committee (2004).

Crystal (2000) introduces language endangerment with discussion about the value of linguistic diversity; see also Hale et al. (1992) and papers in Grenoble and Whaley (1998) and Nettle and Romaine (2000), among many others.

Differing perspectives on language revitalization are given in Grenoble and Whaley (2006), Ash, Fermino, and Hale (2001), Leonard (2007), and Manatowa-Bailey (2007), among many others.

Technical issues are discussed in Bird and Simons (2003), some articles in Gippert et al. (2006), and Aristar-Dry (2009) as well as many other sources.

For a recent presentation on archiving, see Nathan (2010) (http://www.ailla.utexas.org/site/lsa_archiving10.html; accessed 4 June 2010)

For work on language reclamation, see Amery (2000) on Kaurna, Baldwin (2003) and Leonard (2007; 2008) on Miami, and Ash et al. (2001) on Wampanoag. See Hinton (2001) for general discussion.

Notes

1 Thank you to Nick Thieberger and to two anonymous reviewers for very helpful comments. This work is supported by the Canada Research Chair in Linguistics and Aboriginal Studies held by Keren Rice.

2 Oxford English Dictionary on-line; accessed 29 April 2009, http://dictionary.oed.com/

3 It is important to note that the term 'community' is not a straightforward one, as it can be defined in any number of ways. The notion is that there may be a group larger than an individual that is important in the ethics process; it is not necessarily easy to determine just what that group is. I will use the term 'community', recognizing the difficulties inherent in this important word.

4 http://www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/del.html, accessed 7 May 2009.

5 http://www.hrelp.org/, accessed 7 May 2009.