

native speaker can be based on various, but not necessarily grammatical, reasons (see Bower 2008: 78–80; Chelliah 2001: 158–61; Mithun 2001: 48; Samarin 1967: 57; Vaux et al. 2007: 278).

3.5.2.3 Translational elicitation

Linguistic fieldwork on a previously unresearched language starts with the compiling of wordlists in order to investigate the sound system of the language and develop a practical orthography. Most fieldwork manuals recommend the translation of wordlists in the contact language and present a sample in their appendices. These samples contain language specific function words like ‘at’, ‘if’, or ‘in’, or words like ‘freeze’, ‘ice’, and ‘snow’ which are only appropriate for certain regions of the world (Abbi 2001: 244–5; Bower 2008: 223–4; Kibrik 1977: 99–124; Samarin 1967: 220–23). They therefore need to be modified. Function words like prepositions and conjunctions must be removed, and the list of content words should be adapted to the natural environment and culture of the speech community, as done by Abbi in her wordlist ‘for Indian concepts’ (2001: 246–7).

The manifold problems of translational elicitation which have been identified by several authors, include:

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- ↳ The consultants may be ashamed when they do not understand the meaning of a word or a construction in the contact language or when they do not remember the translation equivalent in the target language or the concept in question is not expressed by a single word in their language (Bower 2008: 89; Mosel 2006a: 75).
 - The consultant's knowledge of the contact language may not be sufficient to understand all nuances of meaning the linguist wants to have reflected in the translation (Bower 2008: 89; Chelliah 2001: 157; Samarin 1967: 141).
 - The consultant and the researcher speak different varieties of the contact language like Indian and American English (Chelliah 2001: 157).
 - The form of the translation may be not idiomatic because of interference from the contact language (Bower 2008: 85–7; Chelliah 2001: 155).
 - If the contact language lacks a grammatical category that exists in the target language, it can hardly be systematically uncovered by translational eliciting (Chelliah 2001: 157).
 - In different languages words, grammatical categories and constructions are polysemous in different ways so that there is always the risk that an expression in the contact language or its translation equivalent in the target language are not interpreted in the same way by the researcher and the consultant, especially when the researcher does not describe the context in which the target sentence might be used (Abbi 2001: 88–91; Bower 2008: 86).