

# Coordinating the Research Agenda with Community Needs

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# Why make a contribution to the community?

- ▶ Social imperative (“giving back”).
- ▶ Expectation of other linguists (e.g HRELP grants).
- ▶ Increases chance of success of your project: shows your commitment, rewards stakeholders, increases project profile

## However...

- ▶ It's time-consuming (especially if done well).
- ▶ Can hurt tenure prospects, can increase time needed to finish PhD.
- ▶ Basic materials can hurt the documentation project (cf. amount of language in a 10 minute narrative vs amount of text in an alphabet book).
- ▶ Linguists aren't usually trained to produce community materials.

# Six suggestions for integrating community and academic work

1. **Learn** about language teaching.
2. **Plan** from the start.
3. **Orient** academic work towards community projects.
4. **Outsource** and collaborate.
5. Be **creative**.
6. Get **recognition**.

# 1) Learn about language teaching.

- ▶ Don't reinvent the wheel. There is a lot of knowledge out there about language pedagogy.
- ▶ Study what others have produced, and what existing materials there are in the community.
- ▶ Don't work in a vacuum (e.g. consult teachers about what works for the target age).

## 2) Plan from the beginning.

- ▶ Don't treat community materials as an optional extra, to be worked out at the end of the project if there's time.
- ▶ Allow time for both from the start.
- ▶ E.g. using community orthography from the start will save time in adapting materials.

### 3) Orient research towards community outcomes.

Some projects can be minimally adapted to produce community outcomes without much extra work.

- ▶ phonetic word lists and talking dictionaries
- ▶ learner's guides and basic elicitation (Bower 2008)
- ▶ frog stories and children's books
- ▶ dictionary examples and grammatical elicitation (Hale 2001)
- ▶ writing workshops and vocabulary brainstorming (Dickinson 2007)

## 4) Outsource and collaborate.

- ▶ You've been trained as a linguist, so the best use of your skills is in linguistics.
- ▶ You don't have to do everything.
- ▶ Learner's materials are often excellent community training materials.
- ▶ Make the most of everyone's skills.
- ▶ Projects with community foundations are more likely to succeed.

## 5) Be creative (and opportunistic).

- ▶ Don't just think in terms of the traditional learner's materials like alphabet books, learner's guides, and wordlists.
- ▶ Don't just think of text-based work.
- ▶ e.g. <http://ngapartji.org>

## 6) Get recognition.

- ▶ Treat community work like a consultancy.
- ▶ It's a service you're providing because of your academic skills in addition to your academic work.

# Summary

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