Language Documentation & Conservation Special Publication No. 23
Theoretical reflections around the role of fieldwork in linguistics and linguistic anthropology: Contributions of indigenous researchers from southern Mexico
ed. by Emiliana Cruz Cruz, 131-152
http://nflrc.hawaii.edu/ldc/sp23
http://hdl.handle.net/10125/24988

Ethical principles in linguistic fieldwork methodologies–According to whom?

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Abstract
This article seeks to establish a dialogue between the methodological proposals that have been put forward for linguistic fieldwork and the growing experiences of Indigenous linguists. It is well known that the theorizing of the methodologies that dictate linguists' interactions in their communities of study is carried out from a perspective foreign to both the language and the community. These methodologies are designed for and guided by non-Indigenous academics, predominantly academics from different countries than those of the language and its speakers. This paper argues that the challenges faced by insider and insider-outsider linguists are not the same challenges as those faced by outsider linguists. Thus, this article contributes to a reevaluation of the universality of ethical methodological principles of fieldwork behavior in contemporary linguistics and promotes a local, Indigenous perspective that implies the decolonization of fieldwork methodologies designed by and for foreigners and uncritically adopted by insider and insider-outsider linguists.

Keywords:
linguistic fieldwork, outsider linguist, insider linguist, insider-outsider linguist, community, methodologies.

1. Fieldwork in linguistics[1]

Within linguistics, as with the social sciences in general, the recommended "fieldwork" methodologies have been designed from a perspective foreign to the language and community of study (Himmelmann 1998; Newman and Ratliff 2001; Woodbury 2003; Bowern 2008; Sakel and Everett 2012; among others). This framing begins as a need to define the work of those who study minority languages in the context in which the target language is spoken. It is assumed, then, that fieldwork is carried out by someone who spends a field season (short or long) in the community where the language of study is spoken, thus also presupposing that fieldwork is carried out by linguists who are not from that community. Consequently, the methodologies considered to be good practice in the field are designed from the same outsider perspective.

In the following sections, I aim to make it clear that we, as Indigenous people working in our own communities, are also conducting fieldwork, and that the field methods put forward in linguistics to date do not represent us with respect to the ethical principles within our own communities. To demonstrate this, I have divided the text into the following sections. In §2, I highlight what I do not address in this text. In §3, I speak briefly about the emergence of Indigenous linguists in Mexico and Guatemala. In §4, I mention some reasons why, in my own experience, it is important to discuss field methods. In §5, I discuss the role of speakers and communities in language documentation projects. In §6, I speak about the lack of true inclusion of Indigenous linguists in theorizing the development of linguistic field methods. In §7, I question the existence of field methods for Indigenous linguists. In §8, I discuss some specific ethical considerations. Finally, §9, concludes.

2. Notes about what is said here

As a caveat, I present only some of what is needed for rethinking what "fieldwork" is from the Indigenous perspective and what this process implies. I do not mention each and every one of the practices that have been suggested as prototypical within the field of linguistic documentation (Himmelmann 1998; Bowern 2008), but the points

1 I wish to thank Dr. Emiliana Cruz Cruz for inspiring and motivating me to write this article and for her valuable comments. I also wish to thank Dr. Néstor Hernández-Green and two anonymous readers who gave me important suggestions for improvement of this article. However, as the author of this article, I am solely responsible for any remaining errors in the content or its presentation.

touched on in this text have to do with these ethical principles and their effects within communities. This paper does not cover all possible viewpoints nor all possible ways of proceeding in all community environments, nor does it make a generalization about each linguist working in their own community and/or in other Indigenous communities. Each community makes its own rules that govern its internal interactions, and often these rules determine our best methodological practices in our work as linguists.

I do not discuss the challenges that some Indigenous linguists face in getting a quality education and having the same opportunities as their colleagues of another ethnic origin. Neither do I discuss the challenges with respect to ability, resources, motivation, infrastructure, and community leadership and involvement in the process of linguistic fieldwork. It is necessary to mention these factors because they could directly interfere with the workflow that each one implements when going to the field.

What I present here is directly related to the experience I have had during my training in linguistics at universities in Mexico and at a university in the United States of America (USA), as well as my experience as an insider and insider-outsider[2] linguist working on Tseltal and Mocho'[3] respectively. I hope that my perspective is shared at least by my Indigenous colleagues in Mexico and perhaps in other parts of the world. But I also hope that, with this article as a point of departure, other Indigenous linguists can offer their perspectives about field methods in linguistics.

3. The emergence of Indigenous linguists

Linguistic training of native speakers began alongside the first efforts to include minority languages in linguistic research. Since the 1970s, in many parts of the world a new era has begun in modern linguistics with respect to linguistic documentation

2 *Outsider* linguists are those who do not belong to the community in which they conduct their studies and who do not speak the language, nor do they belong to any other community that speaks a minority language. An outsider linguist in the majority of cases speaks the language of the dominant group. *Insider* linguists are researchers who study the minority language that they speak and who conduct their research in their own communities. In some cases they do not speak the language because it is only spoken by elderly people in the community. A third group of linguists is what I call here *insider-outsiders*. This group includes linguists who come from a marginalized group that speaks a language different from the minority language that they study and who are generally citizens of the same country or region so that they identify strongly with the group they study and share many of the same local problems. For more detail, see Meakins et al. (2018).

3 Tseltal and Mocho' are Mayan languages of the large Western branch. Tseltal belongs to the Cholan-Tseltalan subgroup and Mocho,' to the Q'anjob'alan subgroup. Tseltal has approximately half a million speakers in central, south, and northeast Chiapas. Mocho' has approximately 50 speakers and is spoken in Tuzantán and Motozintla, border towns in Chiapas on the Guatemala-Mexico border.

and description, namely, linguistic training of native speakers in order to achieve better results in data collection projects. These native speakers could be merely informants or, in the best of cases, could themselves be the ones carrying out the description of their own languages.

For example, in Guatemala[4] training of speakers of Mayan languages was carried out, some of whom were later academically trained as linguists. This generation of Indigenous linguists in Guatemala was the precursor to certain demands that have not only influenced linguistic work in that country but have also achieved prominence within linguistics in general. England (1992) summarizes the proposals of Cojti Cuxil (1990), a Maya activist and linguist, who explicitly and implicitly presents a set of standards and obligations that outsider linguists should respect when studying Guatemalan minority languages. Today, several of these participants of a Maya background occupy positions which promote the study of and research on Mayan languages in Guatemala and Mexico. Another example is Mexico, where, through the *Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social* (CIESAS)[5] which was created in Mexico in 1973, a substantial number of Indigenous linguists have received training. One of the prerequisites for attending this institution is that the participant speak the language of study, and one of the primary requirements for graduation is to produce a language documentation corpus as the basis for their linguistic study, which results in a master's and/or doctoral thesis. Many of these graduates are dedicated to Indigenous bilingual education, and some have recently entered governmental positions concerned with Indigenous languages, while some others have research positions. Many of the students who came from Guatemala and Mexico in the generation of the 1980s have been accepted to foreign universities to pursue a doctorate in linguistics. The University of Texas at Austin, for example, has trained some of these students since 2001.

In the USA, besides the University of Texas, universities such as MIT and the University of Arizona have trained speakers of Indigenous North American languages as linguists. Beyond this, the Institute on Collaborative Language Research's (CoLang) mission includes the participation of Indigenous teachers in their summer workshops, which is resulting in an increase in the participation of Indigenous people in the academic life of the U.S. and Canada (Rosenblum and Berez-Kroeker 2018; Fitzgerald 2018). The growing phenomenon of Indigenous linguists is also seen in other parts of the world. Among the most representative, I can mention India (Chelliah

4 *The Proyecto Lingüístico Francisco Marroquín* (PLFM) was founded in 1962 by foreign linguists and local Indigenous linguists from Guatemala. One of the objectives of the PLFM is the teaching of Mayan languages and Spanish as second and third languages (plfm.org).

5 Before 1980, CIESAS was known as the *Centro de Investigaciones Superiores del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia* (CISINAH) (https://bit.ly/3f8GwVO).

2018), East Indonesia (Sawaki and Arka 2018), Australia (Singer 2018), and Ghana[6] (Areka 2018).

These linguists who belong to the speech community of the language they study are normally called "trained professional community members," "insiders," "native linguists," or "Indigenous linguists." With which of these titles should one identify?

In this article, I consider a broader definition of "Indigenous linguists." In Mexico, the term "Indigenous linguist" contrasts with both non-Indigenous Mexican linguists as well as foreign linguists. I include in this concept both insider and insider-outsider linguists, that is, linguists who speak a minority language and who work with either their own language or another minority language from some part of the world[7]. I also include those who claim a minority language community by blood that do not speak their ancestors' language but who work on it or another minority language. Outside of these cases, all other linguists belong to the group that is called "outsider linguists."

4. Reasons to discuss field methods from an Indigenous academic perspective

Until now, Indigenous linguists have not clearly described the need to rethink ways of teaching field methods from the perspective of their own languages and communities. In, for example, Woodbury and England (2004) and England (2018), one can see a methodological shift in the actions of Indigenous linguists who have been trained at foreign universities. However, this change has not resulted from theorizing about field methods within academia but rather from linguistic activism. England (2018:16) states that "[b]eing speakers of beleaguered minority or endangered languages leads directly to language activism," but I want to clarify that this tendency does not manifest in the same way for all speakers of Indigenous languages. Those of us who do activist work do so not by choice, nor due to academic requirements, but to honor our language, our ancestors, and ultimately our own existence on the earth.

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6 Ameka (2018) mentions that in the early 1970s, work began to be carried out by linguists who were native to the communities of study and that recently linguists from other minority groups have been working in communities other than their own. The first of these worked primarily by introspection, and since 2016, some have begun documentary fieldwork.

7 Detailed description of the characteristics of these classifications is not the main goal of this article. However, I do want to emphasize that in my experience working as an insider and an insider-outsider linguist, I have observed a change in linguistic attitude in the community of speakers based on my ethnic identification.

In this sense, I believe that we as Indigenous linguists have a need and a right to open this dialogue and to present the pros and cons of the methods that govern modern linguistic fieldwork. In other areas of social science, there has already been a clear demand for decolonizing methodologies, beginning with Tuhiwai Smith (1999: 15):

> Indigenous methodologies tend to approach cultural protocols, values and behavior as an integral part of methodology. They are 'factors' to be built in to research explicitly, to be thought about reflexively, to be declared openly as part of the research design, to be discussed as part of the final results of a study and to be disseminated back to the people in culturally appropriate ways and in a language that can be understood.

Many outsider linguists partially practice what Tuhiwai Smith suggests, while many others do not practice it at all. I say "partially" because, in contrast to Indigenous linguists, many outsider linguists design their field projects for a set period of time, which is to say one or several field seasons, but almost never as a lifelong connection. These projects are evaluated by advisors outside the communities where the project takes place.

The examples we see of fieldwork show us many of the bad experiences (and very few of the good experiences) of outsider linguists, and students are taught how to avoid or not make the same mistakes (Bowern 2008; Macaulay 2004; etc.). Many outsider linguists who advise students, ethical oversight committees, or even funding agencies for linguistic fieldwork, advise students based on this outsider vision. This clearly shows that they have not yet come to understand the magnitude of the phenomenon or what challenges a linguist who belongs to the community or region of study may face in the community of study, their own or another. For this reason, I want to share some of the personal stories that have motivated me to write this article.

My first motivation is related to the need to be linguists and only linguists in our fieldwork. Books about linguistic field methods suggest things such as "be honest about why you're in the community. It's not ethical to go for one reason but say you're going for another. [...] If you're going there as a linguist, be a linguist" (Bowern 2008: 162). Going to our own communities often means returning home before going to do linguistic fieldwork. Coming as a linguist without first being a member of the community, and therefore not following cultural protocols, would in itself be unethical from the community's perspective and could violate the customs and norms of interaction in one's own community. For an Indigenous linguist, being a member of the community and being a linguist cannot be separated. Therefore, outside standards of ethical behavior are only partially applicable in my experience and surely also for many other Indigenous linguists. Being dishonest in our own communities is not something we could even consider, as it could lead to grave consequences for ourselves as community members and for our families (examples in §8).

The second reason is that during my training as a linguist, it was very common to hear things such as "if it goes badly for you in one community, go to the next community over" or "if you weren't born to do fieldwork, don't go back to the community, just choose another thesis topic." Indeed, there have been outsider linguists who keep jumping between communities with no negative consequences, at least not for them, because once they finish their studies they have the option never to return. After they finish their thesis or scientific work, they return to their home or they find another comfort zone and try to forget the good or bad experiences they had in their fieldwork. For an insider linguist, leaving the community could be easy, if the reasons for doing so are not directly related to problems caused by the research itself. But if the change happens because the researcher conducted themselves badly in their own community during the study, certainly more than one community would know what happened, and the researcher could be banned not only from that community but also from neighboring communities that speak the same language. This would also entail very grave consequences in the life of the researcher and could even compromise their cultural identity (see §8).

The third reason, no less important, and in fact the most important, is linguistic activism. As I mentioned above, activism is not something that we choose but part of our duty as members of these communities. For my part, promoting the language in all social spheres exercises a right that has been denied to our ancestors, contributing to a world that is more whole, in which our cultural identities are not seen as mere roadblocks to civilization nor as objects which have no understanding or knowledge. On one occasion, I openly contradicted a professor who said that their role as a linguist was not to convince the community they worked with about the scientific difference between the concept of a dialect (*dialecto*) and a language (*lengua*).[8] If the community assumed and stated that they spoke a *dialecto* and not a *lengua*, then this should be respected. Forcing them to understand the difference could indicate a lack of respect toward them. From this professor's standpoint, I understand and respect this point of view. I could even say that the fact that the community uses the word *dialecto* to refer to their speech may not be, in itself, proof that they themselves undervalue their speech; it may simply be because it is the term they learned. Nevertheless, accepting that they speak a "dialect" carries with it a history of linguistic contempt for their language which manifests in their apparent linguistic attitudes, like the fact that they prefer their children to learn Spanish and not their "dialect." Acting in my own community, it would not be appropriate to let others speak highly of me for speaking the language of white people while they continue to believe that

8 *Dialecto* is a derogatory term referring to a minority language. [Translator's note: "dialect" is also often used in a derogatory sense in English; this is even more the case in Spanish.]

their "dialect" is inferior and useless. To accept that they speak a dialect would be to reproduce the discrimination and racism that I myself have been subjected to all my life. If, after this, someone today says that it is not important, that even with this history one can be objective in social-scientific questions with our communities, this obviously goes against our convictions grounded in our community, our identity, and our humanity. Manuals on linguistic fieldwork say that as a linguist, one should try to stay at the edge of community problems, and they further suggest that one stay impartial and not become a "blinkered advocate for the community" (Bowern 2008: 161). But again, how could someone go unnoticed in their own community and keep from noticing the problems that have threatened their own humanity? This question could even extend to research done on any language, not only research related to minority languages.

Cojtí Cuxil (1990: 19) has said of Guatemala, "in this country, the linguist who works on Mayan languages has only two options: active complicity with the prevailing colonialism and assimilationist linguistics, or activism in favor of a new linguistic order in which the equality rights for all languages are concretely established, which also implies the same rights for nationalities and communities."[9]

5. Speakers and communities in documentation projects

In the 1970s, when linguistic training of native speakers began for the first time, a debate began about the role of speakers and communities of the language of study. At first, it was suggested that, since linguistics is an objective science, we should not be responsible for the wishes of communities or their speakers when developing ethical principles of how to proceed in linguistic research, and that ultimately this relationship should best be considered as "a matter of personal decision" (Samarin 1967: 17). This of course has been subject to recent criticism about the relationship that should exist between the researcher and community of study. Czaykowska-Higgins (2018: 111—112), for example, argues against Samarin (1967), saying that the work of linguistic documentation inevitably has social consequences, because the linguist is almost always working with small communities, many of which are Indigenous and have been marginalized (whether economically or through other types of oppression and colonization). Because of this, documentary linguists' accountability

9 Cited in England (1992: 31), from notes from the 11th Mayan Linguistics Workshop that took place in 1989 in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala.

to the community and its speakers should not be simply a "personal decision," and moreover, it is not sufficient to assume that linguistics will always and only be an "objective science" when working with humans.

Himmelmann's (1998) proposal to consider language documentation a subfield of linguistics generated a need to theorize about the methods that linguists should follow in their fieldwork. These proposals consciously reference to the need to include native speakers, often linguistically trained speakers, in linguistic documentation projects. This reformulation unites two key points: (1) ethical considerations in linguistic fieldwork are essential for improving scientific output, and (2) the fieldwork of a documentary linguist should be founded in principles of community collaboration (McDonnell et al. 2018, which contains 31 articles about linguistic documentation).

In these discussions about ethical principles of work in linguistic documentation, it is clear that there is already discussion about the involvement of communities and their speakers in these projects. Nevertheless, Indigenous linguists are not discussed except to mention the advantages that result from a partnership between an outside researcher and a professionally trained insider or insider-outsider speaker in documentation projects, or in cases of a project conducted by an insider linguist.[10] Ameka (2018: 231) is the only author to date to suggest that the methods and techniques that are currently being developed in Africa by professionally trained community members should also feed into the global discourse about fieldwork in documentary linguistics.

6. Fieldwork as an inclusive practice

The definition of fieldwork from the perspective of mainstream linguistics excludes any way of obtaining data that does not follow its dogmatic prescriptions. Sakel and Everett (2012: 5) say, for example, that fieldwork is "the activity of a researcher systematically analyzing parts of a language, usually other than one's native language and usually within a community of speakers of that language." However, there are those

10 In the following quote, we see again that the practice of a symmetrical relationship is still not the most preferred one in linguistic documentation: "we attempt to unmask the ideological bias inherent in influential conceptions of the methods, motivations and practices of Endangered Language Documentation Research (ELDR) by addressing the unequal exchange that frequently characterizes the relationship between the linguistic researcher, on the one hand, and the language community and, in some cases, local researchers, on the other" (Grinevald and Sinha 2016: 25).

who take a slightly more inclusive view of fieldwork. In this view, fieldwork can also include gathering data in cities. Thus, linguists such as William Labov (1972), who gathered his sociolinguistic data about varieties of American English in cities such as New York and Philadelphia, are considered fieldworkers. On that subject, Meakins et al. (2018: 7) say that, if these types of studies carried out in cities can be considered part of a fieldwork project, then it would be possible for this notion of fieldwork to include linguistic research based on any primary sources, or even studies based on introspection in which researchers themselves make judgments for tests of grammaticality or meaning. Of course, this type of fieldwork is not viewed positively by those who travel to remote areas in the middle of nowhere. In a more inclusive position we have Chelliah and de Reuse (2011: 10–11), who suggest that fieldwork involves "the collection or gathering of linguistic data through a variety of methods and techniques, with a focus on reliability, representativity, and archivability."

Indigenous linguists can fall at one extreme or the other. On one hand, there are those of us who work in our own communities, which are also our homes. But on the other hand, we, most of the time, do not live permanently in our communities, creating some similarities to insider-outsider linguists. This leads us to reflect about what "doing fieldwork" means from a more inclusive perspective that does not try to create discrete categories, but rather a continuum which many of us Indigenous linguists find ourselves in the middle of. Following Chelliah and de Reuse (2011), if we gather documentary data, elicitation, experimental data, or introspection, whether within our families, in our own communities, or in other communities, we are also doing fieldwork. If what is important is that the data be reliable, representative, and archivable, then the methods and techniques implemented in the process of compiling or gathering data to support scientific linguistic work can vary based on the positionality of the researcher without devaluing the ethical principles of conduct already established within the discipline. When necessary, this type of work can propose other ethical principles that complement and improve those already put forward in the discipline. The intent is not only to improve the result of a linguistic project carried out *in situ* but also to improve the interaction between science and its object, as well as those who carry it out, who are, after all, human. In this way, linguistic science can go in a direction that some outsider linguists have already come to consider necessary: "re-humanizing" science, and "building relationships across difference" (Dobrin and Berson 2011: 207; Czaykowska-Higgins 2018).

7. What fieldwork methods do we "Indigenous people" follow?

As already seen, despite the growing wave of Indigenous linguists, they are not only absent from the reflections of documentary linguists but in general there is very little involvement of Indigenous linguists in the development of theory. Many linguists who theorize about field methods in linguistics have already realized this. Newman and Ratliff (2001), in their reflections on fieldwork in linguistics, note that in their book and their discussions about field methods they constrain themselves and focus on practices developed primarily by outsider linguists from North America, Australia, and Western Europe. Recently, Ameka (2018: 225) shows that the prototypical idea of "fieldwork" does not take insider linguists into account, and as a consequence, they are not considered "fieldworkers." He mentions that "it is a paradox in the era of documentary linguistics for "outsider" fieldwork to be considered the norm" (Ameka 2018: 230).

In fact, this article has taken shape due to this paradox. If there are Indigenous academics working in linguistic description, linguistic documentation, formal linguistics, or any other subfield of linguistics as a science, following the principles of ethics and collaborative work that they surely practice, then there are Indigenous linguists practicing so-called "fieldwork." However, if field methods are conceptualized by and for outsider linguists, what are the ethical principles that govern the actions of insider and insider-outsider linguists? This and other questions should be on the table for debate when proposing a fieldwork project that bridges community participation and scientific work, but up to this point this has not been seen nor greatly discussed.

Given the wide range of documentary linguists, I have already mentioned the need to be inclusive, but there has not been much involvement from Indigenous linguists themselves. Here I try to open a dialogue from a personal perspective as an Indigenous linguist from Mexico, in order to discuss the methods that we insider and insider-outsider linguists follow, as well as the local perspective from the communities of study. I propose that Indigenous researchers who conduct fieldwork in their own or in other communities do not necessarily have to follow the ethical methodological principles that are standard for linguistic fieldwork. By contrast, I suggest that Indigenous academics doing fieldwork in their own communities have to take certain ethical measures that are not discussed in existing writing about linguistic field methods.

8. Some ethical considerations

Ethics. What does ethics mean, and for whom? Ethical concepts are seen differently depending on the specific perspective from which one approaches the topic. One way to define ethics in linguistic fieldwork is "a way of working that you, the research community and the language community think is appropriate" (Bowern 2008: 148). Universities in the U.S. generally have ethics committees that determine what is "ethical," or not, during fieldwork. These committees regulate things such as what can and cannot be studied; ownership of the products of fieldwork; what can or cannot be recorded, archived, and shared; types of compensation; permission to work with children; citation and recognition of the contributions of collaborators; the use of data in secondary work; etc. Nevertheless, as Bowern (2008: 150) has rightly pointed out, "Ethics are strongly a function of culture, and what may be considered ethical in one community would be unethical in another." Therefore, there is no single ethical way to behave when doing research, nor is there only one system that one should satisfy.

In many countries, the ethical principles for how to conduct linguistic fieldwork are not clear, nor is there systematization on the part of outsider linguists. Pérez Báez (2018: 336) observes that in Mexico, there are inconsistencies on the part of both institutions and linguists in the process of obtaining the consent of collaborators in fieldwork projects. This is so even though there are national and international academics doing research on Indigenous communities in Mexico. Moreover, the principles that govern ethical standards for doing research in these communities, when they exist, are evaluated by institutional review boards outside of Mexico. This obviously makes us question how appropriate and practical these principles are.

As a local researcher one must take into account the community's standards and stick to them. How severe would the consequences of inadequate fieldwork practices be for an insider linguist? Here I wish to cite the example of an Indigenous filmmaker from Chiapas so that readers see clearly what the greatest cost of non-conformity with our communities may be.

> I was just informed that in my community [...] in assembly [...] a few groups came together to agree that they will not allow me to film and produce works having to do with culture, because they say I sell the videos and cultural products to the government and to foreigners, especially to foreigners. [...] This is not the first time they have done this; some time ago Brother Aurelio asked me to document the arrival of the bishop, which I did happily, because I like to do so—I like to take photos and videos because I think it is good to have memory of our history as a community. Years ago, the foreigners came and robbed us, so I understand that there is mistrust, but we are not the same... I have never sold a photo, I have never sold a video, I have not earned millions, I have nothing, I

> receive nothing from the government because I don't believe in them either. I only ask that they do not affect my family, that they do not hurt them any more with their words; whatever doubt or frustration, it is better that they say it to me, it is better that we start a dialogue, and if even after that it is not clear, what else can I do, they do not want me near my community either, I don't know what to think. Some time ago, my brother Manuel also went through this, he left and never again returned and never will return because recently he passed away (Saul Kak[11], 2 March 2019).

Books about field methods in linguistics warn about the "awkwardness" and "confusion" that foreign researchers can have in an unknown context (Bowern 2008; Macaulay 2004), or they talk about the "psychological well-being" of outsider linguists (Wengle 1988: 91), but they do not talk about the social, and community, disruptions that Indigenous linguists may experience due to the fact that they belong to an Indigenous group. As can be seen, there is much to do with respect to our ethical practices before we really have field methods in linguistics that are complete and inclusive, not only of the collaborator but of the community itself. I suggest, from personal experience, that one's social conscience and the collection of linguistic data in minority languages should be inseparable actions in which teaching should be mutual and collaborative, not only with respect to collaborators but with respect to the community as a whole.

The decision to work with a minority language. We as linguists do fieldwork for various reasons. What is clear is that we do linguistic fieldwork for some personal and intellectual satisfaction. For outsider linguists, there is a whole background that often leads them to work with certain languages, and there are often cases of wanting to be an Indiana Jones in the middle of the jungle or a Robin Hood acting as a hero for minority languages. Many other times, it is because they really want to contribute to understanding the complexity of linguistic science and to try resolving complex problems. In some cases, linguists are adopted by the community they work in, and they are given recognition for their insight and knowledge about the language. This, in turn, leads linguists to involve themselves in activities that are not related to linguistics but rather are community-focused. In other cases, there may not be a direct relationship between the linguist and the community, only between the linguist and a few speakers (Macaulay 2004). This leads to the linguist not having any involvement in the community beyond their relationship to the people they work with.

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11 Saul Kak (Facebook), (Saul Kak, Zoque visual artist from Rayón, Chiapas; co-director of the documentary "La Selva Negra") Marzo 2, 2019.

Why do we as Indigenous people do fieldwork on our own languages? In many cases, it is because we have been part of a documentation project and have ourselves been informants or because we are involved in Indigenous bilingual teaching and we simply want to understand how our language works. At first, I wanted to do fieldwork so that I could understand the idea of emotions in Tseltal through the lexicon, which is to say, to understand the neurolinguistic processing of emotions. This interest came about because of conceptual distinctions in Spanish that do not exist in Tseltal, and vice versa. I wanted to understand our way of envisioning the world that my non-Tseltal friends did not understand well. When I decided to do fieldwork on another minority language as an insider-outsider linguist, it was because I had written an essay about Mocho', but I did not have any counterexamples for my hypothesis. The idea began as a merely academic interest. When I did pilot fieldwork in Motozintla, where Mocho' is spoken, I learned more about the language and people, and my interest in describing the language began there. Indigenous people who work on their own languages do not have to worry about choosing what language to study; they will automatically work on their own language if there is insufficient description of its grammar or culture. On occasion, working on genetically related languages also becomes an option. One wants to contribute to the understanding of a section of the grammar or the social life of the less-studied language. Indigenous insider-outsider linguists might have other reasons for their choice and could be more like outsider linguists in this sense.

As I said before, for an insider linguist, doing fieldwork often means returning home. The idea that outsider and insider-outsider linguists have of going to a new, unknown, and interesting place, often exotic to others, does not cross the mind of an insider researcher. A native researcher is not going to read about their own culture to understand how their people behave, they are not going to contact the Ejidal Commissariat or the Municipal Council to see if they will grant permission to come and stay for a time in the community. They do not need to consider where they will stay or who will feed them. They do not think about what they are going to eat or about what the people eat there. The Indigenous linguist as a person does not have to worry about "asking permission" to be in their community, but as a researcher they do have to report what activities they will be conducting, because some of their research activities will be unusual. The insider linguist already knows their officially recognized customs and traditions. For an insider linguist, doing linguistic fieldwork should be seen as mediation between what they already know about their language and culture and the possible dissemination of new information, without violating their cultural practices and, very importantly, they should follow as far as possible the local norms of interaction in order to maintain harmony between their research project and the community. And from there, they should share the results with the local as well as the scientific community.

Demands of home and of fieldwork. As James Crippen (2009), a Tlingit linguist from British Columbia, points out, the fact that "home" and "field" are one and the same can involve many more demands than those placed on an outsider linguist. Indeed, returning to one's home and community has many consequences. One role cannot be separated from the other.

Among the demands (to mention only one) that returning to the community can involve are community service duties (see *Cargo system* in the Cultural Glossary at the end of this volume). For example, having access to an official education[12] outside the community and knowing Spanish better than any other community member (and knowing English, which is much more prestigious) can serve as a basis for the community naming one an administrative and bureaucratic representative before the State because this would benefit the community. Many communities appoint these representatives based on customs and traditions, and turning down a position of this kind could lead to negative repercussions within the community such as: being excluded from local projects, not being considered for future positions as a representative, and even worse, marginalizing the family members of the researcher who is excluded due to a lack of community engagement, a stigma that can even pass on to future generations.

Among the activities that are not strictly mandatory but are required to survive in our communities are visiting family, working in the fields to produce food, and attending community town hall meetings, among other things. If someone does not participate in required communal work while in town (e.g., maintaining the community water tank, fixing and cleaning roads, etc.), for example, this could create suspicion that they are disinterested in the community. It is even worse if one offers to pay for recordings of the language or culture without participating in the community practices. These and other attitudes can serve as examples of why, in our fieldwork, being a linguist is more than simply being a linguist and why there are certain constraints placed upon us that are not always explicitly stated by a president or community member. For an outsider linguist, the situation is completely different: they have the option to participate in local activities and may be seen as something "exotic" by community members, but these activities are not required of them given their condition and position within the community.

These factors are not discussed when people talk about field methods; it is assumed only that going home while going to the field makes one's scientific work

12 By "official education" here, I mean education offered by governments or private institutions that require the student to speak the dominant language. There are no official institutions of this kind in which one can receive an education in their own language and community. Veracruz University in Mexico offers a master's degree in Nahuatl Language and Culture which was launched in 2020 (https://www.uv.mx/mlcn/).

much more productive. It is taken for granted that an insider linguist is like any other outsider linguist doing field research, but reality tells us that it is not that simple.

"Informant" and "researcher". To what extent are these concepts constructed under the assumption that the researcher is not an informant/consultant? That is, for the community, it is atypical for someone to show up asking how to say this or that phrase in the language. Ameka (2018) mentions that an insider linguist can seem foolish for asking others how to say things, because the community knows that the linguist speaks the language. At first glance, this would not have any repercussions for an insider linguist, but if they do not sufficiently communicate their purpose, other speakers may start to doubt the insider linguist's proficiency as a speaker of their own language. The fact of studying or having studied in a city or outside of our communities creates doubt in the speech community. For them, many of those who study elsewhere are "contaminated"[13] by Western or *mestizo* culture. This, when combined with field practices that treat the speaker as just an object of study, endangers our status as speakers.

I want to mention here my first experiences as a linguist (most of the time, accompanied by another Tseltal speaker or a non-Tseltal linguist) working for the Dialectological Atlas of the Tseltal Documentation Project (hosted by CIESAS-Sureste). On more than one occasion, speakers refused to repeat the same phrases three times on a phonological and morphological questionnaire that we were conducting. I, in my role as the scientist, did not want to interact more than necessary so as not to "contaminate the investigation" and, of course, because I was the employee of a project and they were paying me to work. In their refusal, they argued that, if I wanted them to repeat something more than once, then I should record myself, since I spoke the language. What I want to underscore here is that people without linguistics training, Indigenous or not, do not understand the nature of linguistic science. Even professionals from other disciplines do not fully understand what linguists do. It is well known that in these communities, access to formal education is very limited, and illiteracy is a problem. For this reason, it is very important to educate them about what we do and to explain verbally, in detail, and in their own language, why we do what we do. To accomplish this communicative act, there is a whole procedure that follows local norms, and someone who is local should know those norms. This process is carried out in the dominant language by insider-outsider and outsider linguists in trying to explain the concept of the project, sometimes successfully, sometimes less so. Having this sense for communication according to

13 We mix our language with Spanish, we do not wear traditional clothing, we introduce new behaviors, etc. These things create the idea of not being "pure."

cultural norms is obviously much harder for someone who does not share the same practices, much less the language.

Many times, we fall into the error of underestimating the role of the people who collaborate with us in our fieldwork. In more than one instance, we surely owe the understanding of the structure of their language to them, rather than the reverse. Outsider and insider-outsider linguists could not do fieldwork at all without people who speak the language, much less understand its structure and function. Using terms like informant, consultant, or investigator in front of community members (or in an academic publication) can sound arrogant and ambitious, and the asymmetry that it creates in our relationships permeates the interaction in future work. In my experience as an insider-outsider researcher working with speakers of Mocho', I have realized that for them, the concepts of "informant," "consultant," or even "collaborator," are degrading. For them, this is another way of perpetuating discrimination and contempt toward their language. At the beginning of my research in the area, speakers had a very negative attitude toward sharing their language, and they said that nobody in the community would be willing to do so (for historical reasons and because of researchers who had worked there previously). Understanding and processing someone's experience as a human is the first step in understanding the reasons for certain behaviors. One cannot overlook the implications of being an outsider in an unknown context. And, if someone takes this risk in spite of X or Y situation, overlooking the process of assimilation and mutual understanding with the community is not the best way to begin a field project.

Activism and reclamation. The need for "quality of life" in the communities where we work is often unfortunately confused with quality of life in terms of material things. In Tseltal-Tsotsil cosmovision,[14] quality of life goes beyond having a good house, good clinic, schooling, or accumulated wealth. Quality of life has to do with being well with oneself and with one's neighbors, fulfilling one's responsibilities as a human being and as a good citizen (Schlitter Álvarez 2012). Frustrated linguists who have been in third-world or "fourth-world" communities (Bowern 2008) in minority areas with endangered languages lament their powerlessness to improve the "quality of life" of the communities, and further, about not even trying to defend themselves

14 "Good living" in Tseltal-Tsotsil is *lekil kuxlejal* "a Tsotsil and Tseltal cultural concept that names certain practices and ways of understanding, creating and recreating the world, that have to do with a relationship of respect with others and with the earth, and a search for harmony with it and with the vital cycles that compose it; that understands and respects the sacred dimension of the earth and life, and seeks the common good between us, and with it. In this sense, the term also presents a conception of what is a type of well-being, or of what is necessary in order to have an honorable and just life" (Schlittler Álvarez 2012: 15-16).

against the prejudiced things racist people say about their work with these minority languages. Nevertheless, empowering speakers to know their language is a way to both do linguistics and improve their quality of life.

In my experience, improving quality of life and empowering minority languages are part of the same process. To illustrate this point, I here share an anecdote about Mocho'. First, I should make clear that there is very little grammatical description of the Mocho' language, and what exists is not a detailed or finished analysis. Ever since I began working on the Mocho' language in 2015, I have been sharing the knowledge that I have gained about the language with Mr. Teodoso Ortíz Ramírez, a 71-year-old Mocho' speaker. He has been my teacher and my guide during my training in Mocho'. He did not know how to read or write in Spanish, much less Mocho', but through his commitment to the arduous work of teaching himself, he has mastered reading and writing in both languages. Now, Mr. Teodoso teaches Mocho' language classes at the Casa de la Cultura de Motozintla de Mendoza, Chiapas, Mexico. One day, he told me that a man came to observe his class, introducing himself as an elementary-level bilingual Spanish-Mocho' teacher (which does not exist; there is no teachers who are fluent in Mocho', so there are no teachers at any level who teach in both Spanish and Mocho', according to the same "bilingual" teachers). The Mocho' speakers of Motozintla all know each other, and this man was not someone known in the town, but upon mentioning the name of his father (who is a speaker) he was identified. While Mr. Teodoso was teaching his class, the visitor interrupted to tell him that what he was writing was wrong; why was he writing a double vowel when no such thing existed in Mocho'? Mr. Teodoso very kindly showed him a minimal pair in which the contrast between a short and long vowel changed the meaning. Even then, the visitor very angrily told him that he was teaching lies, casting doubt on Mr. Teodoso's knowledge, and proceeded to leave the class. This has been common practice in the "Indigenous bilingual" system in this part of Motozintla. People are disparaged for not having attained any level of education in the official system, despite their native knowledge of the language. What I want to highlight here is Mr. Teodoso's reaction. If this had happened on any other occasion, perhaps the speaker would have just hung their head and conceded the visitor's expertise in the language, as I have witnessed several times before with other speakers. Mr. Teodoso obviously knows that his status as a native speaker does not, by itself, automatically make him a "bilingual teacher," but he also knows that what we have learned together is not an invention or something that we pulled out of thin air. Now, he has no fear of saying that he speaks the language and that he knows how to write it. Mr. Teodoso's empowerment[15] is part

15 The tension about "who teaches the language best" is unfortunately a problem that I have seen in Motozintla and which generally happens with learners of the language who call themselves "Mo-

of what an Indigenous linguist also seeks: not just adequate description and data collection in a moribund language but also cultural and linguistic reclamation of what had almost been lost in Motozintla.

Monetary compensation. In documentary linguistics projects whose budget includes compensation for project collaborators, this money should be spent for them and with them. Many times, researchers think that by giving the speaker a bag of bread or a box of groceries, everyone will be happy. This often happens in fieldwork, based on the advice of some outsider linguists, to avoid being seen as distributors of money. What I want to ask is, how much of the money budgeted for consultants is really ending up with them? In my experience, this can be avoided. If there is a funded project, it is possible to explain the objective of the project and then invite community members to work in a collaborative way. It is necessary to explain who can collaborate and who cannot, based on the objective of the project. In this way, the participants and the community will understand where the funds come from and what they are for. I say this because on occasion, I have been complicit in seeing, as a salaried worker, that there are stingy and greedy linguists who want to obtain information without any economic compensation. When we work with our own communities and people, by virtue of being family or acquaintance they will settle for what we give them for their time and work. The ethical goal of Indigenous linguists is to change these practices and to ensure that they receive what they deserve. As an insider and insider-outsider linguist, moreover, one understands the needs and the shortages in our communities. Many times, we ourselves have gone hungry to get to where we are, and compared to our communities, we are now in a privileged position. In many projects, one has to make explicit how much is spent on travel, equipment, supplies, and other things, aside from the amount budgeted for compensating speakers. Therefore, personally, I suggest that the money budgeted for compensating speakers should be given entirely to collaborators who actively participate in the project. This holds us accountable to total honesty with them and with ourselves. It is an ethical principle that we should all follow regardless of our situation.

cho'-Spanish bilingual teachers." According to don Teodoso and my other Mocho' teachers, these "Mocho'-Spanish bilingual teachers" know lists of vocabulary but do not actually speak the language. Personally, I have not gotten to know them well because several of them have refused to work collaboratively. The empowerment of speakers can also create tension in a dominant group for political reasons, but it is necessary to find a way to reconcile these differences, which I do not discuss here.

9. Conclusion

In this article I have shown, first, that those of us Indigenous researchers who work with our own languages, in our own communities or in other communities, are of course doing fieldwork, and second, that the field methods that are the most developed, published, and disseminated do not always take into account the ethical perspective of Indigenous linguists.

I have shown that not all the ethical principles in contemporary linguistic fieldwork are applicable for Indigenous linguists. Undoubtedly there are Indigenous linguists who are already aware of this; now, we must continue to share our experiences and lay the foundation for new field methods in linguistics. Understanding the challenges that we face as Indigenous linguists will serve not only to develop field methods that are more diverse and inclusive but will also provide guidelines so that outsider linguists may also know what their Indigenous teachers and collaborators could face when they are involved in documentary linguistics projects.

Indigenous linguists have a duty to contribute to scientific theory, but we also have the duty to strengthen our languages in all social spheres. There are many ways to be an activist linguist, and I have shown here that empowering our linguistic identity is one of the most important ways of doing so. Being an Indigenous linguist can create a social consciousness about the linguistic situation and about working collaboratively with the community in a harmonious environment. However, if we make a false step, not only could we lose credibility in our work as social scientists among our people but also, in the worst case, we could be expelled for life from our communities. This would bring a loss of linguistic identity that would contribute to instability in the community and to gradual loss of the language. Because of this, before adopting outsider methods, our first priority must be our own community's norms.

It is reasonable that universities, professors, and institutions that finance documentary linguistics projects generally dictate how one must proceed in academia. This is understandable and acceptable; one has to be a scientist and produce what one's peers produce in academia. What is unacceptable is that outsider linguists dictate how an Indigenous researcher from the community of study must proceed in their own community. Diverse field methods will not mean (at least not in linguistics) that the object of study and the results of linguistic fieldwork are put in doubt if the data speaks for itself.

What this article urges is that, as Dobrin and Berson (2011: 207) and Czaykowska-Higgins (2018) have said, we must re-humanize linguistics in order to build relationships across differences. At least in linguistic field methods, this will allow the vision of Indigenous linguists working in their own trenches, as Ameka (2018) has said, to be recognized and considered in a global discussion about field methods. In addition, this article also provides the perspective of a local Indigenous linguist who

seeks to decolonize field methods designed by foreigners and uncritically adopted by insider and insider-outsider linguists.

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