Participatory Action Research and the Experimental Process

Under the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, external research initiatives can be presented to a speaker community, and upon their acceptance of the project, the resulting data product can be repurposed for the community benefit.

What is PAR?

- PAR seeks the **active** participation of members of the speaker community
- Community members are **agents**, not ‘experimental subjects’
- PAR seeks to rebalance the power dynamic between researcher and community to one of equality

Introducing External Research Projects to the Community: The Process

- **External research initiative was introduced for discussion** to the Mayangna community
- **Project was designed to elicit language data concerning how the Mayangna language represented objects in space and their orientation**
- **Mayangna community accepted the research initiative and became experiment leaders**
- **The community discovered a new use for the research data that benefited their community**

Training of Indigenous Linguist Team

**Technology Training**

- The Mayangna linguists had already been trained to use **ELAN**, a software annotation tool for language (see Viñas de Puig, Frs. 11:00 AM, Sarima, 2010)
- They also participated in training to operate a digital video camera, for the purpose of recording experimental tasks

**Training in the Experimental Process**

- Mayangna linguists participated in a workshop designed to train them to be experimental leaders
- Trained in data collection procedures for elicitation tasks

Project Execution

**Mayangna Linguists**

- Directed elicitation tasks with other speakers within their community
- Collected data resulting from these tasks
- Recorded tasks on video
- Annotated language data on the computer, using ELAN

Data Collection & Processing

Analysis of Data and Project Results

Repurposed results for use in elementary school curriculum:

- Lesson plans for explicit ways of describing an object’s spatial position
- Body-part, animal-part, and plant-part terms can be added to textbook materials