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Field linguistics: a minor manual *

Abstract

This manual provides basic information concerning linguistic fieldwork. What is it? Why do it? The ethics involved. How to choose a field language and a field location. How to go about it. What to get – a comprehensive reference grammar (written in terms of basic linguistic theory), a volume of texts, and a dictionary/thesaurus. What to do: insofar as possible, become a member of the community (for 'immersion fieldwork'); analyse texts; only use elicitation at a late stage, within the language of study (not from a lingua franca). How to work with consultants (and some things which should be avoided). Writing up the grammar. There is a short final section concerning field methods courses in a university.

Fieldwork is the most important and most exciting part of linguistics. But there are many misconceptions concerning what it is and how to do it. This is a short introduction (based on my experience of fieldwork in Australia, Fiji and Brazil, commencing in 1963 – see Dixon 1972, 1977, 1981, 1983, 1984, 1988, 1991 a, 2004), providing a personal view of the discipline.

1. What is it?

Going into a community where a language is spoken, collecting data from fluent native speakers, analysing the data, and providing a comprehensive description, consisting of grammar, texts and dictionary.

2. Why do it?

There are two main reasons for undertaking fieldwork:

(a) **To learn linguistics.** The only way to learn any discipline is to get out there and do it. One first learns the theoretical concepts that make up the science of linguistics. But one can only fully understand these concepts through using them – through using them to describe a language.

A medical student learns about the human body and about the techniques of modern surgery. They must then perform actual operations in order to become a surgeon. At a later stage they may write a book about the principles of surgery. In similar fashion, a linguist must actually work on describing a language (preferably a language that has not been fully described before) in order to understand the principles of linguistic analysis.

(b) **Because one enjoys the intellectual excitement of working on a 'new language'.** A linguist must take pleasure in what they are doing to be able to do it well and produce worthwhile and exciting results. If you take pleasure in doing fieldwork and writing the resulting grammar then others will draw pleasure from reading the grammar.

3. Poor reasons for doing fieldwork

If you undertake fieldwork for any reason other than its own sake, you are doing it for the wrong reason. For example:

(i) Just now there is a fad interest in 'endangered languages'. Many people have taken up this cause and there is lots of talk about it – lots of talk but limited action (and a fair amount of that misdirected). It is not apparent that there are significantly more people undertaking fieldwork now than there were before the fad became current. A warning is in order. No one should undertake fieldwork simply because they feel a social responsibility to document some language before it disappears. Only because they want to learn linguistics and love the challenge of working on a language.

(ii) Many missionaries feel a call to translate parts of the Christian Bible into some new language. Some of these also have reasons (a) and (b) above, and these people generally produce a fairly good grammar and then a good translation. Others don't really like linguistics and try to avoid writing a grammar. If they do produce any language description it is invariably bad and their translations are generally so poor that native speakers scarcely recognise them as documents in the intended language.

(iii) To try to test or prove some theoretical point. Such fieldwork is likely to focus just on one part of a language, ignoring the rest; this is unsound methodology since the part exists with respect to the whole and can only be properly understood when considered within the context of the whole. Fieldwork of this kind is also likely to consist almost exclusively of elicitation; as pointed out in §12 below, this is not the way to really understand what a language is like.

A linguist should work in terms of basic linguistic theory, the cumulative theoretical framework which underlies almost all grammar writing and typological generalisation.

A fieldworker should be a good all-round linguist. Every part of a language description is equally important and each part interrelates with the others. Anyone who says (to others, or just to themselves) anything like 'I'm basically a phonologist' or 'I'm primarily a syntactician' is not likely to produce a good overall description.

Note that the term 'analysis' has different meanings depending on who uses it. For people working in terms of a formal theory it generally means fitting the data of a language into the predetermined parameters claimed by the model. For linguists working in terms of basic linguistic theory it means working out the structural organisation of a language in its own terms, with each step being fully justified. A formal theorist may look at how the relative clauses in a new language fit with the parameters that define the formalism (these generally being oriented towards what is found in English and other familiar European languages). A fieldworker working within basic linguistic theory will enquire whether the language has anything that could be called relative clauses, what the criteria for recognition are, and what the characteristics of relative clauses in the language are.

4. The ethics of fieldwork

Of course, one should only go where one is wanted. A fieldworker will only go into a community which welcomes them and the work they are doing.

One can distinguish two basic types of field situation. (These are polar extremes; there are intermediate cases.)

(i) **When the language is still spoken, as first language, by everyone in the community.** Some (or most, or all) people will also have a degree of competence in a lingua franca of the region. My experience (and other people's) is that such a community is likely to welcome a stranger who wishes to learn their language and to provide whatever linguistic feedback the community requests (e.g. a practical dictionary, a volume of traditional texts).

Communities of this type are often located off the beaten track (for example, in the jungles of New Guinea or Amazonia) and tend to have minimal contact with the mainstream of 'civilisation'.

(ii) **When the language is only spoken (or perhaps just remembered) by some older people.** A community of this sort tends to be situated within the mainstream of a nation; working in it can be a delicate political exercise. Some of the younger members, who do not speak the language themselves, may resent an outside linguist learning it. People will be aware of past injustices (which have been a contributory factor towards the loss of language and other aspects of traditional culture) and as a consequence may resent the attentions of a member of that ethnic group which has oppressed them in the past.

In such situations the actual speakers of the language are generally eager to work with a linguist who will record their heritage for posterity, but other members of the community may raise objections. Each situation has its own characteristics, and the linguist must (if they can) negotiate an agreement that is acceptable to all parties. The community may wish to monitor everything that the linguist does and to be consulted concerning what the linguist publishes.

Many linguists have worked happily and fruitfully in this type of situation. However, just occasionally, some members of the community may impose such restrictions that productive fieldwork is not possible; the linguist is then best advised to seek to work elsewhere.

5. How to choose a language

All languages have special points of interest and all should – in an ideal world – be accorded a comprehensive description. However, there is no way that every language with, say, less than a thousand speakers, can be described before these pass into extinction. Priorities have to be set, from the global perspective of having materials on a representative selection of languages. A higher priority should be given to working on a previously undescribed 'isolate' language, than to a language from a large and relatively homogeneous subgroup where there are already several good grammars for other languages in the subgroup.

Without in any way maligning any language currently spoken in the world today (all of which are important and interesting), one should recognise the following truths:

(1) Some languages are more interesting than others, in terms of their typological characteristics. If a language shows a previously unreported value for a certain category (or, better still, a previously unreported category) then it is of particular interest. For

example, a language with a seven-term evidentiality system (larger than any so far known), or a language with more types of conditioning factors for an ergativity split than have so far been reported.

(2) Some languages are more difficult to learn, to analyse and to describe than others. For some languages a comprehensive grammar can be achieved in 400 pages; for others a grammar of similar depth may require 700 pages.

How difficult a language is to learn does, of course, depend in part on the languages already known to the learner. Someone who speaks Tamil will find it easier to learn Telugu than French, and someone who already speaks French will find it easier to learn Italian than Tamil. Someone who already knows a tone language from Africa or Asia may find it easier to learn a tone language from Mexico than someone who has no experience with tone languages.

In a similar way, a linguist who has already described a polysynthetic language will face less of a challenge in describing a newly-discovered polysynthetic language than would a linguist whose previous experience has been in describing analytic languages.

Of course, this is not a reason to avoid a particular language. A good, dedicated linguist can learn and describe any language. It is just that in certain circumstances a little more effort may be needed than in other cases.

When deciding on a language to study a linguist should take into account: (i) the sort of language that would be of particular interest to them; and (ii) the level of difficulty likely to be involved. Taking these points one at a time.

(i) **Type of language.** Suppose a linguistics student is faced with a choice between which of two languages they should work on. Suppose that language A is known (or thought) to have a large vowel inventory (including nasalised vowels), glottalised consonants, a basically agglutinative morphology, dependent marking, and a complex system of TAM, while language B has just five vowels and twelve consonants, a fusional verb structure with three sets of bound pronouns giving a head-marking profile, but just a two-term tense system. Everything else being equal the linguist will choose that language whose points of complexity interest (or excite) them the most.

(ii) **Level of difficulty.** Take a specific example. In the Solomon Islands there are two kinds of languages, some belonging to the Oceanic subgroup of Austronesian and some non-Austronesian (the cover term 'Papuan' is used for non-Austronesian languages spoken on and in the vicinity of New Guinea). There are about 500 Oceanic languages and good descriptions have been provided for several score of them. Each language has its own characteristics but there are pervasive similarities between them. Describing a new Oceanic language is like filling in the spaces on an established linguistic grid, and adding a few unexpected spaces for a few language-specific features. In contrast, the Papuan languages of the Solomons are not known to be related to any already-described languages (not enough is yet known to tell whether the Papuan languages of the Solomons are related to each other). Describing a new Papuan language is like establishing a new linguistic grid, and then filling in the spaces on it.

Suppose you wanted to work on a language from the Solomon Islands for a PhD dissertation (which had to be completed within three years). The safest option would be to work on an Oceanic language (and this would yield an interesting and valuable dissertation). The more challenging option would be to work on a Papuan language.

There is one other comment that should be made at this point. People sometimes remark on how lucky it is that the best linguists seem to choose the most difficult languages (those which really require a brilliant linguist, to do justice to them). Similar comments are some-

times made about anthropologists and communities. For example, people sometimes say how lucky it was that the great anthropologist Evans-Pritchard chose to work on Nuer society, from the Sudan. His analytic skills were able to reveal the manifold complexities of Nuer life. This is in fact little comment on the Nuer, simply on Evans-Pritchard. Such was his excellence that, whatever society he had chosen to study, he would have made it seem fascinating.

Similarly for linguists and languages. I shall avoid citing specific cases but there are many examples of two linguists, A and B, working on two nearby languages, X and Y. Linguist A writes a wonderfully long and detailed grammar of language X which is much admired and quoted. Linguist B writes a short grammar of language Y, which has few features of interest. People comment on how lucky it is that A, who is one of the top people in the field, chose to work on X, which is a really complex and interesting language, rather than on Y, which is a rather simple and dull language. The truth often is that X and Y are equally complex and interesting, if analysed in the right way. It is just that A is a good linguist and B is a rather poor one. For any language A worked on, they would reveal its complexities and make it interesting. For any language that B worked on they would make it seem simple and dull.

There is a warning here. Some grammars of languages are very short and make the language appear unusually simple and uninteresting. In very many cases this is not a valid comment on the language, but on the lack of training and sophistication of the linguist involved. I have seen a certain language worked on by a poor linguist (of type B) and then – some years later – the same language is worked on by a good linguist (of type A). The second linguist describes and explains all sorts of morpho-phonological patterns, construction types and so on that the first linguist never dreamed existed.

6. Fieldwork locations

Starting from the fifteenth century, dominant ethnic groups (speaking dominant languages) began an economic exploitation that by the middle of the twentieth century had taken over most of the globe. The ethnic groups that were displaced have mostly disappeared, together with their languages. This applies, for example, to the eastern seaboards of the USA and Brazil, and the major areas of settlement in southern Australia.

By and large, those languages which are still spoken and which have not yet been described are in inaccessible places. The languages and their speakers remain, simply because the territory they live in was not thought worthy of economic development. There are, it is true, some endangered languages, spoken on idyllic islands in the south seas. But the great majority of languages in need of study are deep in a jungle or high on a mountain range, in a place that is not only difficult to get to but may also be difficult to live in. The largest number of languages in need of study are in New Guinea and Amazonia where there may be extreme heat and humidity, plenty of annoying insects and lots of diseases (malaria, dengue fever, yellow fever, hepatitis, and so on).

These are not easy places to work in, which is why so few people have worked in them in the past. But by taking sensible precautions (having the relevant inoculations and pills, and a reserve supply of antibiotics, using a mosquito net, purifying drinking water, and the like) living conditions can be made quite pleasant. And any physical discomfort is more than made up for by the joyous intellectual exhilaration of linguistic fieldwork on a new and exciting language, as well as by the fascination of living as part of a community so different from one's own.

By far the best place to study a language is in a community in which it is spoken, observing how the speakers live and how they use the language. Sometimes this is not practicable; for example, if there is a war going on in that area. It is possible to do good work with native speakers in non-native locations. One should still (see §9 below) concentrate on recording and analysing texts. However, in these circumstances participant observation – (a) under § 9 below – will scarcely be available. If a period of fieldwork is undertaken with one or a few speakers away from their home territory, this should if at all possible be backed up with a later period of fieldwork in a native community.

7. How to do it

My experience is that is it not a good thing to look upon fieldwork as a business arrangement between linguist and language consultant. People have always worked with me as a gesture of friendship, because they are interested in what I am doing and wish to help me to learn their language and to fully document it.

Tribal communities – which have nearly always had their language denigrated by outsiders – are generally glad to have a linguist come to learn and record it. As long as the linguist shows some aptitude for the task (for example, can pronounce it properly) and learns from what they are told, people will be eager to teach them and to answer their questions. Speakers are almost always glad to record texts and help to build up a comprehensive dictionary. There will be some speakers (not necessarily those who recorded the texts) who will be interested in the lengthy task of transcribing and translating texts.

Of course, one does provide concrete recompense to the language consultants that one works with, either in money or in kind (whichever they request). This should not be regarded as payment for a job done, but rather as a gift in respect of services rendered (by one member of the community to another). One also provides any other kind of help and advice that is appropriate. For example, early in the 1970s I was able to interest the Australian government in buying a substantial block of land and providing houses for the Dyirbal people (who were at that time scattered, each family living under sufferance on a different white farmer's property).

One should, on a daily basis, provide any help that is requested in the community. For example, writing letters for people, providing medicines, and giving technical assistance in areas in which one has some competence (for instance, repairing or cleaning machines).

Each field situation is different. If a consultant has a regular job but arranges to have time off to work with a linguist, then they should be paid at the same rate that they would have received on their regular job (or perhaps at a slightly higher rate).

One builds up a relationship with each of a small coterie of intelligent, reliable, interested and willing language consultants. The consultants will get on 'the same wavelength' as the linguist, understanding what the linguist is trying to do and sometimes even anticipating what the linguist is about to ask. This is a priceless intellectual partnership.

A responsible linguist will continue for the rest of their life their relationship with a language community among which they have worked, always being available – as needed – with advice and assistance. An academic may find ways of drawing the attention of government bodies to the needs of indigenous groups, which the groups themselves would not be able to essay.

A linguist is accepted in different sorts of ways in different societies. In many places some member of the community will act as mentor and 'adopt' the linguist as a certain type of relative. For my fieldwork in North Queensland, Australia, Bessie Jerry adopted me as her *gaya* 'mother's younger brother' (a relation that a woman can have close comradeship with). In Fiji, Elia Waqa adopted me as his *luve*- 'son'. These are both classificatory kinship systems and once I was assigned a relationship with one person, then I also had a relationship (according to an implicit algorithm that everybody knows) with each other person in the community. In contrast, I have done extensive fieldwork among the Jarawara people of southern Amazonia and they do not place strangers in their classificatory kinship system.

There are advantages and disadvantages to each scenario. If you are assigned a close relationship to a certain set of people in the community you will have obligations towards them as they will have towards you. This can be a help to the linguist, as in Fiji when members of my kin group assisted me in building a house. But being aligned with one group may create difficulties; for instance, members of other groups – who have critical specialised knowledge – may not be keen to work with you. And once you are a part of the kinship system you may automatically be in a taboo relationship with certain people (who might be people you would have wished to have contact with). However, there is seldom any choice involved. If a community has a custom of including outsiders (who they respect and value) in the kinship system, then this is what you should aim for. If they lack this custom then that is the way things are.

A linguist can achieve a degree of acceptance into a community (and this is irrespective of whether or not they are taken into the kinship system – for instance, I have as warm a relationship with the Jarawara as I had in Fiji or Australia) but it is important to realise that it is **only** that, **a degree of acceptance**. There is no way in which a linguist or anthropologist can be fully assimilated into any community (that is, short of marrying into the community and living exactly the same life as everyone else, cutting off all regular contact with their previous life). A linguist will probably have a different skin colour and type of hair; they may help with some community activities but they will spend a great deal of their time writing. They won't be used to living in that environment and are likely to have to take special medicines, and probably to purify drinking water, in order not to fall seriously ill. They are unlikely to have the stamina to perform tasks that members of the community regard as routine (for instance, climbing a high tree in search of honey). It is a mistake to try too hard to become 'one of the community'. You are different, and will always be perceived as different. You will be respected for what you are, not for what you try to be.

The ideal place to work also varies, depending on local conditions. When I began fieldwork in Australia, in 1963, the pioneer anthropologist A. P. Elkin advised: "always go to their house, don't make them come to where you are staying". This was sound advice for fieldwork in state-run or mission-run Aboriginal communities in Australia at that time. Each settlement was strictly divided into an area of housing for the white staff and an area for the Aboriginal people. Elkin was right; Aboriginal people were most uneasy about working in the white guest house where I had to stay; I always worked in their part of the settlement, either squatting under a tree or else (if it rained) in the language consultant's house.

Things are generally quite different outside the confines of such a prescriptive settlement. In Fiji and in Brazil I had my own house in the village. People would drop in to see me all the time and we would work together, or else I would go to their house and we would work there. At a later period in Australia (outside the confines of a government settlement or mission) I would stay for a few nights in a consultant's house or they would stay

in mine. The point to bear in mind is that people may have preferences as to where to work, and the linguist must be sensitive to these.

8. What to get

The aim of a linguistic fieldworker should be to produce and publish:

(a) A comprehensive reference grammar of the language (written in terms of basic linguistic theory).

Alongside this should go a study of dialect differences and social styles of language use (in rituals, ceremonies, and just in varying aspects of everyday life). The language of songs is a further (often rather difficult) topic for study.

Before embarking on fieldwork on a previously undescribed language, one should not have any preconceptions about what features its grammar will include. But once a certain feature is recognised it should be fully investigated, examining all the standard parameters of variation as set out in the appropriate typological literature. Many of the chapters in SHOPEN (1985) provide a useful overview of grammatical categories and construction types. Appendix 3 of AIKHENVALD (2000: 447–451), "Fieldworker's guide to classifier languages", discusses the types of questions that need to be dealt with for languages with classifiers, noun classes or genders. And at the end of AIKHENVALD (2004: 385–390) there is a "Fieldworker's guide: how to gather materials on evidentiality systems".

(b) A series of texts with interlinear glosses and full translation, with notes on the social context of the texts and on points of particular grammatical and social interest. Ideally, the texts should be of varying types – traditional legends, accounts of historical events, autobiographical reminiscences, instructions on how to garden or fish or hunt game or manufacture artefacts, and so on. Some should be monologues but some should involve more than one person – perhaps a recording of a village meeting. The texts should be from a variety of speakers, from different age groups. Ideally they should be from speakers of both sexes; however, in some communities a linguist would not be encouraged to work with someone of a different sex from them.

(c) A reasonably full vocabulary. This is best produced in the form of a thesaurus, by semantic fields. In this way all of a certain type of animal or plant will be listed together, and their meanings compared. Similarly, all adjectives of colour will be in one place, and all verbs of motion, rather than scattered through an alphabetically-arranged dictionary. There should be two alphabetical finder lists (keyed to the thesaurus entries), one on the language under description, and one on the lingua franca used for the description (e.g. English, Spanish); see DIXON (1991 b).

One should also produce such literacy and other materials as the community requests, for its own use. These may include primers, storybooks of various kinds, and practical dictionaries.

There are some situations in which a language is teetering towards extinction and the work of a linguist can help the language revive and continue, at least for a while. But there are many field situations where the language is only spoken by a few old people and is past the stage at which it could be revived. (People may not want to believe this to be the case, but the linguist will be able to see that this is so.) In such a circumstance the linguist should devote some time to producing materials for use in school and so on; these can be an aid to increasing ethnic pride in the cultural past of the community. But in such a situation it is waste of resources for the linguist to devote too much time to preparing teaching materials

(which, if produced, would never be likely to be fully utilised) at the expense of the main task, which is to produce a full and scientific grammar, plus text collection and dictionary.

There is no directionality to producing a language description. One must right from the start be working simultaneously on grammar, texts and dictionary. Within the grammar there is again no directionality; the linguist must be working simultaneously on phonology, morphology and syntax, gradually refining each as the results from one feed into the others.

A warning is in order. It is not advisable to publish on one particular aspect of the structure of a language until one has a thorough understanding of the whole system. You may think that you understand the rules for stress assignment, say, at the end of the first period of fieldwork. But when later on you delve deep into morphological structure, you may uncover new factors (say, concerning different kinds of morphological boundaries) which lead to a radical reassessment and restatement of the stress rules. This may be rather embarrassing if you have already published the stress rules, as you stated them before having achieved a full understanding of the grammar.

9. What to do

The most important thing of all is to be fully organised. You need to decide on a standard set of notebooks that you will use (I always use A4 or foolscap size spiral bound books, since one can turn the page back and easily use the book on one's knee, or even when standing). Each notebook should be given a code letter and each page numbered. Whenever you write anything in a field notebook, note the date and location and the name of the consultant(s) who supply the information. When you are drafting a grammar sketch you should refer to where each example comes from – for example, a particular instance of an aversive construction was offered by Makabi at Vidawa on 29 February 2004 (and taken down in field notebook C on page 29).

Throughout all fieldwork a linguist should be working simultaneously on three fronts:

(a) **Becoming a part of the community** (to the extent that one can – see comments above) **and beginning to speak the language**. This involves one's presence within the community being accepted as a normal thing, so that people come and see you (just for a chat, or to look over what you have in your house, or to ask to borrow or be given something) and you go to see them (for similar reasons). They may invite you to come along to some of their communal activities – it could be a meeting or a party or a fishing expedition or just a trip to a nearby town. During all this you will be trying to learn the language. People will generally be keen to tell you the names of things and tell you how to describe what you are doing and what other people are doing. You will of course begin by communicating with them in the lingua franca of the region (English in Australia, Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea, Spanish in Peru, and so on) but you will gradually use more and more of the local language. Just keep working steadily at this; don't try to rush it, and don't get disheartened if your progress seems to you to be slow. Every week you will acquire a little more fluency. The important thing is to listen to what people tell you, to encourage people to correct all your mistakes, and to learn from these.

Some linguists insist that one doesn't have to develop any ability at speaking a language – or at learning to understand it (at least to some degree) as it is used in everyday interaction – in order to write an acceptable grammar. While a linguist may produce a grammar without

developing any facility for using the language themself, the grammar will be greatly improved if they are able to include participant observation among the techniques for data gathering. Franz Boas (1911:60) one of the pioneers of linguistic fieldwork, insisted that

> "a command of the language is an indispensable means of obtaining accurate and thorough knowledge, because 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".

(b) **Compiling a dictionary.** One should steadily build up a dictionary of every word encountered in texts and conversation, also employing systematic eliciting for certain semantic fields. One of the first areas to ask about is body parts. Then all the various types of fauna and natural objects (sun, moon, stone, hill, water, flood, sand, clay and the like). I might suggest to a consultant that on the morrow we could go through all the names of snakes; they would think about it overnight. I would then use a file card for each name, writing down the description of its appearance, colour, size and habits. When the consultant mentions some particularly distinctive feature I would ask for a sentence describing this, and add it to the file card.

It is only possible to elicit a limited number of names for flora while sitting in a house. The best plan here is to wander out in the woods or forest and ask for an identification of each plant encountered.

For a dictionary to be of real use all animal and plant names should be provided with as full a documentation as is possible, involving both scientific name and also how they are called in the lingua franca. This is not an easy task, but it is an important one. (There is nothing more pathetic than a dictionary that abounds in glosses of the type 'monkey species' or 'type of tree'.) Consultants will often know the corresponding name in the lingua franca. Books with pictures and descriptions of birds, animals, plants, etc. will be of some use. One can send plant specimens to a local herbarium or the like. Ideally, a linguist should (as the dictionary is nearing completion) work in the field with a biologist who is an expert on the fauna and flora of the area. (A particularly tricky area is fishes. Often the various local species do not have separate names in the lingua franca. The linguist really needs to have an ichthyologist with them, looking directly at fishes in the river or sea; this can be difficult to achieve.)

One can elicit a great deal concerning nouns, but rather less concerning adjectives and verbs. It is of course possible to ask the equivalents of 'big', 'sharp', 'jump', 'laugh' and other common concepts. But there will be many adjectives and verbs (and a smaller proportion of nouns) which are culture-specific and would be unlikely to be discovered by elicitation. They will be encountered in texts and conversation.

It is important to keep one's files up-to-date. Every evening (if at all possible) I go through everything taken down that day and make cards for any new lexemes. From time to time I sort these into semantic fields and then, at regular intervals, go through the cards for each semantic group of new lexemes. Perhaps once every two weeks I ask a consultant about the new adjectives, say, gathered during that period. An adjective might have occurred in text or conversation in a rather particular meaning; when the form is put to the consultant outside of any specific context of use they will be likely to mention its central meaning, and provide a few example sentences. As fieldwork progresses this adjective is likely to be encountered again in different contexts with different extensions from the central meaning; this will all be noted on the card.

I keep a record of the vocabulary in two forms – by semantic fields, and alphabetically on the language under study. I start off by semantic fields, and use a standard format so that I always know where I am and where to find something, no matter what language I am working on (I code body parts as A, age-group terms as B, kin as C, mammals as D, reptiles as E, etc – the full list is followed by all contributors to the *Handbook of Australian languages* and can be found there; see Dixon & Blake 1979/2000). Once I have run through a semantic field I copy the items into a notebook, and then re-sort the cards into alphabetical order for permanent storage. When putting the vocabulary by semantic fields into a notebook I leave plenty of space for later additions; one way of doing this is just to use the left-hand pages (or parts of the left-hand pages) initially and leave the right hand pages for later additions. (One needs to leave more space for later additions in the case of adjectives and verbs than for nouns, since – as just mentioned – these are less easily elicitable.)

At the end of a field-trip (or just before the next one) I may copy out the alphabetical vocabulary into a notebook, again leaving a facing page for later additions. This is to save taking the whole card index into the field each time.

Many people use computers nowadays; these have many positive and some negative features. They are obviously ideal for keeping up vocabulary lists and for making interpolations into them. The use of computers is, in my opinion, not a sensible substitute in the field for the use of file cards for recording vocabulary items, and example sentences. Computers are a valuable aid once one leaves the field and works on materials back at base.

(c) **Recording and analysing texts.** Texts are the lifeblood of linguistic fieldwork. The only way to understand the grammatical structure of a language is to analyse recorded texts in that language (**not** by asking how to translate sentences from the lingua franca). One should start gathering and working on texts right from the beginning – if not in the first week of fieldwork then certainly in the second week. One is then really **working on the language** (not on how sentences can be translated into the language from a lingua franca).

Tell consultants that you'd like them to tell a short story in the language (maybe a short account of who they are, where they were born, and so on) then you can write it down and in this way learn to understand and speak the language.

The first texts you get are likely to be short (it may be a good thing if they are). You then need to transcribe them, with the help of a consultant, try to divide them up into words and then the words into morphemes, and work out the meaning of each sentence, of each word, and (eventually) of each morpheme. As you get to understand the language a little better, and as consultants come to know you better and to respect the work you are doing, they will be likely to proffer longer and more challenging texts. Some topics may take a while to come forth; for instance, it wasn't until my third field trip among the Jarawara in Brazil, that they felt they knew me well enough to record texts about their traditional religion and the spirit world.

Ideally, the person who tells a story (which may take 20 or 40 minutes) and the person who helps you transcribe and analyse the story (which may take 10 or 20 hours) would be the same. But often this is not practicable. The best storytellers may be old people who don't have the patience to assist with transcribing. But there should be no lack of younger people who will be willing to work with you on transcribing an older relative's story.

Part of a fieldworker's duties should be to encourage and assist native speakers to write down their own language. It is then possible to get them to transcribe texts on their own.

I don't do this myself simply because I find every stage of text collection, transcription and analysis to be really important to me in learning the language and understanding its structure. But other linguists find it useful to pay people to transcribe texts for them.

All texts should be transcribed in the field. In the early stages the linguist should not attempt transcription without a native speaker by their side. As the linguist gets to know the language better they can attempt an initial transcription on their own, but should always then go over it in detail with a consultant. In the case of a language I had been working on for more than 20 years (Dyirbal) I could get a new text 95 % right, but there were always a few points that I missed the proper meaning or full significance of, and had to have them pointed out by an expert consultant. One thing one should **never** do is just record texts in the field and try to transcribe them later on back at base (whether one is working on phonetics, phonology, grammar, discourse or whatever); this is a sure recipe for an incompetent analysis.

Texts are the most important part of a field linguist's database but they can never be the full story. They must be supplemented by what the linguist hears around them – by what people say and by what they tell the linguist to say. There are likely to be some construction types which come up frequently in conversation but are seldom (or never) encountered in the more formal milieu of recorded texts. To rely solely on texts is to miss an important data source (and is almost as bad as not using texts at all, but just using sentence elicitation as the basis for a grammar).

You will note that while I have mentioned lexical elicitation, in compiling a dictionary, I have not mentioned grammatical elicitation – going through a battery of sentences in the lingua franca and asking for their translation into the native language as a way of getting the verbal paradigm, or relative clause structure, or whatever. Such elicitation should play **no role whatsoever** in linguistic fieldwork.

At first one learns and listens, records and transcribes texts and tries to analyse them. Suppose that the verb appears to have many possible suffixes. The thing to do is to see what combinations of suffixes co-occur. Suppose one can get suffix 1 followed by suffix 2, and 3 followed by 2 and 4 followed by 2 but that there are no examples of 1 plus 3 or 1 plus 4 or 3 plus 4. The likely hypothesis is that 1, 3 and 4 make up a grammatical system, from which only one member may be chosen, and that the 1/3/4 slot is followed by the 2 slot. The linguist should put forward preliminary generalisations on language-internal grounds; that is, by analysing texts in the language.

At a post-initial stage of fieldwork (say, after a couple of months) one does bring a fourth strand into the work:

(d) **Using elicitation in the language under study to check generalisations and fill in gaps in paradigms.** When working in Brazil I have almost never given a sentence in Portuguese (which most of the men in the community have some knowledge of) and asked how it would be said in Jarawara. What I do is make up Jarawara sentences (that are generated by the grammatical rules I am positing) and ask if these are bona fide utterances. I will seldom just give a sentence, but first describe a context (using either Portuguese or Jarawara for this) and then give a short dialogue, ending with the sentence that I want to test. Or else I will quote some sentence that I know is alright (because I have heard it in a text or conversation) and ask about variants on it, perhaps changing the verb to a similar one ('cough' in place of 'laugh') or adding or subtracting an affix or a word. Consultants get the idea of what I am trying to do and either confirm that my made-up sentence is correct, or else offer an appropriate correction.

When asking whether a sentence is alright it is not sufficient to have the consultant say 'yes'; you must get the consultant to actually say the sentence. People often say 'yes' to a sentence which is correct in one respect but erroneous in some other way. When you get them to say it themself the sentence may come out differently from the way you had it. (My experience has been that consultants are generally happy to respond to my 'you say it!', and get used to doing this. If a consultant won't do this, then they are simply not a good person to use for this phase of the work.[1])

It is important to bear in mind that there is a difference between (a) what people think they ought to say, (b) what they think they do say, and (c) what they actually say. Sometimes people will judge a certain type of sentence as unacceptable although in fact it crops up often in texts.

One is able to work out many parts of the grammar from what occurs in texts. But there may be a few gaps in a paradigm. If some fairly obscure form (for example, the locative form of 2nd person dual pronoun) has not turned up after you have analysed a good few texts then it is sensible to try to elicit it. You may try to predict what the form is, on the basis of the paradigm already gathered. Or you may give a sentence with locative of the 2nd person plural pronoun and then ask what it should be if there were only two people involved. (Sometimes there really **is** a gap in a paradigm with no form at all; this is unusual, but it does happen.)

What you should not do is try to elicit a paradigm from scratch, going inexorably through the parameters (for example: 1st person, 2nd person, 3rd person; singular, plural; past, present, future). Get what you can from texts, and just use elicitation (not all at once, but a bit here and a bit there) to fill in the gaps. For instance, at one time I needed to check two transitive construction types in Jarawara for four kinds of subject (1st or 2nd person singular, 1st or 2nd person non-singular, 3rd person singular, 3rd person non-singular), four kinds of object (the same four possibilities) and four kinds of predicate (with just mood specified, with just tense specified, with both, and with neither). This gave 64 possibilities. Checking through texts I found that I had examples of about 80 % of these. I directed elicitation towards the remainder, just a couple each day (some of the missing combinations came up in the new texts I was going through during the two weeks it took to complete the elicitation).

A very small number of linguists just analyse texts and scorn any sort of elicitation, even that solely in the language under study. They publish a grammar with gaps in the paradigms, simply because certain forms didn't happen to occur in their particular sample of texts. Using nothing but texts is almost as bad as not using texts at all. To provide a comprehensive grammar of a language – and this should be the goal of every fieldworker – one should base the study on texts and on participant observation, but this must always be augmented by judicious elicitation in the language, to fill in gaps and also to check generalisations.

I said earlier that I almost never asked for the Jarawara translation of a sentence in Portuguese, to investigate some grammatical point. In fact I did this just once. It seemed to me (and was confirmed by consultants) that a certain Jarawara sentence could mean either

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[1]   The volume *Introduction to linguistic field methods* by VAUX & COOPER (1999) breaks almost every rule for fieldwork, as stated in this manual. To quote just one instance, they provide a transcription for part of one of their elicitation sessions, showing that they just ask a consultant whether or not a proffered sentence is acceptable, without asking them to repeat it.

'Who hit John?' or 'John hit who?' (i.e. 'Who did John hit?'). I asked how to distinguish the two happenings, using Portuguese for this. (The answer was that one has to employ a two-clause sentence.)

It is beneficial to follow a pragmatic approach in every aspect of linguistic fieldwork. I generally have available a piece of string, a small stick, a nail, a model canoe, and so on. When discussing the various verbs of pulling I offer the string to a consultant who demonstrates that one lexeme means 'pulling with steady pressure', another is 'pull with a sudden jerk', a third is 'pull up, hand over hand', and so on. It is often easier for people to demonstrate things than to describe them.

When trying to ascertain the meaning of a verb I imitate what I think it might mean. 'Does the verb mean squat like this?', and I squat down on my toes, heels in the air, bottom off the ground. 'No', I am told, and the consultant squats in a different fashion, to show the type of action that the verb refers to. People who may at first be rather shy soon join in with my acting out simple things, and show me the meaning of a word in the best possible manner, by pragmatic demonstration (an addition to verbal discussion).

10. Other fieldwork situations

The account in § 9 is of what to do when a language is still in daily use throughout a community, with the linguist able to live in the community for the period of fieldwork and to become a part of it. This is what has been called 'immersion fieldwork'.

However, many undescribed languages have moved some way along the path towards extinction. A language may be used in limited circumstances just by a number of elderly people, in a community where the language of daily discourse is a lingua franca (for example, English or Indonesian or Spanish or Swahili). Or it may not be in regular use at all, being just remembered – or partly remembered – by a few old people. Sometimes the rememberers are able to give texts, but there are situations where the last speakers (or semi-speakers) of a language are unable to provide texts, just translate short sentences from the lingua franca.

Most linguistic fieldwork situations in North America and in Australia, for instance, fall short of the ideal described in § 9, where there is a community in which the language is in daily use and where the linguist can live, and hear it spoken around them. There is no longer in existence an active language milieu in which the fieldworker can immerse themself. In such cases the participant observation strand – (a) in § 9 – is scarcely available. One simply does what one can in the circumstances that prevail, through 'interview fieldwork'.

When speakers are able to give texts, then the gathering and analysis of texts must still be the major priority, together with the compilation of a dictionary. And grammatical elicitation should still be kept for a post-initial phase of fieldwork; as described under (d) in § 9, it should involve asking about the validity of sentences in the language under study, and not eliciting translations of sentences in the lingua franca.

One does what one can. When the only speakers available are unable to give texts, one has to begin by asking for translation of sentences from the lingua franca. (The linguist should still – in due course – pursue the other kind of elicitation, generating sentences in the language under study and asking whether they are correct, in order to check grammatical hypotheses.) Such a study will yield only a partial grammar, in comparison with the results of an ideal fieldwork situation. But it will still be a useful contribution to knowledge.

11. Making sure you have it right

A crucial part of making sure that your data is accurate and correct involves obtaining correction from native speakers. One way of doing this is to say (a) something that you know to be correct, and then (b) something that you believe to be incorrect, according to your understanding of the structure of the language. If you **are** correct, the consultant will accept (a) – and repeat it back to you – but reject (b).

The great phonetician Daniel Jones emphasised the importance of this technique, with respect to the sound component of language (Jones & Plaatje 1916: 12):

> "When you have doubts about one of your sounds, pronounce the word you are practising making slight deviations from what you believe to be the correct sound. You mispronounce on purpose, and notice whether your native [speaker] is just as well satisfied with your intentional mispronunciation as he is with your attempt at the right sound. If he is just as well satisfied, you may be sure that your attempt at the right sound is still very wide of the mark. If your attempt at the right sound is a really good one, the native [speaker] will certainly prefer it to your intentional mispronunciation."

One can use a variation on this method in working out what phones belong to a single phoneme, and which relate to different phonemes. My early transcriptions of Dyirbal included vowel phones [u] and [o], which I suspected belonged to one phoneme. When the consultant said [yugo] for 'tree' I repeated it as [yugo], [yugu], [yogu] and [yogo], to be told that all of these pronunciations were 'the same word', confirming the hypothesis that [u] and [o] are allophones of one phoneme. I also noted two rhotics, a trill [r] and a semi-retroflex continuant [ɹ]. The consultant gave [yaɹa] 'man'. I repeated this as [yaɹa] and then varied it to [yara]. The consultant said that the first pronunciation was alright, but pointed out that [yara] is a different word, 'fishing line', thus showing that [ɹ] and [r] belong to distinct phonemes.

The same technique applies for morphology and syntax. When the linguist has formulated a hypothesis concerning the structure of complex words, for example, they make up a series of what should be acceptable words (if the hypothesis is correct) for ratification by consultants. The linguist should, in addition, concoct a number of words which should be ungrammatical, according to the hypothesis, and check that these are not acceptable to the consultant. Similarly for complex sentence constructions. And so on.

12. What not to do

These points were mentioned above, but since they appear in the literature, they need to be emphasised.

(a) **Transcribe after you leave the field.** Canger (1994: 1220), states in an encyclopedia entry:

> "before the tape recorder, all texts were dictated and simultaneously subjected to a basic analysis, whereas in the early 1990s the linguist will tape-record much material in the field, which he (sic) will transcribe and analyse only after he has returned to his desk."

One can carry on analysing after one has left the field (as one could before the advent of tape-recorders) but to transcribe without the help of a language consultant is arrogant and foolish.

(b) **Pursue 'controlled elicitation'.** In an entry for another encyclopedia, JUDITH L. AISSEN (1992) states "while nothing in generative linguistics excludes text collection, direct elicitation is unavoidable". She goes on to say: "in practice, most fieldwork uses both highly controlled elicitation and more open-ended dialog, combing these with text collection and, *perhap*s [my italics], participant observation". Not only is this bad technique (trying to study just some part of a language, to feed-in to some part of a formal theory), it is unlikely to obtain the desired results. I have known linguists try to study relative clauses in language X by asking how to translate English sentences including relative clauses into X. Not a single relative clause was used in the translations obtained. Yet the language does have a rich set of relative clause constructions, which can be observed if one studies texts. In another instance the linguist did get some 'relative clauses' by this technique but they were simply calques (literally, word for word translations) from the lingua franca, and quite different from the relative clauses that are encountered in texts.

If one simply poses a battery of questions in the lingua franca and asks 'how do you say this in language X?' one tends to – at best – learn ways in which this language is similar to the lingua franca. Construction types that are unlike anything in the lingua franca are rather unlikely to come up in 'highly controlled elicitation'.

THOMAS E. PAYNE, in his book *Describing morphosyntax: a guide for field linguists* (1997) emphasises the value of gathering texts. Yet on page 370 he suggests: "perhaps a rule of thumb would be to begin with 90 percent elicited data, and 10 percent text data, then move gradually to 90 percent text data and 10 percent elicited data some time in the second year". His 'elicited data' undoubtedly includes elicitation by asking for translation of sentences in the lingua franca, something I would recommend doing only very occasionally. One should, right from the commencement of fieldwork, accord a central role to the recording, transcription and analysis of texts.

Some linguists, who are trying to prove a particular point, get frustrated when a speaker (who is in fact a totally reliable consultant) gives what they consider (from their viewpoint) to be inconsistent data. They maintain that the speaker is making mistakes. In my experience this is almost never so. What the consultant is saying is correct, and can be seen to be so if analysed in its own terms. But the linguist is trying to project onto the language a theoretical model which is not appropriate for it.

Speakers do of course have different levels of competence, and different kinds of judgement (see LEONARD BLOOMFIELD's illuminating comments on Menomini speakers in his classic 1927 paper *Literate and illiterate speech*). Some people tend to have generous judgements of what one can say, while others are meaner in this regard. The linguist will strike up a rapport with a number of consultants (it should always be several, rather than just one) who get to understand what the linguist is trying to do and will guide them along the path towards a full understanding of the language.

Early in fieldwork one writes down everything one is told. But a little later one realises that what X says is always reliable, that Y sometimes will muddle in material from another language which he also speaks, and that Z will tend to accept some things that other speakers find dubious. By looking back over old notes, the linguist can identify that something which puzzled them was actually from Z (before the linguist stopped using Z as a source of data) and is not upheld by other speakers (such as X). This emphasises the value of always noting who said what and when and in what context.

13. Writing up the grammar

Writing up a grammar for publication is a quite different matter from analysing the data and gradually building up a full understanding of the language. The way in which the grammar is organised should not (except coincidentally) reflect the way in which the linguist worked and the order in which analytic decisions were reached. When you have achieved a full understanding of the language and feel ready to write it up, it is wise to (as it were) stand back, view the grammatical organisation of the language as a whole, and work out an optimal strategy for presenting an account of the structure of the language to linguists at large.

The 'traditional' way of presenting a description of a language is: phonology, then morphology, then syntax, then discourse structure (with plentiful cross-references back and forth). For some languages it is possible to alter the order. In my 1972 grammar of Dyirbal I put the main syntax chapter before the bulk of the morphology. But, ahead of the syntax, I did include a chapter called 'Word classes' which outlined the inflectional morphology; this was, of course, needed to understand the syntax. Different languages require different strategies of description but whichever technique is chosen make sure that it is internally consistent and user-friendly.

Some people just utilise a grammar to look up a particular topic they are studying; but there are also people (like me) who like to read a grammar from first page to last. Two recent grammar series (the Lingua – later Croom Helm, later still Routledge – Descriptive Grammars, and the *Handbook of Amazonian Languages*) forced contributors to follow a template which made sequential reading impossible through putting syntax ahead of morphology. Contributors to the *Handbook of Amazonian Languages* snuck critical bits of inflectional morphology into an early chapter (but at a different place in every grammar, so that one never knew where to find it). I find it a difficult and frustrating experience to read these grammars.

A grammar should flow. Write in a clear style, avoiding pedantic or obscure prose. Write in such a way that people will find it easy and enjoyable to read. Don't write in a complicated way, as if to show how clever you are. If you do, your chance of being read and quoted – of having an influence on the field – is not good. (Many grammars are complex enough in themselves, and become unintelligible when befogged by an obscure style.)

The reader should be able to go through your grammar sequentially.[2] For example, if behaviour under reduplication is a criterion for distinguishing stative from non-stative verbs, then ideally the discussion of reduplication should precede that of verb classes (so that the reader doesn't have to jump ahead).

If a grammarian enjoys writing a grammar, then it is likely that another linguist will enjoy reading it. A good grammar is one that you dip into to check on some particular point and then keep on reading because it really is gripping (just like a good novel).

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[2]   When Paul Newman's (2000) compendious grammar of Hausa came out, I looked forward to reading it. Alas, the chapters are in alphabetical order, so that '54, Phonology' is between '53, Numerals and other quantifiers' and '55, Pluractional verbs', and '71, Tone and intonation' is between '70, Tense/ aspect/mood' and '72, Topicalization'. It sits on my shelf, unread (but available for reference on particular topics).

14. Field methods courses

Some good linguistics departments offer their students courses in 'field methods'. These can be most valuable (whether or not a student plans to go on to undertake work in the field themself) since a student is then faced with a real language, with all its inconsistencies and untidy ends, rather than the neat 'doctored' sets of data they will have been asked to 'solve' in courses on phonology, morphology, syntax and the like.

Just as every linguist has their own way of doing fieldwork, so every linguistics teacher seems to have their own way of teaching field methods classes. Different techniques can be equally effective. Let me here just add some general comments, partly concerning the way in which I conduct such courses myself.

(a) A field methods course should be taught by a linguist who has done real (immersion) fieldwork, and published a grammar based on it. It should involve a native speaker of a language (preferably one for which there is no grammar readily available).

(I know of one course called 'Field Methods' taught at a most prestigious university by a well-known linguist who had never done fieldwork himself. The course consisted of studying my 1972 grammar of Dyirbal, plus listening to recordings of the three texts at the end of the grammar. The students may have learnt something of how to read a grammar, and perhaps of how to re-write a grammar, but they would not have learnt how to do fieldwork.)

(b) In such a course one cannot really approximate an actual field situation (really, it should not be called a 'field methods course'). Quite a lot of the time must be spent on elicitation from the lingua franca, something that I seldom do in the field. However, I also get students to record short texts, and to transcribe them with the consultant, so that the joint venture has some textual input (and so that the students learn a little of how to handle texts).

(c) The teacher should have one lecture at the beginning on the ethics and politics of fieldwork, reinforcing this throughout the course by further comments on what to do in the field (and what life is like in a field situation).

(d) It is a good thing to choose for the field methods course a language which is not too hard in phonology or morphology. If the language has a tough phonology, too much of the course will be spent trying to figure this out. Ideally, working out the basics of phonology should take no more than a couple of weeks, and the essentials of morphology should then be do-able, so that some time is left at the end of the course for topics in syntax.

(e) In a field methods course of limited duration (typically somewhere between 12 and 20 weeks) one cannot expect to produce a correct description of any aspect of a language. The aim is to teach the students how to undertake fieldwork, not to produce a finished product.

In 1990 I taught a Field Methods class on Motuna, a Papuan language – of complex structure – from Bougainville in Papua New Guinea. One of the students in the class, MASAYUKI ONISHI, then went on to complete a fine PhD thesis on the language; see ONISHI 1994. When he was finished I asked: "those analyses the students had at the end of the field methods course don't bear too much relation to what the language is like, now that you've understood it pretty well, do they?" Masa simply smiled in response.

(f) I always choose for a field methods class a language that I know nothing about, and for which there is no published description. I work with the consultant for just an hour or so before the course commences to make sure that everything will be alright. I take little active part in the class myself. Almost all the time is taken up by the students taking it in turn to work with the consultant. I listen to what is happening and offer suggestions and comments on how to proceed.

Some teachers spend most of the course working with the consultant themself, with the students sitting there taking notes. They are showing the students how to do it. I get the students to **do it themselves**, to learn by experience.

(g) It follows from (e) and (f) that a teacher should never aim to publish anything at the end of the field-methods course. Certainly not a collection of students' assignments. If the teacher publishes a paper or grammar sketch under their own name, on the basis of a field methods course, then – in my opinion – they have approached the course in the wrong way, as if it were for their benefit rather than for the benefit of the students. If an instructor should put out a collection of student essays from a field methods course, they are providing a wrong message concerning how properly to undertake linguistic study, and when to publish.

I know of instances of a linguist publishing a paper on some aspect of a language solely on the basis of a field methods course they had taught. When someone else has undertaken extensive fieldwork (in a field location) on the language the 'results' of the fields methods paper were shown to be absolutely erroneous. (In at least one instance some crucial aspects of a formal theory were revised on the basis of such a field methods course paper. Later, another linguist did extensive fieldwork on the language and pointed out the errors in the work based on elicitation in the context of a field linguistics course – see Durie 1988, commenting on a series of papers by John Lawler.)

Appendix 1 – Describing the fieldwork situation

The anthropologist David Maybury-Lewis (1968) comments:

"Most anthropological reports nowadays specify how long the author spent in the field, but they do not always indicate how much of the time was actually spent in daily contact with the people studied and how much elsewhere – for example in a near-by city. Nor do they always mention other pertinent details of such contacts. We are not always told how the field-worker was received by the people [they] studied and how [they] went about collecting [their] information, It is often difficult to discover whether [they] shared living quarters with the people, or occupied a separate dwelling in the same community, or one at some distance from the community, or whether [they] commuted from another community altogether … I suggest that it is time we abandoned the mystique which surrounds field-work and made it conventional to describe in some detail the circumstances of data-collecting, so that they may be as subject to scrutiny as the data themselves."

Similar comments are relevant for linguistic reports of work on little-known languages. First of all, was the data gathered from a speaker who has now settled in Los Angeles (or some other big city), or did the linguist actually undertake fieldwork and go to the community where the language is spoken on a daily basis? How many consultants were used? Was the data gathered mainly by elicitation or by analysis of texts? Where actual fieldwork was involved, the points mentioned by Maybury-Lewis should be addressed.

Appendix 2 – Planning a fieldwork PhD

I have had several dozen students write a grammar of a previously undescribed language for their PhD dissertation (within the 3 to $3\frac{1}{2}$ year time-frame allowed for PhD programs in Australian universities). The normal schedule is:
   • 3–6 months: Preliminary library research and planning for fieldwork (including getting appropriate visas and permissions).
   • 9–12 months: First (long) field trip.
   • 9–12 months: Back at the university, writing up a first draft of every chapter of the dissertation. This must be completed before:

- 2–3 months: Second (short) field trip – checking generalisations and hypotheses, filling in gaps in paradigms, etc.
- 9–12 months: Back at the university, revising the grammar for submission.

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