

Documentary Linguistics and Community Relations

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In recent years, there has been a growing focus in linguistics on community-based research. In this paper, I summarize how community-based research is defined, and then address community-based research from two perspectives. I begin with a perspective that is sometimes heard in universities, and sometimes by colleagues in linguistics as well: that community-based research is not really research, but rather community service. I discuss some of the fallacies in this conclusion, examining how traditional types of linguistic research can grow out of community-based work as well as addressing the types of new research topics that might emerge from this type of paradigm. I then switch the focus and ask what community-based research might mean from the perspective of a community, and who controls the research.

1. INTRODUCTION.¹ Not too long ago, I listened to parts of a radio series on science. An episode on physics, and the role of theory and empirical work in physics, particularly caught my attention. The speaker was arguing for the core nature of empirical work within physics, and the need to focus on empirical work over theory, broadly speaking, in order to make advances at this time. He argued that theoretical advances would occur only with advances in empirical research.

This discussion about physics made me think about debates in linguistics over (at least) the last half-century around empirical research on languages. In linguistics, as in physics, there have been debates about the balance between theory and empirical work. In the world that I will characterize with the term *fieldwork*, with its focus on empirical work, the field of documentary linguistics has once again brought to the fore many of these controversies. Documentary linguistics has an empirical goal: focusing on the collection and archiving of data, with the development of principles relating to collection, archiving, and analysis of a diverse corpus. In documentary linguistics, like much work in science more generally, there are concerns about accountability and replicability. In these ways, documentary linguistics continues the tradition of regarding linguistics as a science, with a concentration on its empirical aspects. In documentary linguistics, the focus has been on data gathering and management over deep data analysis and description, at least for a point in time. See Himmelmann (1998, 2006), Austin (2010), and Woodbury (2003, 2011), among others, for detailed discussion of documentary linguistics.

The person talking about physics on the radio program made no mention of another concern that is often associated with documentary linguistics—one that has also been an

¹ This is a revised version of a talk presented at the plenary session on documentary linguistics at the 2010 annual meeting of the Linguistic Society of America, where my responsibility was to talk about different perspectives on linguistic work and communities. Thank you to Ken Rehg, Lise Dobrin, and Arienne Dwyer for inviting me to participate in the panel, to my fellow panelists Peter Austin and Michael Krauss, to those who raised questions and issues during and after the session, and to the advice from a reviewer for Language Documentation & Conservation.

interest beyond linguistics, in the social sciences. This is the notion of collaborative research. The term *collaborative* can be read in at least two ways. In one sense, it can refer to people from different academic disciplines or different areas within the same discipline. I do not address this sense of the term. Instead, I focus on collaboration with members of a community.

Across the social sciences, responsibility to the communities with which the researcher is engaged has become an important theme. Just as accountability with respect to data is a priority in documentary linguistics, accountability with respect to speakers, communities, and, when language transmission is diminished, would-be speakers, has become a high priority as well. While early descriptions of documentary linguistics—such as the well-known article by Himmelmann (1998)—do not address methodology much beyond technology and archiving, the recognition of engagement at some level has become essential as the field has grown and taken on its own life (e.g., Himmelmann 2006, Austin 2010, Woodbury 2011). For instance, the DoBeS program (Dokumentation Bedrohter Sprachen/Documentation of Endangered Languages), sponsored by Volkswagen, funds documentary linguistics, and the 2010 call for proposals includes in its criteria that the documentation “can be used for language maintenance and revitalization by the speech community”². The DoBeS criteria further require that “each documentation is carried out in close cooperation with the speech community and reflects the particular characteristics of the respective culture.” Austin (2010:12) says much the same, noting that part of the goal of documentary linguistics is “to support speakers of these languages in their desire to maintain them,” and he points out that documentary linguistics is concerned with the role of speakers, and their rights and needs.

It has become common in recent years for linguists involved in fieldwork to argue that, as a profession, linguists have a responsibility to become engaged with the community in which they are working, using models referred to as *participatory action research*, *community-based research*, *community-centered research*, *collaborative research*, and similar terms. I will use the terms *community-based* and *collaborative* interchangeably here. Czaykowska-Higgins (2009), Dobrin (2008), Furbee & Stanley (2002), Holton (2009), Mosel (2006), Penfield, Serratos, Tucker, Flores, Harper, Hill & Vasquez (2008), Shaw (2004), Wilkins (1992), and Yamada (2007, 2011), among others, have written recently in this area. A number of talks presented at the 2009 International Conference on Language Documentation & Conservation also dealt with collaborative research in linguistic fieldwork, including Beier; Benedicto, Antonlín, Delores, Fendly, Gómez, Salomón, Viñas i de Puig & Eggleston; Florey, Penfield & Tucker; Leonard & Haynes (now published as Leonard & Haynes 2010); Michael; and Truong & Garcez.³ Rice (2009a) contains a detailed bibliography. While the community-based framework is not one to be adopted by everyone, not being appropriate at all times in all circumstances, in this paper I would like

² In information for applicants available at <http://www.volkswagenstiftung.de/index.php?id=172&L=1>; accessed 15 July 2010

³ Handouts and videos of these presentations are available at <http://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/handle/10125/5961>

to focus on situations where it is appropriate.⁴

I begin with some discussion of what community-based research is (section 2), and then examine community-based research from two perspectives. I first take the perspective that is sometimes heard in universities, and sometimes adopted by colleagues in linguistics as well, that community-based research is not really research, but is rather community service. I point to some of the fallacies in this conclusion, looking at how traditional types of linguistic research can grow out of community-based work as well as the kinds of new research topics that might emerge from this type of work (section 3). I then switch the focus, and ask what community-based research might mean from the perspective of a community (section 4). Who defines the knowledge that contributes to making a concrete difference in the world, and how are such decisions negotiated?

2. WHAT IS COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH? Community-based research has at its core community involvement through all stages of the research, and it grows to a large degree out of work by Freire (1970) on pedagogy of the oppressed. It is discussed in many sources, both generally (e.g., Greenwood & Levin 1998, Reason & Bradbury 2001, Ryan 1995, Smith 1999, Stoecker 2001, Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker & Donohue 2003) and in linguistic fieldwork (e.g., Benedicto, Delores, & McLean 2002, Benedicto, Antolín, Delores, Fendly, Gómez, Salomón, Viñas i de Puig & Eggleston 2009, Cameron, Frazer, Harvey, Rampton & Richardson 1992, Czaykowska-Higgins 2009, Guérin & Lacrampe 2010, Junker & Blacksmith 2001, Leonard & Haynes 2010, Mosel 2004 and 2006, Penfield, Serratos, Tucker, Flores, Harper, Hill & Vasquez 2008, Shaw 2004, Wilkins 1992, Yamada 2007 and 2011, and others).

The Loka Institute, an advocacy organization concerned with making research, science, and technology responsive to social and environmental concerns and their social, political, and environmental repercussions, defines community-based research as follows: Community-based research is

“conducted by, for, and with the participation of community members... community-based research aims not merely to advance understanding but also to ensure that knowledge contributes to making a concrete difference in the world.”⁵

⁴ Dobrin (2008) presents a critique of community-based research, focusing in particular on the notion of community empowerment as a guiding principle in research on endangered languages, and stressing the need for researchers to understand the contemporary ethnographic situation in the region in which they plan to work. Dobrin emphasizes that what is considered empowerment in one part of the world is not necessarily so in another. Holton (2009) takes up a similar theme. He compares his experiences working in Alaska and in Indonesia, concluding that “what counts as ethical research may vary across cultures and languages” (172). In this article, I focus solely on situations in which community-based research—in a narrow view of that term (see section 2)—is an appropriate model, recognizing that this should not be taken as a desideratum for research on endangered languages.

⁵ Cited in Sarah Flicker, Beth Savan, Brian Kolenda, and Matto Mildenerger. 2008. A snapshot of community-based research in Canada: Who? What? Why? How? *Health Education Research* 23.1. 106-114. doi: 10.1093/her/cym007. First published online: February 25, 2007.

Similar definitions are found in other places. The Centre for Community Based Research (http://www.communitybasedresearch.ca/Page/View/CBR_definition.html; accessed 20 July 2010) identifies three major aspects of this type of research, summarized below.

- Community situated: research begins with a topic of practical relevance to the community (as opposed to individual scholars) and is carried out in a community setting.
- Collaborative: community members and researchers equitably share control of the research agenda through active and reciprocal involvement in the research design, implementation, and dissemination.
- Action-oriented: the process and results are useful to community members in making positive social change and promoting social equity.

Collaborative research has become a topic of discussion in linguistics only fairly recently (see Cameron, Frazer, Harvey, Rampton & Richardson 1992), but it is not a new research method. Lassiter (2005), an anthropologist, reviews the history of collaborative work in ethnographic research, focusing on issues that grow out of the disparities of colonization. Part of what has led to the current focus on community-based paradigms is the increasing awareness in linguistics that many languages are not being transmitted to a new generation, coupled with the understanding that communities do not choose to maintain their languages in order to add to the wealth of knowledge of languages, or because the languages are unique treasures, or because languages are being lost around the world (see Hill 2002 for discussion).

Within linguistics, Penfield, Serratos, Tucker, Flores, Harper, Hill & Vasquez (2008) provide a model for collaborative community-based projects in language documentation, offering a list of ten 'best practices'. These include having a plan, getting permission, doing your homework, choosing people carefully, creating a plan as a team, spending time in the community, providing two-way training, keeping documentation consistent with community language goals, being a language advocate, and asking the community to establish the protocols for access and use.

Czaykowska-Higgins (2009), developing work by Cameron, Frazer, Harvey, Rampton & Richardson (1992), introduces the term *community-based language research* (CBLR), defining it as a "model which allows for the production of knowledge on a language that is constructed *for*, *with*, and *by* community members, and that is therefore not primarily for or by linguists. In CBLR, linguists are actively engaged partners working collaboratively with language communities" (Czaykowska-Higgins 2009:24). Czaykowska-Higgins provides thoughtful discussion of various models of research as well as key aspects of collaborative research. Leonard & Haynes (2010) also discuss community-based research and its role in linguistic work, focusing on the notion of control. Yamada (2011) introduces another term, *Community Partnerships Model* (CPM), defining it as "a methodological approach to linguistic fieldwork that is collaborative and speech community-based" (2011:1.5). See section 4 for additional discussion.

It is easy to nitpick at the concept of community-based research. There are many important, challenging, and difficult questions that arise when such a research model is intro-

duced. Perhaps the most important questions, and the most difficult to answer, are these: What does *community* mean? What kind of group can constitute a community? Communities have complex structures, and a community in a broad geographic sense includes many communities within it, with different groups interacting because of family ties, shared interests, and so on. While the term *community-based research* might make one think that the largest possible community should be involved, in fact it does not necessarily imply a large number: in the research described in various articles this paper references, core teams often consist of small numbers—sometimes as small as just one or two members of a community who are keen on collaboration. Nevertheless, in many geographic communities there may well be permissions that must come from a community leader or council, or other organization, and, in this sense, a community means something larger than the individuals directly involved in the research.

Other questions are important, and complex, as well: Who speaks for a community? What is meant by *active engagement*? What does *collaboration* mean? Is this model of research applicable around the world, or does it seem to work best in countries like Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand? See note 3 for some comments on this last issue.

Rather than focus on these very interesting and important issues around community-based research, its definition, and its applicability, I use this term and the term *collaborative research* interchangeably to mean research in which participants are partners and collaborators in research of mutual interest and of usefulness to the community; see section 4 for a brief discussion of what this might mean. Just how this works itself out in different situations and at different times is a topic of great interest, but beyond the scope of the present paper; see the references listed above for further discussion. My focus is rather on responses to community-based research from within both the academic community and the native language community.

3. IS COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH REALLY RESEARCH? COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH IN THE ACADEMY. I served as director of an undergraduate program and a research center in Aboriginal studies at the University of Toronto for many years. In writing about the center, I frequently made reference to the importance of community-based research. At one point, one of the deans asked me to write a pamphlet on community-based research, saying that not all members of the dean's office understood what is meant by *community-based research*, and that it was regarded by some as 'do-good' work that was all well and good, but was not academic research. Instead, *community-based research* was confused with *community service*, something that is valuable, along with research, something that is also valuable, but in a very different way. I have heard linguists make similar comments about community-based research, saying that it is not the responsibility of linguists to take on this kind of work, and linguists should concentrate on studying language.⁶

⁶ See Newman 2009 for remarks along these lines, directed more at documentary linguistics generally than at community-based research specifically. See also the brief remarks on work by Dobrin 2008 and Holton 2009 in note 3 for a critique of community-based language research, but on very different grounds.

At the core of these comments is an assumption that a community-based methodology, as rewarding as it may be, does not lead to ‘real’ research.

Community-based or collaborative research is controversial beyond linguistic fieldwork. Lassiter (2005) writes that a report of a 2002 task force on ethnographic work in anthropology recommended collaborative practice to resolve issues that were arising, where “local experts work side by side with outside researchers, with a fully dialogic exchange of knowledge” (Lassiter 2005:xi, quoted from the task force report). He remarks that some powerful anthropologists responded that collaborative research was unprofessional and invalid (Lassiter 2005:x). He goes on to say that perhaps collaborative ethnographies “linger at the margins because they do not engender the same kinds of authority, prestige, and recognition as the texts we explicitly write for our academic colleagues; or perhaps they remain at the margins because our interlocutors’ constructions of culture differ too profoundly from the academy’s construction of culture” (Lassiter 2005:13). Whatever the case may be, linguistics as a discipline is not alone in having some doubts about the value of community-based fieldwork.

In this section I address the assumption that community-based research is not ‘real’ research, at times framed as being unscientific. This section is explicitly aimed at those who are skeptical about community-based research, like those mentioned in the paragraphs above. In this section I hope to articulate some of the types of research that can result from this model. I am sure that those who are practitioners and advocates of this research model will identify many more examples, as well as lay out the kinds of challenges faced in this type of work. I focus solely on knowledges and the ‘products’ of research that might grow out of collaborative methodologies that are traditionally recognized as constituting research that is valued by universities. The focus is thus quite narrow and is not meant to devalue the other types of research involved in community-based research.

3.1 THE ‘BOASIAN TRILOGY.’ I begin with what is sometimes called the ‘Boasian trilogy’, namely the production of a grammar, a dictionary, and texts in a language. There is ongoing discussion in places like the Linguistic Society of America Committee on Endangered Languages and their Preservation about how well-recognized grammars, dictionaries, and texts are as research products in terms of being hired for a job, but there is no doubt that these are products that are of enormous value in further research.

Before turning to the Boasian trilogy and community-based research, I examine some of the kinds of theoretical linguistic work that has been made possible because of the work that has gone into writing grammars, dictionaries, and texts. The examples are so numerous that it is difficult even to know where to begin, so this extremely brief survey does not come close to doing justice to the invaluable role that grammars, dictionaries, and texts have served in the development of linguistic theory. It is impossible to imagine current linguistic theory, be it formally or functionally oriented, without the existence of the quality descriptions found in the Boasian trilogy.

To start with phonology, I recently did a survey of a number of grammars written in the first half of the twentieth century, largely grammars written in the Sapirian tradition at the University of California, Berkeley. I looked at what constituted phonology in that time period through a study of these grammars (Rice 2009b). It was interesting to see how many of the classic debates in phonology in the past 30 years or so arise out of these grammars.

For instance, debates on rule ordering drew from Tunica, those on abstractness built on research on Yowlumne (also known as Yawelmani), and Klamath figured prominently in understanding syllable structure. The metathesis database at Ohio State⁷ which has formed the foundations of much of the recent theoretical work on metathesis, used grammars of languages as its starting point.

Turning to morphology, Algonquian languages have been at the core of work on morphological theory, with material often being drawn from the grammars of these languages. Our understanding of reduplication has been deeply informed through grammars of languages around the world; this can be seen by the references in the Graz database on reduplication (<http://reduplication.uni-graz.at/db.html>, accessed 20 July 2010). Research on morphological typology relies heavily on grammars: for instance, Bauer's (2009) treatment of the typology of compounds owes its range of languages to the existence of grammars.

In syntax, too, advances in the theoretical understanding of word order rely heavily on the grammars that have been written over the years, as does the understanding of topics such as case systems and lexical categories. There can be little doubt about the key role that grammars play in linguistics.

Similar points can be made about dictionaries. For instance, dictionaries have allowed for a variety of kinds of phonological work, with comprehensive dictionaries serving as the source of generalization about phonotactics, and allowing for research on static constraints on word forms. Dictionaries have also allowed for research on lexical semantics.

Texts are an invaluable source of material for studying discourse structure. For instance, work on topics such as switch reference and sequence of tense phenomena requires discourse-level material, and texts are indispensable to such studies. With recordings of texts, work on areas such as intonation becomes possible.

It is difficult to imagine linguistics being anywhere near the stage it has reached without the careful, in-depth study of languages available through grammars, dictionaries, and texts. In general, the materials described in the above paragraphs grew out of fieldwork where community engagement was not a primary goal. Is there any reason to think that community-based fieldwork will not produce grammars, dictionaries, and texts? Further, is there any reason to believe that such materials that grow out of community-based research will be less useful for traditional intellectual endeavors in linguistics than those done under other research paradigms?

In response to the first question, I mention two types of evidence. I first consider some of the research programs sponsored by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada that take partnerships and collaboration as their core: the Community-University Research Alliance program and the Aboriginal Research program (see Rice 2010 for some discussion; these programs have now amalgamated as a Partnership program, with similar aims). These programs have funded community-based language projects. Almost uniformly, the language-based projects involve the creation of dictionaries (often web-based) teaching grammars, and texts, among other things. Second, courses offered at

⁷ <http://metathesisinlanguage.osu.edu/default.cfm>, accessed 20 July 2010

summer institutes for speakers of Aboriginal languages in the United States and Canada⁸, generally involve topics such as lexicography and videotaping of conversation. Training in basic grammatical analysis is a core part of such programs as well. Both the research and the education programs thus value basic linguistic research. There is little reason to think that the dictionaries, grammars, and texts that result from community-based research methods will be any less valuable than those undertaken using other methods.

3.2 ‘TRADITIONAL’ RESEARCH BEYOND THE BOASIAN TRILOGY. What about traditional research beyond the Boasian trilogy? I will give just a few examples here, suggesting that community-based research has the potential to enhance such research efforts.

I begin with a phonological example from my work on the northern Athabaskan language Dene (Slavey). In work on developing a dictionary, we spent quite a lot of time talking about tone, and whether to mark tone in the dictionary. Just as Sapir (1933) talked about John Whitney, a Tsuut’ina (Sarcee) speaker that he worked closely with, giving him insight into the language through his insistence that two words that Sapir heard as identical were different, it was through this dictionary work that one of the team made me realize I was missing complexities in the tone system. More particularly, in that variety tone did not appear to be contrastive on verb stems, with leveling of tones in this context. However, as the speakers forcefully pointed out, the tone was there, but appeared on the syllable before the verb stem rather than on the stem itself. Moreover, this led to the creation of a clear third phonetic tone—in addition to the high and low tones that were described in the literature, there is an extra-high tone that occurs when a stem high tone is realized on a syllable with a lexical high tone. It was through this group process of dictionary work that I came to understand this. This research has contributed to the understanding of the language and its family, and more generally to the understanding of tonal phonology.

Turning to issues of morphology, my understanding of how number is marked in Dene grew out of work done in writing workshops. In these workshops, people interested in literacy and in language teaching wrote short stories on topics that they chose. Some chose traditional stories; others wrote autobiographical sketches. The writing workshops were part of a series aimed at building literacy, something desired by members of the community. These stories dramatically show the difference in the use of third person plural pronouns depending upon whether the entity in question is human/humanized or not, with a switch from a plural pronoun to one unmarked for number when a human/humanized entity is no longer living. This understanding of how plurality and animacy might intersect is important for understanding the language, and also from a theoretical perspective where, for instance, it contributes to a typological understanding of the interaction between these categories. This work could have been done without the capacity-building component that came through the literacy workshops, but this research was possible with it as well.

⁸ E.g., the American Indian Language and Literacy Development Institute (AILDI, <http://aildi.arizona.edu/>, accessed 27 July 2011) the Canadian Indigenous Language and Literacy Development Institute (CILLDI, <http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/cilldi/>, accessed 27 July 2011), and University of Victoria’s Aboriginal Languages Revitalization Program (<http://www.uvcs.uvic.ca/aspnet/Program/Detail/?code=CALR>, accessed 27 July 2011)

Yamada (forthcoming) reexamines a particular morpheme in Kari'nja, a Cariban language, asking whether it represents evidentiality or deixis. Yamada (2007) describes the process through which she and Chief Mande, a community linguist with whom she worked very closely, came to the understanding that they currently have of the morpheme. It was through difficulties that Chief Mande had in teaching the use of this morpheme that they worked together to come to an analysis of it, an analysis that will appear in a respected linguistics journal.

Mosel (2009) discusses a language documentation project on Teop, an Oceanic language. A team has been working on this language, with one of the goals being to develop a series of thematic mini-dictionaries, together with definitions and short texts. Mosel points to several findings from this work. For instance, the lexical work allowed for a study of lexemes denoting properties, and the differences between these and verbs. The dictionary work also allowed for a study of word order, revealing some surprises in showing that what Mosel thought was the dominant, unmarked word order (Subject – Verb Complex – Primary Object – Secondary Object) could not be considered so in some types of texts. In particular, Mosel found that it is necessary to think about dominant word order with respect to a particular type of text, with the word order Secondary Object – Verb Complex – Subject – Primary Object occurring when the object is a topic. Mosel (2007) has written on this construction, one that had not been observed previously in the language and that has implications more generally for the understanding of word order in Oceanic languages and beyond. This type of study is very important in terms of understanding the language better, as well as understanding general principles of word order.

Work on dictionaries provides rich information for other types of research as well. For instance, areas such as classifier systems, aspect systems, and evidentials have been the focus of much attention in recent years. Dictionaries, especially those that include example sentences and links to texts, as many current dictionaries do, are a wonderful resource for this kind of work. Dictionaries can yield other types of information as well. For instance, work on dictionaries leads to a better understanding of word formation in a language. Dictionary work also provides a window into variation in language in terms of sounds and word formation, work that is enhanced when linked sound files are available, as is increasingly the case in dictionary work. Work on topical dictionaries can lead to a different type of understanding of categorization systems as one seeks to discover what are viewed as important topics by speakers of a language.

Collaborative research can also lead to a reconsideration of the products of the Boasian trilogy. One might ask, for instance, what is a grammar? What must it include? How might it be presented? A recent grammar of Navajo by Yazzie & Speas (2007) includes deep cultural knowledge that is not presented so explicitly in most grammars, and the information is not necessarily easy to obtain in models that do not include community-based research. Dictionaries like the recent Passamaquoddy-Maliseet dictionary (Francis & Leavitt 2008) are remarkable for their depth of information and for wonderful use of example sentences; it is through community-based research that this dictionary was possible. Dictionaries like this can serve as models for what a dictionary might be, and can lead to research on how dictionaries for languages with long traditions of dictionaries might be rethought.

Community-based research can also help in addressing other traditional research areas in linguistics, and I mention just a few more. An area of interest in linguistic research in

recent years has been deep genetic relationships between languages. This research requires in-depth knowledge of individual languages, with careful reconstruction of proto languages. High quality material on each language adds to the reliability of the reconstructions, and such data can be obtained through community-based research. In addition to serving the needs of comparative work, such work may well lead to a richer understanding of the lexicon and its structure than is available in standard research paradigms as speakers explore corners of the lexicon that a non-speaker might remain unaware of.

Community-based work thus can lead to a deep understanding of a language. Such understandings of individual languages give strength to theoretical areas of all sorts. Further, typological work depends critically on high-quality materials from a variety of languages. For a different type of example, linguists often seek arguments based on absence of structures. A well-known recent debate involves recursion (e.g., Everett 2005, 2009; Nevins, Pesetsky & Rodrigues 2009a, b, based on claims by Hauser, Chomsky & Fitch 2002) where arguments about the nature of human language rest on whether or not recursion structures must exist. It is important that the methodology be such that the researcher can be quite confident that the structures in question truly do not exist. Community-based research can allow such insights into a language that do not always emerge otherwise, no matter how capable the fieldworker is.

As a final example, linguists argue for and against universals, and about what might be innate to language and what is part of more general cognitive structures. In a 2010 article, Boroditsky suggests that “as we uncover how languages and their speakers differ from one another, we discover that human natures too can differ dramatically, depending on the languages we speak.” The relationship between language and thought is an old question, as Boroditsky notes. She continues, arguing that an important next step is to understand the mechanisms through which languages help us construct our complex knowledge systems. This research depends on in-depth knowledge of languages. Part of the research that led Boroditsky to this conclusion is based on work with Alice Gaby on Pormuraaw, an Aboriginal language in Australia. Gaby wrote on her website that her work would only be possible in collaboration with the communities, and this collaboration has given her an appreciation of the link between grammar and culture (accessed 10 August 2010; no longer available July 2011).

It would be easy to multiply cases where community-based research leads to the type of data that has been obtained without it. This research method can result in products that are traditionally regarded as research, and are of importance from the perspectives of both language description and theory. It is also worth stressing that data that arises out of community-based research may well be richer than it would be without this methodology. When the speakers themselves are engaged in the questions of research, often for different reasons than the linguist might have had for becoming interested, they bring that speaker intuition discussed by Sapir (1933), Hale (1976), and many others.

Collaborative work can ultimately lead to better linguistic work, and often to new linguistic questions. It is such questions that I will turn to now.

3.3 MORE ON RESEARCH. Of equal importance to supporting the types of research discussed so far is that community-based work can open the door to new areas of research. It is difficult to give a list of topics, as they tend to emerge from the particulars of a com-

munity, its needs, the relationships between people, and so on. However, I will identify a few areas in which this type of work has led to different kinds of work than had been done previously.

An area that has gained particular currency through community-based research is work on ethics in fieldwork. When I was first asked to speak on ethics in fieldwork at the 2000 meeting of the Linguistic Society of America, I was able to find much written on ethics with respect to the study of endangered languages, growing out of the work led by Michael Krauss, Ken Hale, Colette Grinevald, and many others in the 1990s (see Hale et al. 1992). However, I was amazed at how little I was able to find about responsibilities to speakers and communities in the linguistic literature. There is now an extensive literature in this area, resulting from the shift that has been occurring in recognizing responsibilities towards individuals and communities. Many of the papers in the journal *Language Documentation & Conservation* are concerned with ethics, as are many of the talks from the 2009 and 2011 International Conferences on Language Documentation & Conservation. In 2009, the Linguistic Society of America adopted a statement on ethics in linguistic work, speaking to the impact of this type of research on the field.⁹ See Rice (2009a, forthcoming) for a bibliography.

Other areas of research have emerged in community-based fieldwork as well. In work on endangered languages, we can learn more about changes in languages that are heard in limited circumstances but not transmitted directly. What do people in this situation know of a language (see, for instance, Sherkina-Lieber, Pérez-Leroux & Johns 2011)? This is important not only for the development of curriculum materials in the language, but also for the understanding of language acquisition and language loss. Variation in languages where there is not traditionally written literacy is an interesting topic. What kind of variation is tolerated in a small community? We can ask sociolinguistic questions about what it means to know a language, and come to understand different perspectives on this (e.g., Leonard & Haynes 2009). We might develop new practices of doing high-quality phonetic work when soundproof booths are not available, or when it proves difficult for people to work with carrier sentences.

Attention has been paid to the teaching of languages without a long written tradition, and how this can be done, enhancing the field of educational linguistics. Collaborative research may lead to different understandings of literacy and what it is important for. Community-based research might lead to psycholinguistic work as well if people aim to un-

⁹ Somewhat less directly related to ethics, but nevertheless worth mentioning: in 2010 the Linguistic Society of America adopted a resolution that speaks to the importance of a variety of kinds of research and of responsibilities to communities, stating that not only grammars, dictionaries, and text collections, but also archives of primary data, electronic databases, corpora, critical editions of legacy materials, pedagogical works designed for the use of speech communities, software, websites, and other digital media be recognized as scholarly contributions. In addition, the resolution states that the products of language documentation and work supporting linguistic vitality are of significant importance to the preservation of linguistic diversity, are fundamental and permanent contributions to the foundation of linguistics, and are intellectual achievements which require sophisticated analytical skills, deep theoretical knowledge, and broad linguistic expertise. Thus the major linguistic society of the United States has recognized the value of such work, all of which can arise from community-based work.

derstand how a particularly complex structure might be learned. Community-based work might lead to a study of language change within a community, and attitudes towards language and language shift. It can lead to better understandings of the ecology of language, the theme of the Linguistic Society of America 2009 Linguistic Institute, through tapping the knowledge of people with deep local historical and ecological knowledge. Research on climate change is being undertaken by linguists (e.g., Hargus to appear), picking up on a deep interest in many communities, and enriching areas such as lexical semantics.

This is only a tiny sample of the kinds of areas that linguistic research might extend to with community-based research. There are many areas in which collaboration with a community will bring new insights to old questions and areas that cannot even be anticipated.

3.4 SUMMARY. Community-based research may not ultimately produce the large corpora that we have for languages like English, French, and Japanese. It may not be possible to fill all the cells in sociolinguistic research that would render statistically valid samples with a small speaker population; it may not be possible to do types of sophisticated experimental work that rely on literacy. Nevertheless, this does not negate the value of this work for understanding language, and of the new understandings that arise out of this type of research. Such research may, in fact, help us to re-evaluate paradigms that have developed for research, opening them up to greater diversity. Czaykowska-Higgins (2009) ends her paper with the following words:

“In the future, as more linguists engage in collaborative kinds of research with communities, collaborative research models will become more readily understood within the Western academic world. Linguists in the 21st century have more opportunities for choosing how to practice linguistic research than they had in the past. New types of knowledge, new benefits for linguists and for communities are likely to result. It is a very interesting, exciting, and challenging time to be a linguist.”

Community-based research offers one such opportunity. Lassiter (2005), in *The Chicago Guide to Collaborative Ethnography*, speaking of ethnographic work and collaboration at all levels including writing, draws a similar conclusion, noting that ethnographic work and collaboration at all levels is intellectually rewarding as well as serving broader needs.

4. ‘GIVING BACK.’ I would now like to shift gears. In the first part of this paper I focused on the value of community-based research from an academic perspective. I suggested that it is a methodology that can lead to better research on topics that are traditionally considered to be within the domain of linguistics, that it opens up research on questions that had not been asked previously and, in addition, that it allows for rich intellectual exchange and the fulfillment of moral responsibilities. This is a perspective that is often expressed by linguists engaged in fieldwork, and that is inherent in the descriptions of some of the programs that fund work on language documentation.

What about communities? What does community-based research mean from a community perspective? Is this kind of research valued? Who decides what is valuable to a

community? Do some communities view what a linguist deems to be collaborative research as ‘linguist-focused’, to use the term introduced by Czaykowska-Higgins (2009)?

As noted in almost all the work on community-based research cited in this article and elsewhere, there are no single answers to these questions; answers are dependent on a variety of factors including place, time, individuals involved, and particulars of the research. In this section I would like to briefly discuss what it might mean for such work to be of value to a community. In the Loka Institute definition of community-based research, discussed in section 1, the phrase “making a concrete difference in the world” is used. Who defines the knowledge that contributes to making a concrete difference in the world? This is an important question since the goals of community-based research include contributing to research, and also focusing on participation, collaboration, and social justice. Indigenous researchers often note the powerful asymmetries that exist between ‘researcher’ and ‘re-searched’, with attention to the politics of fieldwork (e.g., Smith 1999, Mihesuah 1993, Battiste & Henderson 2000; see also Dobrin 2008 for discussion within the context of linguistic work). Lassiter 2005 discusses this in some detail, stating, with respect to ethnographic work: “Anthropologists and American Indian scholars alike continue to call for models that more assertively attend to community concerns ...” (5–6). He points out that the texts produced by ethnographers matter intellectually, politically, and ethically, in the academy, in communities, in practice, and in moral commitments (2005:14). It is in this sense that it is important to ask what it means to be collaborative.

There is a phrase that has become common in recent years: ‘giving back’. This is part of what motivates community-based research—the researcher wants to be seen as giving, not just taking. Many linguists, at least in a North American context, have commented that they have been told that, as colonizers, they took away so much, and through their linguistic work, they are now trying to take away the language (e.g., Hill 2002). Indigenous scholars in North America, Australia, and New Zealand at least comment on the Eurocentric paradigm that has dominated scholarship, asking for scholarship that is relevant to communities, serves their needs, includes participation, and emphasizes partnerships and mutual understanding (e.g. Smith 1999, Battiste & Henderson 2000). Battiste & Henderson (2000) state this as follows:

“Ethical research systems and practices should enable Indigenous nations, peoples, and communities to exercise control over information related to their knowledge and heritage and to themselves. These projects should be managed jointly with Indigenous people, and the communities being studied should benefit from training and employment opportunities generated by the research. Above all, it is vital that Indigenous peoples have direct input into developing and defining research practices and projects related to them. To act otherwise is to repeat that familiar pattern of decisions being made for Indigenous people by those who presume to know what is best for them.” (Battiste & Henderson 2000:132)

It is not surprising, given this type of background and the general state of the world today, that linguists would want to give back. At the same time, given the close working relationships that linguists often develop with the speakers they work with, field linguists might feel that they are already involved in collaborative relationships, and that giving

notes and products of research, or developing a reader, is an appropriate form of giving back. It is thus worthwhile to look at the notion of collaboration a little more deeply.

Collaboration is defined as follows in Wikipedia (accessed 8 August 2010): “recursive process where two or more people or organizations work together in an intersection of common goals.” There are important words here—*recursive*, *together*, *intersection*, *common*. How do these play themselves out with respect to linguistic research? I will focus here on ‘common goals’.

The terms *community-based research* and, especially, *collaborative research* are used to cover many different types of work. Sometimes these terms are interpreted to mean that copies of any research produced are left in a community—a dissertation, articles written, a dictionary, audio and video recordings. This is important, as such things might well be useful to members of a community who are interested in language teaching or language revitalization, and such materials might be important for symbolic purposes, although in many cases the technical language used might not be easily interpretable. There are many examples that speak to the value of material such as grammars and dictionaries. Perhaps most persuasive of the value of linguistic description and documentation is the way such materials have been used to bring back languages that have not been spoken for some time, but for which there is quality documentation. See, for just a few of many examples, Amery (2000) on Kaurna; Ash, Fermino & Hale (2001) on several languages; Baldwin (2003) and Leonard (2007, 2008) on Myaamia; and Warner, Luna & Butler (2007) on Mutsun; see also Hinton (2001) and Leonard (2008) for general discussion.

Sometimes collaboration is interpreted as developing a reader for use by members of a community, or creating a topical dictionary, or building a website. It might be interpreted as leaving a camera and a computer so that people can create a dictionary on their own. It might be interpreted as working together to make a video that highlights language use. It might involve training of community members to work with the linguist. It might be working with people to meet their goals of developing curriculum materials.

In all these cases, there is a variety of methodologies that might be involved. It might be that, while a community is involved in doing the research, the researcher maintains control of the agenda, deciding what the research is about and what they think the community needs. Or it might be that the linguist asks the community what its needs are and attempts to meet these, working together with the community. It might also be that the linguist and the community work closely with each other, jointly engaged in defining the research and carrying it out from the start. This latter type of research is called *collaborative fieldwork* by Leonard & Haynes (2010:288). They model it as shown below in Figure 1.



FIGURE 1. True Collaboration: Equal Access to the Research Process (Leonard & Haynes 2010)

Cranmer, Smith & Shaw (2009) also explicitly discuss this type of model. They identify three phases in their work: negotiating difference; building trust, reconciling difference; and collaboration. See Penfield, Serratos, Tucker, Flores, Harper, Hill & Vasquez (2008) for foundational work on this paradigm.

As noted above, none of the scenarios described here can be judged as right or wrong arbitrarily when considered from the perspective of community-based research. All might be possible results of such a paradigm. There are other things that might be asked of a researcher that could be surprising—to drive someone to the hospital, to participate on a radio show, to cook dinner for someone, to clean roads. What collaborative research involves is negotiating and meeting joint goals, where more than the researcher’s needs are taken into account. See Holton (2009) for thoughts on different ways in which this might happen in different places.

Czaykowska-Higgins (2009:40) remarks that community-based linguistic research “involves learning different ways of thinking about research and about being a researcher, and learning new ways of conducting research; it requires participating in processes of consultation and, thus, learning how to participate in consultation; it requires learning how to listen and respond to all kinds of values and assumptions, including one’s own; and it requires negotiating the often-contradictory demands and expectations of academic institutions and the goals and needs of the language-using community.” This does not necessarily mean that jobs are equally shared, and it does not necessarily mean that there are things that any party must or must not do. It does not force a particular way of working or a particular product, beyond the consultation that is determined to be necessary by those involved as well as thinking about control. See Dobrin (2008) and Holton (2009) for discussion of consultation and its applicability—like *community*, there is not a single meaning to this word.

Holton (2009:173) points out that “the pursuit of universal interpretations of ethical guidelines and standards may prove elusive, or in the worst case even harmful.” Thus, we will probably be most successful at community-based work if we do not look for a single

way of doing it, but recognize that it means many different things. It is also likely that as relationships develop and participation deepens, the types of questions that can be asked will change in a way that cannot necessarily be anticipated.

In terms of giving back, it is easy to trivialize this important concept. The major point I wish to make is simple to state: just because the linguist thinks community needs are being met, this does not mean that is the case (see Nevins 2004 for very interesting discussion on this topic, as well as Dobrin 2008). This is not the call of the linguist alone.

5. SUMMARY. I have focused on community-based research, and I now return to documentary linguistics more broadly. Issues of accountability loom large in documentary linguistics. For one thing, there is accountability to the data. In fieldwork in recent years, this has been greatly enhanced through developments in technology and archiving, as well as an emphasis on empirical work. Archives allow broader access (given attention to access conditions) to the primary data, making material interpretable through the lens of different researchers. There is also accountability to people. One paradigm that is designed to meet this is community-based research. This paradigm emphasizes research models that are appropriate to a community, with a range of realizations depending on participants, place, time, topics, and so on. Documentary linguistics highlighted partnerships from the start, beginning with partnerships with other researchers. As documentary linguistics has developed, partnerships with speakers and interested community members have become more and more important. As the partnerships with speakers and communities develop, it is likely that the quality of the linguistic work will deepen.

In addition to enhancing the quality of linguistic work and serving a broader set of needs, I believe documentary linguistics, including the focus on community, is one of the many forces that is bringing about change in the field of linguistics. In a 2007 Linguistic Society of America plenary address, Mark Liberman considered the status of linguistics, arguing that linguistics plays far less of a role than it once did. He has argued that digital technology might play an important role in redefining the status of linguistics.¹⁰ Documentary linguistics may also help in redefining the status of linguistics, offering another way of gaining insight into language, and bringing together people from many walks of life—in addition to the community members and linguists that have been the major topic of this paper, work in documentary linguistics has involved anthropologists, educators, artists, filmmakers, ethnobiologists, ethnomusicologists, political scientists, historians, and a variety of others to provide the deepest insight into language in its broadest sense.

We are at a very interesting time on the swing of the pendulum as we look at language in its larger setting. While language structure occupied much of the attention of linguists for many years, the importance of other factors in understanding language is now important. For instance, the Linguistic Society of America 2009 Linguistic Institute was named 'The Ecology of Language', and the 2011 LSA institute was called 'Language and the World'. These titles suggest that as a field overall, linguists are interested in language for more than its structure, and what could be more important than the speakers?

Documentary linguistics involves linguists of different persuasions and speakers working together, often with very different ideas of fundamental issues, such as what it means

¹⁰ [http://languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu/Language Log](http://languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu/Language%20Log), 9 August 2009; accessed 20 July 2010

to speak a language (see Leonard & Haynes 2010 for interesting discussion on this topic) and what is important to know about a language (see, for instance, Nevins 2004 for discussion). If linguists are interested in understanding the mind and culture through language, in understanding language use, and in gaining insight into topics such as language structure and language change, then documentary linguistics, and community-based research as a core piece of documentary linguistics, will be valued not only for how it serves society in general, but also for how it serves the profession. This method will not interest everyone, nor, in a narrow monolithic sense, is it appropriate everywhere, and that is fine, but I hope that it will be respected.

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