

Monolingual fieldwork in and beyond the classroom: the Logooli experience at UCLA

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1 Introduction

Betty Mack Twarog, the biologist who discovered serotonin in 1951 as a Harvard graduate student of John Welsh, later wrote:

“To have worked with Professor John Henry Walsh is to have been apprenticed to a Prince of Serendip, on a journey of scientific exploration. In science, ‘fortuitous’ discovery depends heavily on the traveler’s choice of itinerary. Professor Welsh designed wonderful itineraries for his students and encouraged enthusiasm, eclectic interests, and openmindedness. Many of us have enjoyed the excitement of discovery because of his guidance” (Twarog 1988: 21).

Serendipitous discoveries are a hallmark of linguistic fieldwork, especially when it is conducted primarily in the target language. The linguist who listens and converses in the target language is privy to many unanticipated exchanges. Despite this, the primary mode of data collection in graduate linguistic field methods courses is usually translated elicitation. Few field methods instructors train students in the acquisition of competence in the target language. This means that even if a novice fieldworker believes in the value of target language competence, s/he likely has had little guidance in techniques for acquiring this, nor practice in monolingual elicitation.

It is a pity that most field methods instructors cling to translation from English: monolingual elicitation is an enjoyable, memorable, and efficient framework for a graduate field methods course, especially in the early stages. The monolingual approach gives students a much more realistic introduction to the challenges, frustrations, and joys of linguistic fieldwork than does a controlled contact language elicitation model. The first quarter of the 2014-15 UCLA field methods course was taught using monolingual methods. This paper uses two transcripts from sessions from this course to show the potential of monolingual methods to gather large amounts of target language data quickly.

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2 Monolingual fieldwork overview

Monolingual fieldwork² is taken here to denote linguistic fieldwork in which the researcher communicates with consultant(s) in the target language. Of course, in fieldwork situations where a contact language is available, this contact language may be essential for ethical project setup, and on occasion throughout the field period. As Alexandra Aikhenvald (p.c.) points out, there is no contradiction inherent in a fieldworker's both acquiring the target language and occasionally employing the contact language. The notion of "pure" monolingual fieldwork—where an available contact language is always eschewed, even in instances in which it might be useful—is not advocated here.

For nearly a century, linguistic and anthropological fieldworkers have discussed the utility of learning the target language (Boas 1910; Mead 1939; Lowie 1940; papers in Newman & Ratliff 2001; Everett 2001; Aikhenvald 2007; Dixon 2007; Moore 2009; Chelliah & De Reuse 2011; Mosel 2012, among others). The debate centers around the time burden of language learning and the influence of intermediary languages on elicited material.

In the first half of the twentieth century, anthropologists sparred over whether or not language competence enhanced anthropological research. Boas (1911: 61) wrote: "Much information can be gained by listening to conversations of the natives and by taking part in their daily life, which, to the observer who has no command of the language, will remain entirely inaccessible." Mead (1939: 191) dissented, claiming that a bit of linguistic knowledge was sufficient for many types of research. She defended the "time-honored methods of interpreters and *lingua francas*," although still advocating the use of a texts corpus. For her, the acquisition of language competence by the researcher was an act of "virtuosity" pursued apart from actual research, akin to learning to paddle a canoe. Lowie (1940: 82) responded to Mead's article by challenging the amount of time that interpretation and *lingua francas* had been "honored" for, listing earlier North American ethnologists and linguists: "I believe J. O. Dorsey knew his Omaha, and that several Russian scholars, as well as Castrén (about a century ago), used the linguistic approach. In the United States, Frank Hamilton Cushing learnt Zuni during his five years' stay (1879–1884); Alexander M. Stephen spoke Navaho by 1890 and was learning Hopi before his death (1894)."

By the end of the twentieth century, Boas and Lowie's approach had won out, at least in theory, among anthropologists. Indeed, Moore (2009) and Newman (2013) identified what Newman (2013) called "the great anthropological myth": the notion that anthropologists are all competent in the languages spoken by their subjects. Among linguists, however, target language competence is often seen as a special feat of the particularly-gifted, following Mead (1939).

² Called "blind fieldwork" by Vaux & Cooper (1999: 10).

2.1 The positives: language comprehension for participant-observation

A partial list of the benefits to a linguistic fieldworker of target language competence follows as B1-10, given in no particular order.³

B1. Minimize interference. Working solely through the target language helps limit effects from a contact language.

B2. Guide research. Learning the target language can help the researcher to build pseudo-intuitions about the language that may indicate profitable directions for investigation.

B3. Access the best speakers. If the researcher need not rely on interpreters, s/he may have direct access to members of the community who do not know the lingua franca, such as the elderly or women: these are likely the most proficient and knowledgeable speakers of the target language.

B4. Obtain reliable negative proofs. Others' corrections of the researcher's mistakes are negative proofs of language structure in real-world contexts. Davis, Gillon, & Matthewson (2014) and many others have discussed how essential negative evidence is to establishing a grammatical analysis. One excellent way to obtain negative evidence is to produce an utterance yourself in the course of elicitation, which the consultant corrects automatically, as if correcting a child. This depends, of course, on the consultant's willingness to correct the researcher, which must be cultivated.

B5. Please the community. For the (probable) majority of community members who conceive of the linguistic research project as 'learning (about) our language,' the researcher's progress is gauged in terms of language fluency. If a researcher claims to be investigating language, yet makes no progress in using it, some might interpret the researcher's claims as a cover for some other type of investigation.

B6. Endear the researcher to the community. When a prestigious outsider partially drops his/her expert status to become a student of the community's language—inevitably making embarrassing mistakes in it—this humbles the researcher and shows his/her commitment to the community.

B7. Translate texts and examples more precisely. Eventually, language competence allows for maximally precise translation of texts and examples.

³ Note that this discussion takes for granted that the local community sees no political, spiritual or other problem with the researcher's acquisition of the target language. If the community were to object to the researcher's learning their language, this must be respected.

B8. Discover the unexpected through participant-observation. Target language competence allows the researcher to notice grammatical structures in casual speech outside the elicitation setting

B9. Leave No (Linguistic) Trace (to coopt the US Forest Service mantra). The researcher should be acutely conscious of any potentially negative impact of his/her conduct on a language's social status. A researcher working on an endangered language may claim to value this language but converse only in a contact language. This may negatively impact the endangered language's potential for survival: even the linguist apparently avoids using it! Such a researcher could be leaving a heavy "trace" in the community, cementing the language's low status. If the researcher instead honors the language by favoring it over the contact language in conversation, this may help elevate the language's status.

B10. Maximize efficient data collection. If the researcher converses primarily in the target language, this means that all interactions become potential data sources, or at least potential catalysts for novel elicitation directions.

2.2 What opponents say

Some linguistic fieldworkers who did not acquire competence in their target language claim, along with Mead (1939), that such competence is unnecessary for describing a language's grammar. Indeed, a sizable corpus of transcribed natural speech and a decent passive understanding of the language's structure may suffice for a basic grammatical description. These fieldworkers may also add that acquiring competence would have taken too much time. But it is noteworthy that of fieldworkers who learned to speak the target language, no one seems to declare: "I wasted too much time learning the language." Potential drawbacks to target language acquisition are listed below as D1-4.

D1. It (may) take more time. It has been claimed that acquiring target language competence makes the field research last at least an extra six months (Everett 2001). This claim must be examined against the increased depth and other positive aspects to language acquisition in §2.1. Further, the quality of some of the UCLA graduate student grammatical sketches produced after an academic quarter of part-time monolingual elicitation may prove that monolingual fieldwork does not necessarily entail longer time spans.

D2. Training is lacking. A willing fieldworker may have little training in language acquisition. Moore (2009) and Mosel (2012) note that very few guides to fieldwork, and few field methods classes, teach in any detail how to learn the target language. Thus, the novice fieldworker who wishes to eventually work monolingually may not have any guidance in this. Even

veteran fieldworkers who themselves prefer monolingual elicitation may not train students to do this in field methods courses (Dixon 2007).

D3. Pressure to learn quickly. Not only are the stakes high for the researcher to prove s/he is making progress in learning the language, but the researcher's language mistakes may also be leveled at his/her language teachers (as in McLaughlin & Seydou Sall 2001). In 2012, in the midst of my dissertation research on the Papuan language Nungon, I gave what I thought was a rousing speech in Nungon before a primary school assembly. I meant to say that in the USA, if students do not do homework, they are punished, but did not yet understand that the verb 'punish' has suppletive forms depending on the object argument person/number. Instead of *nisopnangkang* 'they will punish us,' I said *niinangkang* 'they will bite us.' This provoked spontaneous roars of laughter from the assembled students. When I returned to the hearth of my adopted clan in the evening, conversation around the fire was hushed and grave. My public mistake had been leveled against my adopted family: they had been accused of failing to teach me well.

D4. Negative influence on recording content. Consultants may simplify their speech or over-explain during recording sessions if they are directing their speech at the researcher and perceive him/her to have sub-optimal language comprehension. This danger may be minimized by using native speakers as interviewers in recording sessions.

For some, the notion of seriously trying to learn to speak the target language may clash with an idea of "scientific research" in which the expert researcher goes to the field with a pre-established hypothesis, not to pursue side serendipities (Davis et al. 2014). In fact, influential scientific advancements have come about through unexpected discoveries, as with Twarog's Prince of Serendip (1988). Although Charles Darwin touted hypothesis-driven research (Darwin & Seward 1903: 195), he was of course greatly influenced by field observations.

2.3 What no one discusses: efficiency!

Benefit B10 of §2.1, "Maximize efficient data collection," is a major boon of target language competence, but it has been discussed little.

Elicitation through a contact language means that both consultant and elicitor are conscious of building their working relationship primarily through the contact language, and only secondarily around the target language. If either elicitor or consultant is not a near-native speaker of the contact language, that person may feel compelled to prove competence in the contact language through expert commentary, witty parentheticals, jokes, or other meta-discussion. All this may be welcomed by the other party to lessen the intellectual strain of grappling with the less-familiar target language, but it takes up valuable time in elicitation sessions.

Further, it may be difficult to ask the other person to curtail such commentary in a respectful manner. The need to build a relationship through the contact language can thus mean much less actual target language data, and much more elicitation session time taken up with social niceties, jokes, or extraneous information.⁴ If these occurred in the target language, of course, this would be valuable additional data, possibly yielding serendipitous discoveries!

Rebecca Paterson (p.c.) normally elicits through contact languages (English and Hausa) at her field site in Nigeria. When checking previously-obtained data with a new consultant on a recent field trip, however, she worked only in the target Kainji language, *Ut-Ma'in*. She reports that this approach made for more streamlined data collection and much greater efficiency.

Monolingual elicitation is especially suited for the beginning stages of linguistic fieldwork on an undescribed language, when the goals are amassing a sizable vocabulary and filling in morphological paradigms, and there is little need to set up complicated scenarios involving nuanced modalities. These beginning stages of fieldwork are akin to the situation simulated by linguistic field methods courses.

3 Field methods courses in linguistics

Field methods courses are included in the curricula of many graduate and some undergraduate linguistics programs. Although most graduate students in the U.S. will never pursue fieldwork in a faraway place, all linguists have to interact throughout their careers with language descriptions that stem from fieldwork. A field methods course should, at least, give students a window into how the data for these descriptions are gathered and analyzed. Without such experience, a linguist has no basis on which to evaluate such descriptions as reliable. This is like evaluating a statistical claim with no understanding of statistical methods.

Newman (2009: 124) concurs with these generalizations about the import of these courses even for linguists who never plan to do fieldwork: “One has to approach each description with a certain degree of skepticism. Theoreticians who come up with sophisticated models and explanations naively depending on data from one description by one person of one language (about which they know nothing) do so at their own peril.”

For many, their field methods course is also the one chance they get to investigate a new language as a complete system, grappling with its grammar as an integrated whole. A field methods course generates the ultimate messy, real-world massive problem set for students to work out as best they can. In this problem set, phonology is not clearly separated from morphology, and syntax is tied to pragmatics. It should be a challenging synthesis of everything students have learned about language thus far.

⁴ Once the researcher and consultant have begun working through a contact language, it may be difficult to later transition to only speaking the target language together.

Finally, a field methods course should give students a taste of serendipity. It should give them glimpses of intriguing facets of language they could not have anticipated finding. At first, students in Martin Walkow's 2014 undergraduate field methods class could only imagine exploring components of grammar that they knew from general theoretical literature: "Three out of four students who wanted to work on syntax, wanted to work on wh-questions. The fourth wanted to work on quantification" (Martin Walkow, p.c.). After exposure to idiosyncracies of the target language, Shanghainese, however, none of the students ended up focusing on these areas, instead honing in on new discoveries they had "just stumbled into."

Newman (2009) reports an early-1990s informal survey of US and Canadian graduate linguistics programs; of 42 that responded, 34 offered a field methods course. In 5 the field methods course was required for the MA degree, and in 14 it was required for the PhD. In many of the departments, field methods courses were not offered every year. The survey did not probe teaching methods for the field methods courses. Anecdotal evidence today suggests that few, if any, university graduate field methods courses use monolingual methods for any sizeable portion of the course.

Why *not* use monolingual methods? The major drawback to monolingual methodology for fieldwork in general is the investment of time and energy in learning the language. Faculty members undertaking fieldwork may have high-stakes, time-sensitive deliverables that necessitate a rush job using contact language translation. This is not the case with field methods courses: the stakes are low, and the goals are learning-related, not publications. A field methods course would seem to be the ideal venue for students to try monolingual elicitation methods.

4 The 2014-2015 Logooli field methods course outline

All UCLA PhD students in linguistics must take the graduate field methods course. As with many US graduate programs in linguistics, the UCLA field methods course is two academic quarters long. I taught the 2014-15 UCLA field methods sequence working with Logooli (Eastern Bantu) consultant Mwabeni Indire. All class sessions in the Fall quarter were monolingual, and this quarter culminated in each student's production of a grammatical sketch of Logooli. Following the UCLA tradition established by Pam Munro, Bantu and Logooli-related literature was off-limits for the first five weeks of the Fall quarter, so students wrote mid-term draft grammatical sketches without reference to outside literature. In the Winter quarter, students were free to use English in class sessions, and each pursued a specialized topic.

A class database in FLEx included class session transcripts, as well as transcribed narratives from Mr. Indire, interview clips from the film *Maragoli* (Nichols & Ssenyonga 1976), and transcribed narratives from Michael Diercks's Logooli texts corpus (Diercks 2014).

How can a classroom setting with a single speaker accommodate monolingual field methods? My initial monolingual demonstration generated some lexical items, which students then used to prepare potential Logooli sentences. Mr. Indire corrected the students' sentences in the next session and provided further elaboration of them, generating more lexicon. Props, mime, drawings, etc. were all used to elicit vocabulary and inflectional paradigms. Beginning very early, Mr. Indire provided short Logooli narrative sequences that served as models for students' own statements in Logooli (see Moore 2009 on memorization of folklore and other texts as a tool for acquiring target language competence).

Students were forced to pay close attention to all monolingual sessions. In the UCLA program students are encouraged to choose programmatic affiliations early—aligning themselves with the “P-side” (phonetics, phonology) or “S-side” (syntax, semantics)—the monolingual approach and the demand on each of them to produce a Logooli grammatical sketch meant that P-siders could not disregard syntax, and S-siders had to grapple with phonetics and phonology.

A further demand on students—that they submit an abstract to a special session of the Annual Conference on African Linguistics on the Luyia Bantu languages—put pressure on them to quickly master Logooli grammar: a tall task. When this abstract was due, at the end of the first quarter, some students balked at the monolingual approach. But in the second quarter, these same students reported that, having now worked using English, they understood the benefits of working only in Logooli in the first quarter. They felt they grasped the overall structure of Logooli better than they would have if they had used English translation from the beginning.

5 Analysis of sample monolingual and bilingual sessions

The following two sections introduce excerpts from a sample monolingual session and a sample bilingual session. The initial 12:19 of a 1:40:00 monolingual session was transcribed and analyzed, while the last 10:51 of a 42:00 bilingual session was also transcribed and analyzed. The entire 12:19 and 10:51 transcripts are not given here, but all material from these excerpts contributes to the counts in Table 1 in section §5.3.

The two sessions have necessarily different characters: the monolingual one was part of the period of general information-gathering in the Fall quarter, while the bilingual session represents one student's investigation (in front of the class) of a topic of special interest. This means that if the bilingual session sampled here had been conducted monolingually, it would still have had a somewhat different character than the monolingual session sampled here.

Regardless of this difference in content and style, the emphases here are on the serendipitous discoveries of the monolingual session and the excessive parenthetical statements and social niceties of the bilingual session. These do not relate to the sessions' content; rather, they relate to the choice of primary language for each.

In the monolingual session, the consultant performs self-corrections, elaborations, explanations, and other meta-linguistic commentary in the target language. Given the number of these explanations in the bilingual sample, an equal or greater number of serendipitous discoveries could be expected from such a session if conducted monolingually.

5.1 Monolingual session

The excerpt in (1) below represents a 1:28 segment of a class session in October 2014. The segment belongs to the 12:19 excerpt that was transcribed for analysis; for length considerations, only this 1:28 excerpt is given here. Participants are: M (the consultant), J, H, NA, NL, and S. The session began with two students, NA and J, reading to Mr. Indire the self-introductions they have prepared in Logooli, modeled on his own; this excerpt begins from the start of the second student's self-introduction. The students pause after each sentence for any corrections from Mr. Indire.

In this session, most interactions were in Logooli, with occasional English asides whispered between students to clarify points among themselves, and an English introduction to the session by the instructor.

(1) Monolingual session transcript excerpt

J: Irjeta	rjaan̄ge	ne	____.	Ndivurwa	New Jersey.
J: name	my	is	____.	I was born	New Jersey.
J: Karoono		ngaande		iskuru.	
J: Today		I walked [sic]		school.	
M: Ndījo!	Karoono	ngeendi	kuzja,		
M: Thus!	Today	I walked	to go,		
M: karoono	ngeendi	kuzja	muskuru.	H: Ah.	
M: today	I walked	to go	to school.	H: Ah.	
M :ngeendi,	kuzja,	muskuru.	H: ngeendi,	kuzja,	
M: I walked,	to go,	to school.	H: I walked,	to go,	
M: M-m.	Kuzja mba,	pole.	Kuzja mba.		
M: No.	Not 'to go',	sorry.	Not 'to go'.		
M: ngeendi	mpaka,	mm,	mpaka,	skuru.	S: Mpaka.
M: I walked	until,	mm,	until,	school.	S: Until.
NL: Iranera,	ngeendi	mpaka,			
NL: Repeat,	I walked	until,			
NA: [whispers to J]	J, to NA: I walk to school.		NA: M-hm.		

The excerpt in (1), although brief, includes several noteworthy discoveries not likely to have emerged in routine translated elicitation. Some of these concern discourse functions of known expressions, such as *ndijo* ‘like that, thus,’ which is used here for encouragement. Pivotal here is Mr. Indire’s self-correction after he supplies an infelicitously-worded sequence. He uses an expression *pole* ‘sorry’ to apologize for supplying misinformation, then negates the infelicitous term *kuzja* ‘to go’ using a secondary negator, *mba*. Whenever Mr. Indire self-corrected in Logooli, he used the negator *mba* rather than the primary negator he had taught the group, *daave*. If the session here had been conducted through English, none of the three expressions would have been used in these ways. Here, the richness and flexibility of Logooli as a living language is brought to the fore.

5.2 Bilingual session

The transcript in (2) is a 4:30 excerpt from the 10:51 transcribed segment of the bilingual class session on 27 January 2015. In this session, a single student, N, interacted with the consultant, M, to explore the differences between three copular forms. Other members of the class also asked questions at various points during the session, but the excerpt here shows only N and M. In this excerpt, Mr. Indire’s speech is in brackets throughout.

(2) Bilingual session transcript excerpt

N: It’s something like, the translation is, is that accurate to say that when you say mwivi ne mwahi, [M: m-hm] it means ‘the thief is the doctor’ in English? [M: No.]

N: And in the other case— No? [M: Sorry, say it again.]

N: Mwivi ne mwahi is something like, ‘the thief is the doctor,’ talking about a specific one?

[M: Yes, you can get that too, uh-huh.]

N: Whereas when you say mwivi ave mwahi [M: M-hm] it’s more like, ‘the thief is a doctor.’ [M: A doctor, exactly.]

N: But it’s a possible sentence. [M: That—] It’s correct— under this reading, is it correct?

[M: The thief is a doctor, mwivi ave mwahi?]

N: Uh-huh. [M: Absolutely, yeah. It’s very correct.]

[M: Now, for the other one, because you said it's more specific, I should add, you can say mwivi ne mwahi ora.]

N: M-hm. [M: The ora just makes it more specific, like it's that doctor.] N: The specific. [M: M-hm.]

[M: Oh no, no, mwivi ne mwahi, is that what I said, right?] N: M-hm.

[M: Yeah, okay. Cool. If I get confusing or something, just let me know.]

Like (1), this excerpt also shows self-correction and elaboration by the consultant. Here, however, these reflections serve only to help clarify judgments and reported connotations, and to grease the social wheels between consultant and elicitor. Because English is used as a metalanguage, no unexpected discoveries arise; rather, the elicitor is given nuanced English interpretations to weigh against previous ideas of the differences between the copula forms.

The turns in (2) are longer than in (1). Further, both elicitor and consultant in (2) use parenthetical statements such as *it's more like*, *the translation is*, and *I should add*. These arguably contribute nothing of linguistic interest and serve only to take up valuable time. Likewise, the last statement by the consultant serves no linguistic purpose.

It appears that when English is used, elicitor and consultant are necessarily conscious of their relationship-building in English, mediating statements with niceties and parentheticals. Unfortunately, these niceties fill time in the session. When the elicitor(s) and consultant use only Logooli, these niceties are set aside; the elicitor(s) are exempt from using them, as language-learners, and the consultant strives to teach the basics first. Thus, monolingual elicitation techniques spare everyone the empty social graces and parenthetical comments of English or another contact language.

5.3 Comparison of the two sessions

The two transcribed session segments from which (1) and (2) were taken are analyzed in Table 1. Number of turns, total words spoken, number of words spoken in Logooli, percentage of words spoken in Logooli, and the number of unique Logooli words used are given for both consultant and elicitor(s).

	Monolingual session	Bilingual session
Excerpt length	12:19	10:51
Number of turns by consultant	100	72
Number of turns by elicitor(s)	134	73
Total words spoken by consultant	230	369
Logooli words spoken by consultant	226	105
Total words spoken by elicitor(s)	315	566
Logooli words spoken by elicitor(s)	242	76
Percentage of words spoken by consultant in Logooli	98.3%	28.4%
Percentage of words spoken by elicitor(s) in Logooli	76.8%	13.4%
Discrete Logooli words used by consultant	68	16
Discrete Logooli words used by elicitor(s)	41	17

Table 1: Comparison of bilingual and monolingual sessions.

Table 1 shows that although the bilingual session excerpt is shorter and comprises fewer turns, both consultant and elicitor spoke many more words in those fewer turns than in the monolingual session. This confirms the impression from §5.2 that the substantive turns in (2) are generally longer than the turns in (1). In terms of different Logooli words, however, in this wordy session fewer than 20 unique Logooli words were used, in contrast to the monolingual session.

In the bilingual excerpt, only 105 of 369 words uttered by consultant were in the target language. The other 264 functioned to translate, explain usage, or elaborate on previous explanations—or were simply niceties, like the utterance: *Cool. If I get confusing or something, just let me know*, seen in (2). Only 13% of words uttered by elicitor in this excerpt were in the target language.

In the bilingual excerpt, the consultant used a total of 16 discrete words in Logooli throughout the session. The elicitor used a total of 17 discrete words. One word used by the consultant was not used by the elicitor, and two words used by the elicitor were never spoken by the consultant. This is because Logooli was only used in a small number of example sentences, repeated by both elicitor and consultant, with English used to discuss the nuanced differences between the sentences. In contrast, in the monolingual session, the consultant used 27 more forms than did the elicitors while explaining terms in the target language. This may mean that the session generated extra data, some of which the elicitors were unable to parse at the time, but could lead to insights later.

Because the two sessions occurred at different points in the trajectory of the course, the bilingual session was productive in its own way. But if the initial data-gathering component of the course had proceeded with such a heavy English-to-Logooli balance, course participants' understanding of Logooli as a whole language, and their collection of data, would have been greatly slowed.

6 Conclusion

Monolingual elicitation is not only useful for long-haul stints in bush villages; it can also be a stimulating and memorable format for an advanced field methods course. Attempting to speak the target language from the beginning of such a course forces students to think on their feet, drop their armor of theories and analyses, and to boldly make mistakes in public—as fieldworkers must, regardless of methodology. This alone makes monolingual methods better preparation for actual fieldwork than translation-based methods.

But the differences between the monolingual and bilingual class session excerpts examined here also show a new side to the debate: the relative efficiencies of monolingual and contact language-based field methods for data collection. The bilingual excerpt here is weighed down by excessive use of English parentheticals and niceties by both elicitor and consultant; it also lacks any new lexical or usage-related discoveries in the target language. While turns in the monolingual excerpt are shorter, the range of target language vocabulary is much broader. The monolingual excerpt also reveals several usage-related quirks related to self-correction that would not turn up in a bilingual session, since there all correction is done through English.

Since monolingual methods curtail excessive meta-discussion in a contact language, they can facilitate highly-efficient gathering of data at the beginning of a field methods course. In a graduate field methods course run using conventional English translation, the consultant may feel s/he needs to prove intellectual mettle or expert status to the PhD students in the class, thus increasing English commentary or niceties.

Further, because students in field methods courses are under no time pressure to publish their results, drawback D1—the potential increased time burden of the monolingual method—is irrelevant. If every linguist could follow a Prince of Serendip at one point during graduate training, what wondrous discoveries the field of linguistics would behold.

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