Life in Communities

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Day 1

Day 1

- Introduction
  - *This first class will introduce the trainers and our background working in and with communities.*
  - *We will explore questions researchers might ask about their own identities*
  - *We will explore questions researchers definitely should ask about identity (or identities) of the speech community*

Racquel Yamada

- Shaping Influences: native bilingual/ bicultural; immigrant father; urban environment
- Flight attendant; language teacher
- Peace Corps/Suriname
- Kari'nja language project
- NILI

Spike Gildea

- Shaping influences: rural western Oregon
- Peace Corps/Nepal: Hindu (Nepali), Buddhist (Sherpa), animist (Sunwar)
- Venezuela: **Panare**, Yukpa
- Northern Brazil: Katxúyana, Apalaí, Akuriyó, Hixkaryana, Ikpéng, Tiriyó, Waiwai, Wayana
- Texas (6 years at Rice University)
- Guyana: **Akawaio**, Arekuna, Patamuna, Makushi, Kari'nja

Who are you?

- Your own history

- Your experience in "foreign" communities

Themes in exploring identity

- Language(s)
- Worldview & Authority
- Experience of (lack of) Resources

Identity: Language(s)

- Multilingualism
- Experience of speaking a low-prestige language
- Experience of being a non-native speaker
- Becoming a child again

Identity: Worldview & Authority

- Religious beliefs
- Education
- Technological expertise
- Knowledge of International history/current events
- "Everyone knows…": Cultural expectations
- Flexibility

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Identity: Resources

- First-world expectations about health, opportunity and "fairness"
- The researcher as "teacher/expert"
  - Trainer for language activities
  - Traditionally "in charge" of projects
- The researcher as "wealthy"
  - Employer/conduit for resources
  - Personally benefits from research

You don't know
what you don't know

- You are an adult, fully competent in many domains of your own language, culture

- As a visitor to a new community, you may be:

  – Linguistically childlike

  – Culturally ignorant (potentially offensive)

  – Lacking important skills that everyone else takes for granted

  – Unaware of how much you are missing

Discussion

- What have you done in your life that might help to prepare you for the immersion experience?

- What do you know about yourself that makes you nervous about this experience?

- What makes you want to do this?

Who is "the community"?

- Labels for communities

- The experience of power

- Previous research experiences

- What does "the community" want?

- Who are the individuals researchers will interact with?

- Labels for individuals that work with researchers

Labels for communities

- The field (field work)
- The bush
- The jungle
- The interior
- The village
- The Res
- Home

The experience of power

- Being colonized
  - Political: Authority is with outsiders
  - Education: Outsiders' knowledge is valuable
  - Religion: We have been so wrong…
  - Language: Diglossia
    - Politics and education: the "official" language
    - Commerce: local lingua franca
    - Home (& religion?): the ancestral language
- Living at the margins

Previous "research" experiences

- Explorers
- Missionaries
- Educators
- Educators
- Anthropologists
- Linguists
- Documentary films
- *Ethno-* botany, pharmacology, ecology…

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Who speaks for "the community"?

- Political Powers
  - National and local governments
    - research visas
  - Bureau of Indian Affairs
    - permission to enter indigenous areas
  - Tribal council
- Religious authorities
- Powerful individuals
- There is rarely a single, unified voice…

Who are the individuals researchers will interact with?

- Political leaders
- Religious leaders
- Local schoolteachers
- "Stranger handlers"
- Storytellers
- "Natural Linguists"
- Experts in specific topics

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Labels for individuals that work with researchers

- Subjects
- Informants
- Consultants
- Speakers
- Teachers
- Collaborators
- Friends

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Discussion

- How will the community see you?
- How will you figure this out?