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inventory interviews include displays of taxa outside their normal environments and often dried or preserved in ways that make them look less like they do in the natural environment. On the other hand, environmental transects allow for participants to observe taxa within their natural settings or within settings where they are normally encountered by people, and so they may be able to elicit a higher response level than results from an inventory interview. The problem with the environmental transect is that environments do change over time: some organisms move, die, or are damaged by weather. What is seen by one participant may not be the same as what is seen by subsequent participants over a series of days, weeks, or longer. Also, when specimens are collected at the end, they may not be present as they were at times during the interview period. An area interview is a much more formal and larger version of an environmental transect, and suffers from the same strengths and weaknesses, but magnified. However, since there are usually fewer samples taken with an area interview, there is less chance of change over time if the project does not take too long to complete.

Ethnobiological research in many parts of the world has much to offer linguists in the identification of the vocabularies used by people to describe the world around them. Making these descriptions clear does not have to be difficult and, when done in collaboration with experts from other disciplines, should help linguists to feel more confident about the products of their work. As a concluding thought, consider a story (also mentioned by Evans, Chapter 8 above) told about an experience that Ralph Bulmer had with the Kalam in New Guinea (Diamond 1991: 85).

Bulmer, after years of working with the Kalam recording abundant information on plants and animals, recruited a geologist to come with him into the field. The Kalam opened up to the geologist and provided terminology and observations that Bulmer had expected but found difficult to elicit. When he expressed his disappointment that the Kalam had not had these conversations with him, they explained that when he asked about fauna and flora they realized he knew these topics well and was easy to educate. But they found his questions about rocks revealed that he had so little background knowledge that they foresaw a long and difficult process, which they pragmatically sidestepped by denying their geological lore, revealing a minimum of geology words. Had Bulmer selected a different interview technique, perhaps first making a collection of many different sorts of geological samples and then using an inventory interview, he might have had a different experience. But, in this example, the solution to Bulmer's research problem came about through a successful collaboration with an expert in another discipline. The ethnobiologists and other scientists are waiting for the linguists to call.

Notes

- 1 Thanks to Bruce Hoffman for help with literature sourcing and Kim Bridges, Piet Lincoln, David Reedy, Nat Bletter, Al Chock, and Valerie McClatchey for reading drafts. Thank you to three anonymous reviewers for providing many detailed and helpful comments.
- 2 See the introduction to Dousset, Ch. 9 above, for a definition of 'etic' and 'emic'.