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Ethical budgets in (psycho-)linguistic fieldwork

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Abstract: As most linguists and social scientists are now aware, cross-cultural field research can be extractive, especially when the target community does not have ready access to and/or understanding of the research products. The notions of collaborative research, with communities rather than on them, and co-design of research with the participant community, are now common currency in funding applications, and indeed, an international code of ethics for cross-cultural research now exists: the TRUST Code. But it is easy to pay lip service to some of the principles of the TRUST Code, such as collaboration, co-design, and respect, without offering hard proof of these, at project design and ethics and funding application stages. I propose a straightforward and easy-to-implement partial solution: fair budgets. I suggest, as a starting point, that: (1) any grant proposal or ethics application must state what proportion of the overall project funds will be distributed among local community members, and (2) the travel costs for outsiders must be less than or equal to funds distributed within the local community. Because it may be impossible to match the costs of international travel through participant payments alone, such quotas will require researchers not only to pay everyone who supports the project in the field fairly (as suggested in the TRUST Code on a smaller scale), but also to envision meaningful, capacity-building ways to involve local people in running the project. Then, once local people are trained, they can design and run their own locally relevant projects. Budget quotas are already used by research funders like the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research, which requires that a minimum of 40 % of all grant monies must be spent in-country, but this idea has not yet taken hold widely in social science and humanities research.

Keywords: ethics; fieldwork; psycholinguistics; experimentation; cross-cultural

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1 Introduction

Some types of linguistic fieldwork may be more structurally susceptible to extractive practices than others. In this paper, I draw on my personal experiences with primary descriptive fieldwork and psycholinguistic fieldwork, as both practitioner and proposal reviewer, to explore some aspects of extraction in the regions where I have worked. I then propose a new way to push fieldworkers to be less extractive in at least one area of fieldwork: budgeting. I note at the outset that the tone of this paper is conversational, and the anecdotes presented are not necessarily representative of others' experiences or other regions.

Psycholinguistic fieldwork is defined here as linguistic fieldwork with a primary focus on cognitive processes related to language, and which uses formal experimentation as the main method. Defined more casually by a non-psycholinguist fieldworker, psycholinguistic fieldwork "makes it into *Nature*", unlike primary, descriptive fieldwork on the grammar of a language. Ordinary Working (field) Linguists (to co-opt the SIL acronym OWL), unlike psycholinguists, rarely have cause to discuss their grammatical findings with the *New York Times* and other major mass media outlets – a non-linguist who shared a research centre with a cohort of descriptive field linguists once joked: "You field linguists are the most intrepid of us: you risk life and limb and travel to the far corners of the world, just to see if people there split their infinitives". (The implication was that most others don't care about the infinitives.) But run an experiment and get the statistical models just so, and (even if reality is more complicated) the researcher may be fielding interviews with the popular press left and right.

Despite strides in the other direction in academia, mass media in many parts of the world still love a story about finding a remote group in the Amazon who think differently – or the same. The narrative, unfortunately, is still framed, un-ironically, as "brave researcher like us goes and studies remote group unlike us, and finds a difference or similarity". As noted by Clancy and Davis (2019), *inter alia*, "like us" often involves strange and nebulous assumptions. Even academics throw around terms like "Western culture" and "Western music", although these are hardly rigorously defined (see brief discussion in Smit et al. 2022, and note that Papua New Guinea, for instance, was classed as part of the "West" by Huntington 1996), and anyone from a culturally diverse region in the US or elsewhere, especially a member of a minority group, can likely recognize some failings in these terms. Psycholinguistic fieldworkers need to ensure that popular narratives about their research findings are not sensationalized in the stereotypical way (Indiana Jones meets villagers and tests their brains), and that they do not envision themselves in this way.

Beyond its potential fit into stereotyped narratives, psycholinguistic fieldwork may be particularly susceptible to extractive practices due to its possible short-term, impersonal, and transactional nature, characteristics that often do not apply to traditional long-term descriptive linguistic fieldwork. Thus, although its object of inquiry involves language, psycholinguistic fieldwork can be structurally more similar to fieldwork in other areas of quantitative social sciences, and even applied medicine, than to long-term immersion linguistic fieldwork.

In this paper, I first discuss the differences between primary descriptive fieldwork methods and psycholinguistic fieldwork methods that lead to the latter's being more susceptible to extractive practices (Section 2), then problematize the notion of extractiveness in the context of (psycho-)linguistic fieldwork in some regions (Section 3). I then propose a novel partial solution to the difficult problem of establishing whether a proposed research project is extractive: requiring a clear statement of the proportion of funds that will be spent in the target community, along with a quota holding community-distributed funds equal to funds spent for outsiders' travel (Section 4). This solution also promises to enhance community buy-in and interest in research, which could boost the discipline of psycholinguistics in the long term (Section 5).

2 Primary linguistic fieldwork versus psycholinguistic fieldwork

Consider the traditional model for primary descriptive fieldwork on an underdescribed language, leading to the publication of a reference grammar on that language (Aikhenvald 2007, 2014). An individual linguist embarks on an initial long field trip or a few shorter, cumulative field trips, totalling about seven to ten months of immersion fieldwork (Dixon 2007) in a community. The fieldworker aims to master the target language enough to participate in the community and to get feedback on linguistic hypotheses in the course of everyday interactions. Unlike the 1970s "formalist" assumption that fieldwork entails asking one or two speakers a lot of questions (repeated in Wagers and Chung to appear), the usual aim is to obtain natural speech data by way of transcribed recordings from a wide range of speakers, in a wide range of contexts. The linguist returns to their home institution to analyse and write up their field data (some of which may have already been analysed and written up while in the field), and then goes back to the speech community for a final brief trip to check analyses and fill in gaps. This general model assumes, of course, that the linguist is based at an institution located relatively far from the speech community; it will be adjusted when the linguist has ongoing access to the

community and/or is a native speaker of the target language (see contributions to Cruz Cruz 2020a, for instance), and for truly collaborative research.

A budget for descriptive linguistic fieldwork usually involves, minimally, travel and medicinal costs for the researcher, recording equipment, possibly a flexible solar panel or other setup to support netbook and battery charging, payments for language consultants, payments for the linguist's village host(s) for food and lodging for their extended stays, and gifts for consultants and community members. During such a project, local research assistants might occasionally be employed to accompany the researcher and help with recordings, if interest or local mores dictate this, but it is not advised in such work to fully "out-source" transcription work, since transcription is an important process through which the researcher gains a better understanding of the language.

Descriptive linguistic fieldwork hinges on the researcher's ability to master the grammar of the local language, as spoken by multiple members of a speech community. It is thus a relatively long-term endeavour that necessitates extended field trips and, often, formal adoption into a local clan and/or family. (As I have written, while I had mastered the most frequent verbal inflections, verb classes, etc. by about three months into my initial fieldwork on the Papuan language Nungon, it wasn't until months after that that I finally noticed a final vowel alteration that marks calls at distance; Sarvasy 2017.) Communication with the speech community may continue for the rest of the fieldworker's life, with a constant push-and-pull of requests and aid in both directions; such involvement, if done with good intentions, can hardly be described as exploitative (Aikhenvald 2013), although it comes with its own ethical conundrums (Cruz Cruz 2020b; Dobrin and Schwartz 2016; Dwyer 2006; Eckert 2013; Pérez González 2021; Rice 2012, *inter alia*).

Psycholinguistic fieldwork, on the other hand, tends to involve quick trips in and out of a community to run a pre-planned and pre-programmed, highly structured experiment targeting a particular detail of language and cognition, often with more than one outsider flying in. As with other formal experimental paradigms, the ideal is anonymity and an impersonal, uniform relationship between the experimenter and participants (so as not to introduce additional variation into the results). The process is thus by nature more transactional than the deeply personal and individualized, long-term model described for descriptive linguistic fieldwork. When we brought mobile EEG headsets to the Nungon speech community, it took only about five days to run 60 participants through the two experiments loaded on the headsets. The community rallied, and we put on a two-week "experiment fair", ably coordinated by Nungon speakers, through which five different psychological and psycholinguistic experiments were run (Milne et al. 2023; Mulak et al. 2021; Sarvasy et al. 2023; Smit et al. 2022; Tuninetti et al., in prep.), with at least 60 participants in each experiment. Of the group of outsiders who descended (literally, in a small plane) on the

community for the occasion, I was the only one who had long-term relationships with the Nungon speech community; the others were there to conduct a single experiment and leave. They planned no ongoing collaboration with the community, although one group ended up paying local research assistants to collect more data after the research team left.

Psycholinguistic fieldwork is subject to the same ethical dilemmas as other short-term cross-cultural research, summarized by Broesch et al. (2020). Some of these are addressed through a Global Code of Conduct (GCC; Schroeder et al. 2019), of which the European Research Council was among the major early adopters; the GCC is now called "the TRUST Code for Equitable Research Partnerships" (TRUST 2018). The TRUST Code is given as an Appendix here; it involves 23 articles with concrete recommendations, within four core "values": fairness, respect, care, honesty.

It is wrong to conduct exploitative, or "extractive", research: exploiting a speech community to further a researcher's goals, without any reciprocity. But despite the relatively concrete suggestions in the TRUST Code, this can be a blurry and subjective area: one person's extractiveness could be another's model of ethical engagement.

3 Extraction by whom?

Much literature on research conducted by scholars from high-income countries (HICs) in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) presents the outside researcher as wielding an asymmetrical degree of power in relations with locals (e.g., Broesch et al. 2020). There are many heinous examples of vilely exploitative cross-cultural research in recent memory or in the distant past (Schroeder et al. 2018), which impacted vulnerable communities in criminal ways. But recent literature on ethical engagement with small-scale communities can give an almost paternalistic impression that these communities are vulnerable to becoming passive victims of powerful outside researchers, and must be protected – by those same researchers. Further, the literature might suggest to a naïve outsider that establishing a collaboration with an in-country organization or individuals will ensure that research ensues respectfully (as in the TRUST Code, Article 4), but this is not necessarily the case. I would like to add some nuance to the literature by suggesting that, at least for (psycho-)linguistic research, and in at least some communities:

(a) the outside researcher's activity may be just a blip on the community's radar, tangential to their main areas of concern, such as making a living, land rights, and getting healthcare;
(b) speech community members often have their own agendas, and may use the visiting researcher(s) as a means to their own ends;

(c) when speech community members are not pleased with the terms of engagement, they may wield considerable power over the outside researcher(s) to get them to change these;
(d) collaboration with in-country organizations, and even with non-community members from the same country, are not necessarily automatic "ethics fixes".

These are discussed in order:

(a) Researcher is not the centre of the community's universe. Point (a) is meant to adjust the outsider-centric framing of much of the recent ethics literature, which implies that communities are fragile and easily damaged by outside researchers. A small outside psycholinguistic research project may be of little import to a community. Even if the researcher gets a well-cited publication out of the project, this may be inconsequential from a local perspective. Local people in many parts of the world will get on with their lives as before, once the researcher leaves.

(b) Communities are made of individuals with often-competing goals. Point (b) is a reminder that "communities" are not monolithic and are full of individuals with their own complex relationships and goals. Although everyone could benefit from, for instance, access to medical facilities and education, many other types of outside projects may benefit individuals and their families/clans to different degrees.

People who have lived in small country towns and remote villages know that they can teem with rivalries and interpersonal conflicts; these can characterize people's quotidian existence much more than many city-dwellers ever experience, apart from, perhaps, in school. Into this stew of personalities, rivalries, shifting allegiances, and land disputes come the clueless outside researchers. Now – who is exploiting whom? Far from being vulnerable villagers to be exploited, locals may act as savvy politicians and negotiators looking to gain personal, familial, and communal advantage through manipulation of the fleeting outside project. As G. Tucker Childs explained to me during our ten months of linguistic fieldwork in remote Tei village of southern Sierra Leone, we were only temporary visitors to a community where people relied on long-term webs of connection, and so at a certain level, people saw their relationships with us as mere waypoints along a longer trajectory toward influence, not as goals in their own right.

When I was planning a field trip to the Nungon-speaking area in Papua New Guinea in 2019, I experienced pressure from my local project managers to bring other researchers with me, to make the trip a big event in the eyes of community members. This would inflate my status, locally (since I would be seen as having influence over others of influence), and, by extension, the status of local people associated with me. The three people who had been running a longitudinal study of child language acquisition with me, Lyn Ögate, Stanly Girip, and James Jio, informed the rest of the community how many people were coming, and, months in advance, people began

stockpiling supplies and planning for the pomp of the opening and closing ceremonies for the "experiment fair" described earlier. In the closing ceremony, one man told me, in front of the assembled village, notables, and the other foreign researchers:

> Before, when you used to come here alone [in more than nine months of immersion fieldwork on Nungon grammar], I thought your work was inconsequential. But this time, when you arrived, followed by a long line of others, I realized that you are doing major work. (Quoted in Mulak et al. 2021)

At least in my experiences with three very different small communities in North and West Africa and in Papua New Guinea (two with very vibrant heritage languages, and one with a moribund heritage language), a few in the community are very interested in language and enjoy talking and thinking about it; some like to think about it to a certain degree, especially as it relates to maintenance of culture and ethnobiological knowledge, and perhaps the majority, like the speaker quoted above, are not really very interested, and find this work "inconsequential". For this last cohort, the utility of a foreign researcher may be primarily about material gain and/or forging further connections to more outsiders (vid. Dobrin 2008). Such connections would ideally eventually result in tangible benefits and a long-term increase in clout and leverage for locals.

(c) Community members wield power over research success. Point (c) is a reminder that outside researchers are wholly dependent on local people for the success of their projects, and this may be obvious to all involved. Locals can vote with their feet if they are not happy with the terms of participation/employment offered them. A few foreign researchers seeking local consultants or participants is a very different scenario from a corporation resisting unionization. The foreign researchers are at the mercy of local people. If their terms are unfavourable, their research may fail or not be optimally successful. This can occur on a small scale: at least one field linguist colleague and I have experienced the phenomenon whereby a consultant seems to drop out of communication, and then inquiries lead to the discovery that s/he was not happy about some aspect of the project, financial or interpersonal. Depending on local conflict resolution practices, open discussion, apologies, and setting things right can bring the consultant back into the fold.

At one point during our fieldwork in Sierra Leone, the remaining Kim semi-speakers of the village Nyandehun staged a strike. When I arrived at their village, they informed me that they would not do any more recording or transcription work until we raised their pay rate; we had to agree. (They also wanted the project to fund the construction of a new school building; this request was beyond the scope of what we could do at the time.)

(d) Not all collaboration leads to equal footing. Urassa et al. (2021) state the important point that cross-cultural research should be done in partnership with academics

based locally; this is also stressed in the TRUST Code, Articles 2 and 4, and elsewhere. It is indeed unseemly for HIC researchers to snub local academics and research centres in LMICs, "leapfrogging" over them to form direct relationships with local communities (Urassa et al. 2021). Ideally, research would be conducted with at least the formal blessing of local academics and research centres, and at best full collaboration with them. Yet just because someone is from the same country as their participants does not mean that they will necessarily treat research participants as equals or empower them to help shape the research project. Local academics, just like foreign ones, may have ways of working with remote communities that can be potentially problematic in their own way, due to long-standing hierarchical relationships between urban and rural populations, for instance. This is undoubtedly true of academics in any country, including the United States, Australia, the UK, and European nations.

In Sierra Leone, I was initially surprised at the manner in which my dear fellow research assistant, an educated, urban Sierra Leonean (the late Alie Turay), addressed the elderly Kim and Bom speakers with whom we worked in remote fishing villages. He would seem to order them around, often in Krio or English, which some of them did not understand. This seemed to accentuate his position of power relative to the villagers. His approach did not seem to be one of "sitting at their feet and learning about their traditions", which was how I (from the US, living in Sierra Leone for the first time) saw our work. He also did not seek to build the same types of rapport with them that I sought. (On the other hand, Alie knew much better than I did how to interpret relationships and small gestures and comments in daily life. For instance, once a woman came and asked me for a cup of rice. I told Alie that I was considering giving her a cup of rice, and he patiently explained to me what should have been obvious: that she had said "one cup", but that she would need more than that to feed her family, and if I gave her just one cup, this would actually be insulting.)

Alie's approach to our shared duties was different from mine; he had familial responsibilities back home, health problems, and of course, his own trauma from the recent civil war. In a nation with strong divisions between ethnic and linguistic groups, he would never really belong to the Kim or Bom communities, so did not waste time trying to fit in with them. He did not want to work for them in their fields for free, as I did (since for me it was exercise plus immersion fieldwork), nor did he want to enter into a patron/client relationship by which he would help them materially on his return to the city. Alie's approach was not unethical: it was just that a certain hierarchical distance was maintained between him and the Kim and Bom speakers because of the hierarchies and allegiances in the country. I, a foreigner, was paradoxically able to enter more closely into relationships with the Kim and Bom speakers than Alie could. For me, this led to more language learning and access to

more personal stories from Kim and Bom speakers than was perhaps easily available to a Sierra Leonean outsider like Alie.

What of collaboration with NGOs, as opposed to academics? Schroeder's suggestion (2019) that "helicopter research" marked by unintentional breaches of local ethical protocols can be avoided by consulting closely with local NGOs indicates that she may be unaware of the corruption and malpractice among local NGOs in many parts of the world (Muurlink and Macht 2020; Rademacher 2023; Smith 2012, *inter alia*). There may further be hierarchical relations between people with the skills, family connections, and privileged background to be employed with an NGO and villagers who may be perceived as less because they lack these and often have no outside salaried employment. I remember hearing the anger of local Nungon-speaking men when a Papua New Guinean woman employed by a conservation NGO berated them over the CB radio, "What kind of work do you think you're doing?", which was seen as disrespectful and patronizing. Surely a domineering style that would not be ethically acceptable in a foreigner should also be unacceptable in a fellow citizen.

Sojourning in a remote community may not appeal to urbanites in the same country: again, this would be true of any country, including the US. Indeed, we had great difficulty recruiting Sierra Leonean Master's students to visit our field site, and were told that the problem was that they didn't want to go to such a remote place.

Finally, with collaborations, there is the question of which language is used for conducting research; this relates to both foreign and non-foreign researchers, but may entail special complications for non-foreign researchers. I believe that an ethical imperative for any work with speakers of minority languages is to facilitate the use of, not just study of, their language, within the research project (of any discipline), to the extent that this is accepted by speakers (Sarvasy 2023b). What message does it send to speakers of an endangered language A when someone arrives and runs all interviews and work sessions in a contact language B, asking about the linguistic structures of A, but only using B (which induces others to also just use B around this outsider)? This tells them: A is a museum piece already, not fit to conduct serious research in. What a different message is sent when the outsider employs local people to collect the research data in A alone, and shows them how to transcribe A into phones and computers, and to even set up spreadsheets with headings in A. As I have heard from Nungon speakers, where I and a large team of Nungon speakers take pains to do all our research in Nungon, this tells local people, even those not directly involved in doing the data collection themselves, that A is a language with a future, suitable for use even for international research projects (and see Pye 2022, who affirms this in child language acquisition research).

Unfortunately, there are various linguistic hierarchies in place among fellow citizens of a single country, and even within one community. Outsiders may feel that

when they try to speak A (badly) instead of B, this erodes their credibility as an authority figure with local people (while, unfortunately, foreign researchers may be perceived as inherent authorities simply because of their origin, regardless of which language they use). They might never consider having local people use A for data collection, perhaps seeing this as an unnecessary extra step, and just use B automatically. Sometimes, even speakers of A may use B or another prestigious language when addressing their own people, under the impression that this gives them a prestige boost (this may even be done at the expense of intelligibility; Sarvasy 2023a).

There are of course examples of highly ethical psycholinguistic fieldwork done in the researcher's home country and/or native language: for instance, Philippine psycholinguistics is a burgeoning area (Pizarro-Guevara and Garcia 2024). But just because someone plans to do research in his/her own country does not mean that s/he is exempt from careful thought about ethical engagement (and of course, such research can bring up additional ethical quandaries not visited upon foreign researchers; Cruz Cruz 2020b). Similarly, just because a project involves someone from the same country as the participant group does not guarantee that the participants will be treated ethically and respectfully. Finally, over-reliance on NGOs as ethical experts would seem to be best avoided in many places, where they are known to be just as ethically fallible and corrupt as other institutions. Overall, it seems that the ideal is really empowerment of members of the local community where fieldwork is being carried out to take active leadership roles within the research project, using their own language as the medium of research activity where appropriate.

4 (Un)ethical budgets

A perhaps unfortunate message received by some of us working in a psychology-centred research institute (where most people's salaries are grant-funded) is that, under the hood, academia is about research money: which researchers and which institutions get how much money. Periodically, administrators visit us to brandish bar graphs that say how we are doing relative to other institutions with similar profiles – not how well our research is received in the world of science, but how much bacon (grant money) we are bringing home. Thus trained, when I am asked to review a grant application, I plunge joyfully into the nuances of the budget as hard evidence of the priorities of the project.

More than once, I have read grant proposals that say the "right" things about ethical engagement, respecting Indigenous perspectives, collaborating with communities, etc. – and then present budgets in which the vast majority of funds go to support the foreign applicant's activities, and local assistants receive a pittance – even sometimes less than the national minimum wage, which is usually hard to

achieve for countries where the minimum wage is somewhere around 1.00 USD/hour. For me, the budget then belies all the lip service paid to ethics in the rest of the application. If the proposed activities are not extractive in terms of intellectual property, then at the very least they are extractive financially – and financial arrangements are one area that is universally important to people of all walks of life negotiating a new fee-for-service project, anywhere in the world.

My first reaction to such budgeting has been: how might one think that such a budget is justifiable? Would it not be embarrassing to reveal the budget to a local person, for them to see how much money was awarded, and how little goes to them? Paul Newman famously wrote of the stinginess of some US PhD students when in the field, because they are used to an impecunious graduate student lifestyle (Newman 2009), not to mention crippling levels of student debt. Or could it be that researchers are either: (a) unaware of the material realities in their proposed field sites, or (b) naïve about what local people would want out of their project?

It is true that there is little in the (psycho-)linguistic field methods literature to be found around distributing funds in the field, beyond just paying consultants at a locally acceptable rate (Dimmendaal 2001; Dobrin 2008; Eisenbeiss 2013: 68–69; Meakins et al. 2018: 42–43; Rice 2012) (or just giving them periodic "gifts"; Dixon 2007; Kulick 2019). But payment rates for lodging, food, porters, and other people who provide support to the field team are not hard to come by: they can either be found codified by local research centres, government agencies, and NGOs, or be agreed upon with local communities in the absence of codified rates. For instance, in Papua New Guinea, all research institutes, such as the National Medical Research Institute, the National Research Institute, and the New Guinea Binatang Research Center, have codified rates for upkeep and board in remote villages, carrying of gear by local people, data collection and entry by local people, participant payments for social science research, hiring a driver with a vehicle, etc.

Much of the discussion about ethical fieldwork practices is subjective and hard to quantify. The TRUST Code offers relatively concrete and clear recommendations, but some may not lend themselves to hard proof. How can one know for sure whether Research Project X was done in an ethical manner, apart from approval from an institutional ethics committee? I thus present two related proposals for reliably ascertaining whether fieldwork – in this case, any fieldwork, psycholinguistic or otherwise – has been planned out ethically.

The first step (recommendation 1) is to foreground the proportions in the project budget, in a binary manner: proportion of funds that will be paid out to local people in the project location, versus the proportion that will be spent on outsiders' work, travel, and equipment:

> **Recommendation 1:** Require project proposals and/or ethics applications to clearly state the proportion of funds that will directly benefit local people (as participant payments, or payments for services such as coordinating research projects, research assistantships, cooking, providing security, carrying gear, etc.).
>
> Example statement: *This project has a total budget of 75,000 USD, of which 33% (24,784 USD) will be dispersed in the local community*.

Such a clear statement of the funding proportion that will go to local communities will bring this into sharp focus for the researcher(s) and for reviewers. It will also establish a baseline expectation that some portion of the funds sought will go to local people. This may be inappropriate in some contexts; for instance, in Saudi Arabia, it may be the norm for research participants to decline to receive monetary compensation for their participation (Al-Zahrani in prep). But in such exceptional cases, the onus would be on the researcher(s) to offer proof of such a standard: for instance, a letter from a community leader stating that the community would prefer not to be paid for their involvement in the proposed project. It should be unacceptable to make claims that the community will be satisfied with compensation through small gifts, in lieu of funds, without strong support from recent literature and/or a community leader-issued statement.

What proportion of funding should reasonably benefit local people? Surely a project in which 5 % of funds will benefit speakers of a language to be studied, and 95 % will not, should be rejigged for a more equitable distribution of funds – but what about a 40/60 split? Here are some observations from our "experiment fair" in the Nungon-speaking area.

It was important to me and to the fair organizers that as broad a swath as possible of local people (spanning all three major clans) benefit financially from our four-experiment extravaganza – for which locals took two weeks off from all usual duties, and for which they had laboured to stockpile foodstuff and firewood for months. We thus paid people well by local standards for participation (K50, or about 20 USD, per experiment, meaning a possible total of K200, or 80 USD, could be made just by participating in all four experiments), and also trained and employed local young people to run the experiments themselves with some supervision: they were paid a daily rate, as were a group of men who maintained security throughout the trip, and a group of women who cooked for the whole entourage, including the young research assistants and the security personnel. All pay rates were established in conversation with the experiment organizers (my own long-time research assistants and coordinators), and were consistent with the usual rates that I had paid people for similar work in the past. We paid local people for lodging and as porters; we also paid the local coordinators of the entire production; and one research team left work and instructions with their young assistants, who then ran the experiment in additional

villages after the outsiders left, and were paid by wire transfer. Finally, we paid for local people to modify an existing building to make it suitable to house the experiments. This is not including equipment that we left in the village for ongoing use for research purposes, including an addition to our existing research solar power setup, a portable ink jet printer, and two new laptops. The solar system is used for other community uses, such as charging phones, in addition to research. My local assistants are skilled in digital data entry and data management, among other things; their pay rate was slightly higher due to these skills.

Our payments to local people for all these things (upwards of 4,675 USD), despite our best intentions, did not exceed the amount we spent on flights to and from the location, and on equipment that was not left at the site (upwards of 6,700 USD just for the EEG headsets plus domestic flights, not including international flights). This says that while local people benefited financially from the trip, other actors (airlines and in-country aviation services; technology vendors) benefited more – and the payments we made to those other vendors either benefited us or our institution (as with the EEG headsets), not, even indirectly, local people.

It is hard to balance out the huge cost of, say, a quality mobile eye-tracker (potentially 20,000 USD). So I suggest – wide open for modifications by others – that travel costs alone, not necessarily also equipment costs, should be considered against funds distributed to community members, such that:

> **Recommendation 2:** Ideally, at least the cost of outsiders' travel to and from a community should be equal to or less than the funds distributed within the community during the course of the project.

This makes intuitive sense, and is a proportion that should seem justified to local people if they were presented with it.

I am *not* suggesting that participants be paid at locally exorbitant rates. Research projects should set payment rates in consultation with a range of local people, and in comparison with similar projects in the same setting, if possible. Where such payment rates are used, and yet the proportion of funds going to local people is still less than the proportion paying for the outsiders' travel, then the research project could be said (if we decide to adopt recommendation 2 above) to be financially extractive. The researcher(s) must then look at other areas where funds could be distributed within, instead of outside, the community. These fall into at least two categories:

1 Research support. The researcher(s) should ensure that everyone who provides a service for the researcher(s), for the people involved in the project, and for the project overall, is compensated adequately (porters, cooks, security, coordinators, translators, etc.), without forgetting anyone (see TRUST Code, Article 7). They should further consider buying foodstuffs, stationary, and other supplies locally, instead of flying them in.

2 Research capacity building. The researcher(s) should also consider how the research project can offer paid on-the-job training and/or semi-skilled work to local young people, either to assist with running the project, managing data, etc., or to learn other skills that the researcher(s) can pass on. In this way, the project can assist with up-skilling a portion of the population and paying them for their time and efforts during training and/or work; see TRUST Code, Article 20. (Whether or not the training itself should be paid, or involve an honorarium, or whether only any research assistance work should be paid, will depend on the local mores.)

Budget quotas are not unheard of in funding for cross-cultural research. The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), a division of the Australian government that offers competitive grant funding to Australian researchers "for the benefit of partner countries" (ACIAR 2024) requires that at least 40 % of all project funds be spent in the country where research is being conducted (Ann Hill, p.c. 2024). This includes salaries for in-country collaborators, technicians, and research assistants, payments to research participants, and fieldwork expenses of outsiders while in-country, along with other in-country resources. ACIAR is not a development agency; it funds research. The 40 % funding quota ensures that research benefits the "partner country" not just in the advancement of knowledge, but also along the way, financially. Benefits to the host country and community in the form of knowledge may be hard to prove, but the distribution of funds is tangible evidence of benefit-sharing.

5 Ethical budgets > capacity building > enhanced research coverage

The very first article of the TRUST Code presents relevance of the research project to local communities as an essential ethical consideration:

> Article 1. Local relevance of research is essential and should be determined in collaboration with local partners. Research that is not relevant in the location where it is undertaken imposes burdens without benefits. (TRUST 2018)

This is unfortunately a major hurdle for psycholinguistic fieldwork, since convincing local people of the relevance of an experiment targeting an obscure phonological or syntactic feature may be difficult. Yet I believe that this, along with increased skills training for local young people, could be the key ingredient in orchestrating a desperately needed expansion in languages and phenomena studied using psycholinguistic methods (see Norcliffe et al. 2015 on the narrow dataset in the

psycholinguistic literature). If people find psycholinguistic research to be relevant to their communities, they may choose to train to run and help design experiments that can be run on a larger scale, with better explanation, and over a much longer time span, than outside researchers can do on their brief trips.

When the whole community benefits, they may rise to the occasion of the research project with great enthusiasm, and begin to contemplate ways that they themselves could run such research – and which questions they would like to answer, using the scientific method. If local young people are trained in digital data entry and other relevant skills, along with understanding the purpose and design of experiments they help to run, then they can continue to run such experiments in the absence of any outside researchers. In total, over the past six years, Nungon speakers have run eight psycholinguistic experiments, as well as a highly acclaimed sociological research project (Baptiste et al. 2022), *in the absence of any outside researchers*. This scale of experimental work is much greater than what is accomplished on a typical expedition by an outside research team. Further, a trained local team can be nimble and efficient in the midst of a pandemic: the Nungon-speaking team were able to continue to work locally during the Covid-19 pandemic, when much international movement of academics was paused.

Pye (2022) challenges child language acquisition researchers to drop an overemphasis on transient theories as the motivators for research, to enable a wider demographic of people to engage in language acquisition research. Surely something similar could be said for psycholinguistics: if a project cannot be explained to local people without their taking three years of graduate seminars in psycholinguistic theories, then how can it ever be seen by them as relevant to their own needs? Field linguists like me, trained to analyse linguistic structures, may find it hard to master enough of the psycholinguistic literature to contribute meaningfully to it; how much more opaque, then, is that literature to local people with no training in basic linguistics?

Colleagues and I ran a language intervention study in a Tashelhit Berber-speaking region of the High Atlas Mountains, Morocco (Sarvasy et al., in prep). We taught 123 older Tashelhit-speaking adults one of two languages of Papua New Guinea or Quran memorization, over 9 h, and tested their working memory and linguistic skills (in Tashelhit) before and after the training. Who were the "colleagues" involved in this? Two colleagues of mine at the MARCS Institute, one an expert in the cognitive effects of bilingualism and in language interventions of this sort (Mark Antoniou) and one skilled in Bayesian modelling (Andrew Milne); and a local, Tashelhit-speaking Master's student in Economics (Mohamed Naciri), along with four local research assistants. We designed Tashelhit versions of the CERAD word recall test, the forward and backward digits recall test, the Auditory Working Memory test, and the Wechsler logical memory test. Mohamed Naciri, Fatima Ait

Hssine, and Sliman Mouzon learned enough Tok Pisin and Nungon to be able to teach these languages to groups of Tashelhit-speaking older adults.

This experience impressed upon me how much it can enrich the experience of both participants and researcher(s) when local assistants and participants fully understand the aims and methods of a study, and find it relevant to their own lives. We framed the research as investigating how three different forms of mental exercise (learning one of the two very different Papua New Guinean languages, or practising Quran memorization) would impact people's test scores: whether, in local terms, the intervention would "sharpen their wits". We also gave a cursory explanation of the scientific method through analogy, saying that the reason for dividing people into three groups, each with a different intervention, was akin to trying out three different pesticides on three different apple orchard sections (as the community is now largely engaged in apple farming), to see which worked the best. Most of the 123 participants engaged fully with the materials they were learning, and people would tell me that they saw groups practising the foreign words on their stoops in the evenings, despite knowing full well that these words would never be of practical utility to them or facilitate material gain.

All the research assistants, who included three without tertiary education and two with this, understood the aims of the project and the methodology. The challenge for them (and us) was to interpret the results of the different tests – that is, to be able to understand why the Auditory Working Memory test results might differ among different groups, and what that could mean in terms of the cognitive effects of the intervention. But even that could be understood with some more explanation. We did not need to school them in the nuances of psycholinguistic theories.

Both participants and research assistants seem to have found the research relevant to their communities, where they recognize that people's cognitive abilities can decline with age, and that people who never had formal schooling might lose capacity faster than others. They found the research design transparent. They found it exciting and interesting to have the chance to learn new things and to do hands-on research themselves: this is evident in the large number of participants (123 in the interventions, plus another 48 as a passive control group) and in the effort they put in to study two obscure (to them) languages from the other side of the world (often well beyond what they had to do to earn the participant payments). The research assistants gained some new skills and understanding, and were paid well for their assistance. Finally, our co-author Mohamed Naciri found a new love of research through running this project and was able to use some of the skills he developed in the project in the execution of his MA thesis the following year. This community is well on their way to running this sort of experiment independently, with only some consultation from outside experts.

In 2023, I was able to explain to a large gathering of Nungon speakers in the village the results of the most exciting psycholinguistic study we have conducted on Nungon to date: we were able to show, using eye-tracking, that Nungon speakers plan their sentences three times farther in advance than English speakers are known to do (Sarvasy et al. 2023; Schubert 2022). People took this as a galvanizing new type of evidence for the worth of their language. I am thus hopeful about the potential for psycholinguistic research to offer people evidence of the ways that their languages shape their brains in unique and special ways, as fodder for arguments for maintaining their language into the future, rather than shifting to the regional lingua franca. I am not a psycholinguist, but I knew that my sentence planning as a non-native Nungon speaker fell well short of what local people must do (Schubert 2022); I wanted to be able to prove this, and was able with the help of a psycholinguistics graduate student to design a sound experiment. If I could do this without years of study of psycholinguistic theories, community members could also do this, as well as the type of intervention study that we conducted in Tashelhit Berber. Moving forward, the ideal would be for these communities to be running such experiments themselves, in areas they find meaningful. As an academic community, we should be looking at ways to get funds and training to such groups for this important work.

6 Conclusions

Psycholinguistic fieldwork is different from descriptive linguistic fieldwork in its duration and structure. Because of the short-term, impersonal, pre-planned, and transactional nature of psycholinguistic fieldwork, it may be more likely to be run in an "extractive" manner than primary descriptive fieldwork, which often involves adoption into a community and the establishment of a long-term relationship which may persist for the rest of the researcher's life (Aikhenvald 2013). While it is important to recognize the dangers of extractive research, I suggested that in some cases, especially with psycholinguistic fieldwork, participant communities are not necessarily as powerless as the TRUST Code and other literature might imply – and, conversely, that some types of in-country collaborations can promote, rather than fix, extractive relations.

First, communities are complex and resilient, and outside researchers should not necessarily flatter themselves that they can singlehandedly wreck a community with a single research project; second, communities are actually made up of individuals with often-competing interests, and these individuals may actually manipulate the unwitting researchers, not the other way around; third, outside researchers are at the mercy of local people when they are in the field, so local people

may have room to dictate how things are run; fourth, I note that establishing in-country collaboration is not necessarily an automatic "ethics fix".

Although a quota for in-country spending is already built into the funding model of at least one national research funding agency (ACIAR), equitable budgets do not yet feature prominently in the literature on ethical cross-cultural research. Perhaps this is a potentially embarrassing point for many of us and one we might prefer were not publicized: how much money was spent on research project "Processing X", and how much (or how little) of it actually went to speakers of language X. But reading multiple grant applications that pay lip service to ethics, but then direct only a pittance to local people, indicates to me that budget quotas might be a powerful tool to help enforce ethical research, in psycholinguistics and beyond. Forcing researchers to find ways to pay more people in the community to do more work would ideally bring us closer to the goal of building local research capacity, such that "fly-in-fly-out" or "helicopter" research fades into the past, and the number of languages for which we have psycholinguistic data increases as quickly – and as ethically – as possible.

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Appendix: TRUST Code (TRUST 2018)

Fairness

ARTICLE 1 Local relevance of research is essential and should be determined in collaboration with local partners. Research that is not relevant in the location where it is undertaken imposes burdens without benefits.

ARTICLE 2 Local communities and research participants should be included throughout the research process, wherever possible, from planning through to post-study feedback and evaluation, to ensure that their perspectives are fairly represented. This approach represents Good Participatory Practice.

ARTICLE 3 Feedback about the findings of the research must be given to local communities and research participants. It should be provided in a way that is meaningful, appropriate and readily comprehended.

ARTICLE 4 Local researchers should be included, wherever possible, throughout the research process, including in study design, study implementation, data ownership, intellectual property and authorship of publications.

ARTICLE 5 Access by researchers to any biological or agricultural resources, human biological materials, traditional knowledge, cultural artefacts or non-renewable resources such as minerals should be subject to the free and prior informed consent of the owners or custodians. Formal agreements should govern the transfer of any material or knowledge to researchers, on terms that are co-developed with resource custodians or knowledge holders.

ARTICLE 6 Any research that uses biological materials and associated information such as traditional knowledge or genetic sequence data should clarify to participants the potential monetary and non-monetary benefits that might arise. A culturally appropriate plan to share benefits should be agreed to by all relevant stakeholders, and reviewed regularly as the research evolves. Researchers from high-income settings need to be aware of the power and resource differentials in benefit-sharing discussions, with sustained efforts to bring lower-capacity parties into the dialogue.

ARTICLE 7 It is essential to compensate local research support systems, for instance translators, interpreters or local coordinators, fairly for their contribution to research projects.

Respect

ARTICLE 8 Potential cultural sensitivities should be explored in advance of research with local communities, research participants and local researchers to avoid

violating customary practices. Research is a voluntary exercise for research participants. It is not a mission-driven exercise to impose different ethical values. If researchers from high-income settings cannot agree on a way of undertaking the research that is acceptable to local stakeholders, it should not take place.

ARTICLE 9 Community assent should be obtained through recognized local structures, if required locally. While individual consent must not be compromised, assent from the community may be an ethical prerequisite and a sign of respect for the entire community. It is the responsibility of the researcher to find out local requirements.

ARTICLE 10 Local ethics review should be sought wherever possible. It is of vital importance that research projects are approved by a research ethics committee in the host country, wherever this exists, even if ethics approval has already been obtained in the high-income setting.

ARTICLE 11 Researchers from high-income settings should show respect to host country research ethics committees.

Care

ARTICLE 12 Informed consent procedures should be tailored to local requirements to achieve genuine understanding and well-founded decision-making.

ARTICLE 13 A clear procedure for feedback, complaints or allegations of misconduct must be offered that gives genuine and appropriate access to all research participants and local partners to express any concerns they may have with the research process. This procedure must be agreed with local partners at the outset of the research.

ARTICLE 14 Research that would be severely restricted or prohibited in a high-income setting should not be carried out in a lower-income setting. Exceptions might be permissible in the context of specific local conditions (e.g. diseases not prevalent in high-income countries). If and when such exceptions are dealt with, the internationally acknowledged compliance commandment "comply or explain" must be used, i.e. exceptions agreed upon by the local stakeholders and researchers must be explicitly and transparently justified and made easily accessible to interested parties.

ARTICLE 15 Where research involvement could lead to stigmatization (e.g. research on sexually transmitted diseases), incrimination (e.g. sex work), discrimination or indeterminate personal risk (e.g. research on political beliefs), special measures to ensure the safety and wellbeing of research participants need to be agreed with local partners.

ARTICLE 16 Ahead of the research it should be determined whether local resources will be depleted to provide staff or other resources for the new project (e.g. nurses or laboratory staff). If so, the implications should be discussed in detail with local communities, partners and authorities and monitored during the study.

ARTICLE 17 In situations where animal welfare regulations are inadequate or non-existent in the local setting compared with the country of origin of the researcher, animal experimentation should always be undertaken in line with the higher standards of protection for animals.

ARTICLE 18 In situations where environmental protection and biorisk-related regulations are inadequate or non-existent in the local setting compared with the country of origin of the researcher, research should always be undertaken in line with the higher standards of environmental protection.

ARTICLE 19 Where research may involve health, safety or security risks for researchers or expose researchers to conflicts of conscience, tailored risk management plans should be agreed in advance of the research between the research team, local partners and employers.

Honesty

ARTICLE 20 A clear understanding should be reached among collaborators with regard to their roles, responsibilities and conduct throughout the research cycle, from study design through to study implementation, review and dissemination. Capacity-building plans for local researchers should be part of these discussions.

ARTICLE 21 Lower educational standards, illiteracy or language barriers can never be an excuse for hiding information or providing it incompletely. Information must always be presented honestly and as clearly as possible. Plain language and a non-patronising style in the appropriate local languages should be adopted in communication with research participants who may have difficulties comprehending the research process and requirements.

ARTICLE 22 Corruption and bribery of any kind cannot be accepted or supported by researchers from any countries.

ARTICLE 23 Lower local data protection standards or compliance procedures can never be an excuse to tolerate the potential for privacy breaches. Special attention must be paid to research participants who are at risk of stigmatization, discrimination or incrimination through the research participation.

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