



The Oxford Handbook of Linguistic Fieldwork

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CHAPTER

18 Ethical Issues in Linguistic Fieldwork

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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](#)

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