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What Linguists Need to Know About Child Care: Access, Service, and Ethics in Community-Based Research

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The purpose of this paper is to draw the attention of language researchers to the potential value of conducting research from a position within a child care program in a community of interest and to the ways in which this degree of subordination might mitigate inequalities of power between researcher and researched. Child care centers are community hubs of rich and complex interactions of interest to field linguists, and linguists have skills which can benefit child care programs. Characteristics of child care programs are described in relation to linguistic interests, program and community interests, and potential roles for researchers within a center or program. The suggestion is made that linguistics graduate programs might encourage students to take courses in child development and early childhood education to enhance logistical resources for new community-based field researchers.

Researching language in a community setting is an important field method within many sub-disciplines of linguistics. Language data collected in a community setting have strong reliability features (e.g., same speakers in different situations) and strong validity features (e.g., naturally occurring speech events involving multiple speakers). Also of importance is the wide range of language topics that are best studied from within a community. Such topics may include the specific kinds of speech events that occur in that community and the ways in which social interactions are conducted between/among community members. However, conducting a language study within a community of interest is often difficult. Researching language in community contexts requires the researcher to have access to the community and to have a basis for forming relationships within the community. Acquiring community knowledge and connections is a lengthy process. This paper describes how linguists might overcome many of the logistical problems of community-based research by establishing themselves in working positions within child care programs of the target community.

Child care programs and centers are sites of rich and complex social and linguistic interactions, and a wide range of projects could be pursued through a working relationship with a child care center in a target community: specific languages and their varieties, ethnography, intercultural and intergenerational sociolinguistics, language and gender, language and identity, critical discourse and critical literacies, registers and verbal arts in child minding and in the larger community, languages in contact, language and education, and developmental aspects of any of these topics.

Child care networks or programs are an identifiable part of every community and are a nexus of social interaction. Regulated child care centers are family service contact points for an increasingly large number of parents in the working communities of industrialized nations. Not only do child care centers serve as contact points for many populations within a community, but they also bring together the linguistic, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the community. The largest child care provider in the United States is federally funded Head Start, with more than 140 languages represented in their programs nationwide (Italiano-Thomas, 2003). Child care centers are a hub of social activity in a community, bringing family members, staff members, and children together for daily care, administrative meetings, celebrations, and opportunities for learning.

During my years as a linguist working as a child care administrator in a small, rural, farmworker community, I recognized that rich opportunities for language research were ever-present and that employment in a child care program could offer a field researcher a natural, long-term participant-observer role as well as provide a source of funding—two useful resources, especially for new researchers without faculty appointments and funding support. The purpose of this paper is to draw the attention of language researchers to the potential value of conducting research from a position within a child care program and to the ways in which some degree of subordination within such a program may support an empowering model of research.

The paper is presented in 5 sections. I begin with a description of typical child care center organization and activities, and I point out the linguistic resources within the child care and community contexts. The second section describes the needs of child care programs for the specific skills that language researchers bring to the field. The third section proposes various kinds of relationships that may be established between language researchers and child care programs, and the fourth section discusses the potential benefits of this relationship in mitigating ethical problems in community-based language research. The fifth section presents a selection of examples of research that has been conducted in child care settings, and concluding remarks explore possibilities of broader recognition of the importance of child care programs within field-based research disciplines.

CHILD CARE CENTER CHARACTERISTICS OF INTEREST TO LINGUISTS

In this section, I will describe the general workings of child care programs and centers to demonstrate the wide range of linguistic research projects that might be pursued through a working relationship with a child care center within a target community. Child care centers are composed of populations of speakers across the life span, within families, and within and across communities. Children in care range from 6 weeks to 12 years old and may include children with a range of disabilities. The caregiving staff and volunteers represent ages from teens to the elderly. Child

care centers are positioned to serve groups with diverse social characteristics such as wealthy, poor, transient, religiously affiliated, and migrant.

In addition to the richness of the population characteristics of most child care programs, the possibilities for linguistically complex situations are of particular interest to linguists. Caregivers may not speak the language of the children under their care. Children within a group or classroom may speak different languages. Many programs require caregivers to speak English at all times no matter what their level of proficiency may be. Since most economically viable communities are experiencing rapid increases in diversity, children in many child care programs are acquiring the language of their caregiver as a second language from input that may be markedly non-native. A recent policy twist adds even greater linguistic complexity to Head Start child care programs. Beginning in 2010, Head Start programs must demonstrate that they support every child in home language development as well as in English (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2008).

In addition to the full range of ages, social characteristics, and languages found within a child care program network, sociolinguists may appreciate the complex roles that children, caregivers, other staff, and parents play in care-related activities. Center staff members participate in a hierarchical system. Caregivers are supervised by the center director or a mid-level administrator who typically has a higher level of education and training than the caregivers. A center also has ancillary staff (i.e., cook, janitor, maintenance person) that may have less education and training than the caregivers. There is a growing number of male caregivers in the traditionally female caregiver role. The linguistic diversity and the sociolinguistic dynamics of staff-to-staff, staff-to-child, parent-to-child, and staff-to-parent interactions are complex.

The study of language events that routinely take place in specific places with specific materials and social roles allows the researcher more control of context variables than is typically available in larger community settings. The typical structure of child care classrooms offers a wide range of mini-settings for the study of language use. Each classroom space is equipped or has access to equipment to support the necessary activities of children's daily lives: sinks, toilets or changing tables, play areas for book reading, art, housekeeping, blocks, science and exploration as well as access to outdoor play. The functions of language vary systematically in each of these activity areas. For example, expressions of motion and location are a necessary function of block play. The socialization routines that make up much of the child care day provide access to cultural as well as linguistic processes. Children typically eat their meals in their classrooms, with caregivers eating the same food at the same table. Family-style dining is a part of early childhood curriculum, along with health practices such as hand washing, teeth brushing, and napping. The richness of routines in a child care classroom is all the more complex as two or more groups of children and their caregivers may share a single classroom space. Thus the management and organization of each classroom requires ongoing communication and close coordination of resources,

routines, and schedules among caregivers.

The parents and guardians also contribute to the sociolinguistic complexity of interactions taking place in child care centers. They are present at the center each day as they drop off and pick up their children, and an adult must sign a chart for the arrival and departure of each child. At this contact point, the observer can see the most basic of literacy skills (writing one's name and the numbers for time and date) in the adult community. The sign-in and sign-out procedure also provides a map of the family's social network of trusted community caregivers, as parents or guardians may authorize other friends or family members to transport their children.

The point where children are dropped off for day care also involves exchanges of information between adults and staff members about child health and development as well as events at the center. Program staff may also conduct home visits to enhance parent involvement in their child's education and development (Head Start Performance Standards 45CFR, 2008; National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2006). Having access to the private homes within a community can serve the purposes of improving the quality of care for children as well as studying aspects of language in the privacy of the home.

In the next section I will explain how a language researcher—a community outsider—might be welcomed into and be valued by a child care program.

LINGUISTIC CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE COMMUNITY

Language researchers, including student researchers, have unique skills that can enhance the quality of care for children in the community. Language researchers can identify the languages and the dialects spoken in a community; they can describe the spoken and written patterns of the languages and dialects used in a community, and they can locate resources (print or spoken) in the various community languages and dialects. Language researchers are also skilled in identifying socially and politically sensitive aspects of language status and use. Child care programs are in need of this unique linguistic skill set. Child care administrators need linguistic expertise to sort out the linguistic and cultural complexities of matching children with caregivers and assigning multiple groups within a single classroom.

Many families enrolling in child care programs cannot provide information about their home language even with the help of the available translators in the community. A language researcher could assist child care staff in identifying respected native speakers within communities to serve as language volunteers to spend time in centers to interact with children in their home language when home language models are not available among the program staff. A language researcher could also help caregivers identify print and spoken resources in the languages of the center and to organize audio and video recordings of storytellings and narrative guides to nature, cooking, crafts, and other aspects of community life which can provide critical discourse experiences for children as well as their caregivers and

families. These linguistic contributions would help a child care program provide the required linguistically appropriate care for children to a far greater degree than most programs are currently capable of providing.

Language researchers could contribute to a program's parent involvement efforts. Linguistic and cultural differences can be sources of intense conflict in communities, and given the mandated amount of interaction between caregivers and parents in child care centers (daily notes from the center and home visits), conflicts can adversely affect the care given to children. Language researchers could identify sources of conflict and provide staff training to support parent involvement and intra-staff communication. Conflicts come from many sources, but sometimes they are purely linguistic in nature. For example, a conflict in a center under my past administration revolved around the hostility that caregivers felt toward Haitian parents who were perceived as regularly using insulting language to their children. In a stream of spoken Kreyol, English speakers heard many instances of what they thought was 'fuck you' when it was the Kreyol form of 'il faut que tu' (as in French, "it is necessary that you" or "you must"). Language researchers are also needed to support the multilingual complexities of parent meetings. Often multiple translators are needed and written materials must be prepared in multiple languages as well. Language researchers could provide much needed technical assistance with all of these important child care program tasks.

Child care administrators may be eager for researchers to help meet their substantial requirements for collecting and reporting program data to funding sources. Child growth and development data, staff development data, and parent involvement and education data are regularly reported. These requirements are especially demanding in Head Start Programs, which then aggregate the data for annual reporting purposes to Congress; Migrant Head Start Programs, in particular, have very compressed time frames for accomplishing all program requirements. Researchers can assist programs by participating in conducting child screenings, collecting anecdotal records of children's language and behavior, and updating children's records. These tasks are frequently a burden on classroom staff members who are fully occupied with the daily tasks of caring for children. Researchers can also help parents and staff interpret the information that is collected, understand the limitations of formal assessments, and perhaps create a more meaningful description of child language and culture development from a local perspective.

All the linguistic contributions presented here have the potential to support a positive image of home languages and dialects in the community through the bottom-up exchange of values between the child care program and the families it serves. When parents see that the child care policies and practices in their children's daily care encourage their children to become fully bilingual or bidialectal, they are likely to be more easily persuaded to value their own home culture and language practices. Furthermore, when parents have experienced linguistically and culturally appropriate education in their children's lives, they are likely to be better prepared to advocate for their children's language rights when their children

transition to public schools.

The importance of positive recognition of linguistic differences within a community cannot be overstated. Wolfram (2004, p. 20) describes the negative linguistic self-image of residents of non-mainstream communities as the most critical challenge he has faced throughout his career of community-based dialect research. Using the education and care of young children as an opportunity to recognize home languages and their variations throughout the community is a powerful resource for overcoming linguistic prejudice—a goal shared by many applied linguists.

WAYS TO PARTICIPATE IN A CHILD CARE PROGRAM

It is unlikely that any language researcher will find a child care center asking directly for the services of a linguist, given the general public's lack of familiarity with linguistics and its applications. Depending on the length of time a researcher wants to spend within a community and the length of time he or she wants to commit to community collaboration in the design of the research, the researcher will have to choose what kind of role he or she is prepared to undertake within the community program. Child care programs typically welcome help from any source because they are chronically shorthanded and sometimes overwhelmed with complex dynamics of communication and teamwork.

Researchers may approach a program as a volunteer for a particular number of hours and weeks to perform specific kinds of duties. These duties might come directly from the linguistic skill set, such as taking a language inventory, translating materials, supporting interpreters at meetings, or conducting language proficiency screenings. Other duties might include the developmental skill set, such as conduct-ing developmental screenings for children, providing staff training, or providing parent information programs. Volunteer duties might also include generic tasks such as maintenance helper, classroom helper, and office helper. Even though volunteers in a child care program are not put in positions of responsibility or liability (e.g., are never unsupervised with children), all are required to undergo background checks and meet minimum health requirements such as current tuberculosis test results. This documentation process provides the researcher with a predictable, upfront opportunity to identify him/herself as having research skills that may be of special interest to the program. A short-term volunteer position could provide a researcher with the preliminary information needed to propose a specific research project: personal contacts within the community, some knowledge of social dynamics within the community, and understanding of the authority structure (both formal and informal) in which to seek permission to conduct the project.

For a researcher willing to commit to a full-time schedule for the duration of a program season (anywhere from 6 weeks to 9 months), a paying position as an employee of a child care program is a pragmatic option. A paid position could support the researcher with necessary income, possibly benefits, at the same time

that the researcher gains a functioning participant role within the community. Staff turnover in child care is high, so it is not unusual to find job openings in these programs. Pay is likely to be at the rate of the hourly minimum wage. Typical entry-level jobs include classroom caregivers/teachers, office clerks, parent liaison workers, kitchen workers, and janitors. Most positions within a child care setting require new employees to complete job-specific trainings and certifications (e.g., First Aid, CPR) within specific timelines, in addition to background checks, medical screening, etc. Researchers of course must consider whether the community of interest is local or a significant distance away, but in any logistical circumstances, the potential benefits of a working relationship with a child care program still apply. However, working within a child care program requires a deep interest as well as a strong commitment to both the community and the kind of work one is doing. Child care centers are bustling and dramatic places to work. Many rules and regulations apply to centers and their activities; center routines are complex, and children's needs are ever-present. It's not for everyone.

ETHICS IN COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH

In the previous sections, I have described the linguistic characteristics of child care programs that are likely to be of interest to linguists, the skills of linguists that are likely to be of interest and benefit to child care programs, and the roles that a researcher might play within a program. In this section, I will discuss how the relationships between language researchers and their communities of interest, or researcher-researched relationships, might address the ethical requirements of conducting language research within a community.

Researching language in community contexts engages the researcher in relationships within the community, and these have been the subject of scholarly discussions of ethical issues in linguistic fieldwork. Wolfram, Rowe, and Grimes (2004) describe critical concerns that have arisen from their community-based work on dialects, dialect awareness, and language preservation programs. Their first concern is the consequences of the researcher's elevated status from outside the community as a language expert—the issue of asymmetrical power and authority. They state that the community-situated roles they undertook (visitors, researchers, and friends) could not change the asymmetrical frame—the "initial and primary status… framed by our role as university-based language experts" (p. 3). I am suggesting that a researcher's power and authority have a better chance of being reframed into peer status if the researcher participates as a child care employee or volunteer. In this situated role, the researcher's status as a formally educated language expert is no longer in the foreground. Providing care for children is humbling work, and no amount of education or prestige can make the job easier. The researcher must depend on the community experts to teach him or her how to do the job at hand. The relational frame of community members as teachers and the researcher as the student or novice is described by Rice (2006): "I think that every

person with whom I have worked has viewed themselves as a teacher—they are very conscious that they have knowledge that I do not have" (p. 141).

Power, authority, and prestige dynamics among participants in social interaction are described as oppositions of more and less—expert/novice, insider/outsider, low socioeconomic status/higher socio-economic status—which are often the basis of resentment and estrangement in relationships. A position within a child care program has the potential to mitigate this asymmetry because the program itself asserts superordinate authority over all participants and their activities. In her review of ethical issues in linguistic fieldwork, Rice (2006) says that "[i]n all of the communities in which I worked, a community council, band council, or local education authority helped me… the support of some official body was invaluable to me" (p. 138). When researchers engage in child care through an established child care program in the community, they openly demonstrate their commitment to service and their willingness to function within the rules and regulations of a community institution. Researcher–researched relationships in this context are less likely to be imbalanced when they are jointly governed by a third, overarching authority.

In *Researching Language: Issues of Power and Control*, Cameron, Frazier, Harvey, Rampton, and Richardson (1992) describe 3 models of language research: ethical research, advocacy research, and empowered research. In ethical research, the researcher must be cognizant of any possible harm or disruption to the researched and actively minimize those negative effects. Cameron et al. (1992) state that the principle governing ethical research, or research *on* others, is that "[p]ersons are not objects and should not be treated as objects" (p. 23). Researchers are guided by professional as well as institutional codes of ethics, and the gross objectification of research participants is rare and punishable by review boards. However, researchers are trained to be objective and may find themselves thinking along traditional lines of research subjects and informants rather than teachers and co-workers. One way that researchers might lessen the subconscious objectification of research participants is through interaction and joint participation, as is natural in a child care setting.

In advocacy research, the researcher commits to carry out research *on* and *for* subjects under the guiding advocacy principle, "subjects have their own agendas and research should try to address them" (p. 23). In her own discussion of Cameron et al.'s (1992) models of research, Rice (2006) illustrates the advocacy research model with an example from a manual for doing linguistic fieldwork in Australia written by Sutton and Walsh (1979):

> Sutton and Walsh…stress that the linguist has a responsibility beyond his or her own research goals, a responsibility to a community: "If the community has an interest in bilingual education, the linguist should be prepared to lend his or her talents and knowledge to this type of program." (p. 130)

In his article entitled "Objectivity and Commitment in Linguistic Science: The Case of the Black English Trial in Ann Arbor," Labov (1982) reconciles the

perceived opposition of scientific objectivity and social commitment as not neatly separable and argues that, in fact, "commitment is needed at all stages of this [linguistic] research: in entering the field; in dealing with a racist society on both sides of the issue; withstanding the kinds of criticism that I have cited above" (p. 195). Many applications of the principle of advocacy in linguistic fieldwork can be found in the literature, but it is most notably practiced by linguists involved in efforts to protect endangered languages and those involved in education reform.

In Cameron et al.'s (1992) model of empowered research, the researcher works *on, for,* and *with* community participants under the guiding principle, "if knowledge is worth having, it is worth sharing" (p. 24). The three programmatic statements defining empowered research (people are not objects; research should try to support community agendas; knowledge should be shared) support a framework for open, collaboratively planned, implemented, and reported research projects. Not every research project fits within the aims of this model, but many linguists continue to address the empowerment possibilities of research.

Working from within Cameron et al.'s (1992) framework of empowered research, Wolfram (1993, 1998) offers the principle of linguistic gratuity as a model of how researchers can usefully balance their position of indebtedness (following Labov's (1982) "principle of debt incurred") to a community in which they do research. Wolfram's principle of linguistic gratuity is consistent with the empowered research model's requirement to share worthwhile knowledge. Wolfram's commitment to the principle has resulted in many elaborations of useful gratuities or linguistic favors: community-based curricula, publications, celebrations, museum installations, and video productions (Wolfram, Rowe, & Grimes, 2004).

It is of interest to me that both Cameron et al. and Wolfram make references to working with children as cautionary notes:

> We must acknowledge that the requirements of research qua research, and not youth work or teaching, will set limits upon the extent to which a project can be planned and run collaboratively, and thus become empowering. (Cameron et al., 1992, p. 138)

> Even if we took a position that returning favors to communities should be limited to activities unrelated to language (e.g. babysitting, tutoring, or other volunteer activities in host communities), our motives for offering such services might be suspect. (Wolfram, 1998, p. 277; 2004, p. 33)

I have presented many reasons why I believe that just such activities as "youth work," "babysitting," and "tutoring" within the governance of a community organization support unique opportunities for principled, empowered language research. When researchers engage in child care and related gratuity activities through an established child care program in the community, they are in a position which may naturally fulfill all three of Cameron et al.'s criteria for empowered research. As part of a caregiving team, the researcher must relate to community

members as individuals—children, parents, staff members, and members of their social networks—rather than as objects of research. The researcher's linguistic interests in the community are likely to be compatible with the self-interest of the child care program. As outlined in the preceding sections, the scholarly activities of language description, analysis, and study have some natural overlap with child care program needs (i.e., language identification, awareness, and reporting). Cameron et al.'s requirement that researchers attempt to understand the agendas of the community and to address those agendas within the research project becomes straightforward in the context of a child care center because a large part of the community agenda is articulated in the governance of the program. The researcher can openly communicate and negotiate the research plan to meet the needs of the program as well as of his or her own project. Open discussion between researcher and child care participants to ensure the mutually beneficial outcomes of research meets Cameron et al.'s third criterion for empowered research—that knowledge worth having is worth sharing.

Clearly, we all agree that research practices must be ethical, but is it incumbent on researchers to be advocates or go one step further and allow research to be shaped by collaboration within the community? Rice (2006) points out that the spirit of empowered research has been a long-standing linguistic tradition practiced by linguists who trained community members to carry out language study and language preservation activities. She goes on, however, to point out that empowered research has been codified in the American Anthropological Association Code of Ethics, approved in February 2009. Section III of the code provides for the ethical obligations of research: "These ethical obligations include:…To consult actively with the affected individuals or group(s), with the goal of establishing a working relationship that can be beneficial to all parties involved" (American Anthropological Association, 2009, p. 2). According to Rice (2006), "This statement thus is part of a shift in paradigm to what Cameron et al. (1992) refer to as an empowerment model" (p. 132). Rice (2006) argues,

> Collaborative working arrangements are not truly collaborative if the linguist still controls the content and framework of the research, and the form in which it appears. A reexamination of what the study of linguistics is all about is not necessarily easy, but under the best of circumstances it will ultimately lead to deeper insights into language, combining different intellectual traditions. It is this opening of the mind that, in the end, makes this type of research truly exciting and empowering for all. (pp. 149-150)

The model of empowered research, that is, actively pursuing a goal of mutually beneficial research activity within a community, is not set forth as a minimum standard of ethical practice because it is not applicable to all research. However, empowered research is codified as a goal of all research.

EXAMPLES OF CHILD CARE PARTICIPANT RESEARCH

One small example from my own experience illustrates the overlapping interests of linguists and child care programs. As an education program coordinator within a large, not-for-profit child care organization in a rural farmworker community, as mentioned above, I was partnered with an area coordinator who oversaw the administration of the seven child care centers assigned to us. From its inception, this organization has had the philosophy that a member of the community should serve as the senior administrator, and that a formally trained and credentialed person should serve as the "second-in-command" and oversee curriculum. The area coordinator routinely called for meetings of the key center staff within our area. All the participants of these meetings were bilingual or bidialectal, with formal education ranging from elementary grades through some college experience. Most participants were first or second generation Mexican immigrants with little work experience outside of agriculture and child care.

Our geographic area overlapped with the organization's state headquarters, so our program sites had frequent visits from state and local dignitaries and the regional press. Our state administrators encouraged our staff members to prepare for the formal language demands of these visits. Toward this end, the area coordinator organized a local chapter of a formal speaking club, but with no way to require the staff's participation, there was limited success. In a renewed effort to support staff development in public speaking, I proposed that we formalize our area meetings to require each center to present an oral report of its recent activities—in the way that committee reports are traditionally given at organizational meetings. My area coordinator embraced the idea along with my suggestion to tape-record the presentations so everyone could hear themselves, reduce nervousness, and cultivate a formal English-speaking identity for themselves. We audio-taped our area reports once a month for six months, and copies of each tape were distributed to the centers for staff members' personal review.

Years after I left the position, I consulted with my former partner to collaborate on a research project based on her spoken presentations recorded at the area meetings. She decided that what was of interest to her in examining the tapes was to determine if her speech at these meetings supported her beliefs about her leadership—that she uses her power and authority over others in a positive, supportive, and protective way. It was important to her that her leadership style be in contrast to familiar community leadership norms—harsh agricultural crew leaders who were known to abuse their workers. My interest in reviewing her speaking parts of the meetings then dovetailed with hers. I wanted to learn how this speaker managed the different speaking traditions of the Area Meeting: a formal English business meeting genre and a community leadership event. Our mutually empowered collaboration resulted in a joint-authored presentation at a linguistics conference (Burns-Hoffman & Padilla-Martinez, 2005).

A different kind of example is found in the work of William Corsaro (1985), a sociologist of childhood, who spent one school year as a participant-observer in a nursery school program. His sociolinguistic study was conducted in a child care program which was part of a state university child study center and was designed to accommodate the needs of researchers. He was provided with office space, video equipment, and one-way mirrored observation windows. Since he had funding for the project, he was able to take a non-paying role within the program. The role he played was critical for his research design: participating directly with the children. Even in this seemingly "research-ready" child care setting, Corsaro spent several months on site collaborating with the staff before beginning to collect data, and he continued to collaborate with staff and parents throughout the study, eliciting their interpretations of events and sharing his interpretations and findings as they evolved, inviting their input, and responding to their inquiries about the research. Corsaro's work provides a specific case of a researcher negotiating access, participation, and ongoing research design with the child care program staff. Many language researchers have chosen child care to study child-related language topics and have engaged in meaningful ways with child care staff in the process. But Corsaro's work is noteworthy for its embedded design within the child care program for a full school term.

Child care programs may also provide a useful position within a community of interest for language research on topics not specific to children. I spoke recently with two linguists who work on endangered indigenous languages and asked them how child care work would or would not be appropriate in their fieldwork experiences, and their responses were instructive. In Melissa Axelrod's work with Ixil women in the highlands of Guatemala (Brown & Gomez de Garcia, 2006), children regularly accompanied their mothers to work sessions. Initially, the children and linguists were watched with a wary eye due to the prevalence of kidnapping and child trafficking in this region. As time passed, however, the linguists' warmth for the children came to be appreciated, and several new babies have been named after the linguists and their family members (M. Axelrod, personal communication, September 1, 2009). For Erin Debenport, employment as a tutor in an after-school program of a tribal school met her logistical and ethical requirements for participation in the language community of interest, and she has subsequently found additional service and work opportunities within the tribal Head Start program. Debenport noted that working with children has the added benefit of offering the linguist an excellent opportunity to practice the local language with the language learners themselves (E. Debenport, personal communication, September 5, 2009).

CONCLUSION

Child care centers are concentrated microcosms of the communities they serve, and their participants routinely engage in rich and complex linguistic behaviors. Language researchers seeking long-term, meaningful contact with a commu-

nity of interest are encouraged to consider establishing a working position within a child care program within the community. Such a position provides logistical support for the researcher in terms of funding and community access, but it also sets up parameters that address familiar ethical concerns in field research. By working within a program with the community, the researcher is no longer in a direct researcher–researched dyad. Instead, the Researcher commits himself or herself to participating in a triad of overlapping interests: researcher and community members become joint participants under the auspices of the child care organization. From this position, the needs of the community and the researcher may be negotiated, and collaborative efforts may lead to mutually beneficial research.

This paper has described how efforts to reach this goal may be enhanced from a working, contributing position within a community's child care program. If child care programs were to become a more generally discussed resource in fieldwork, linguistics and applied linguistics programs might encourage students to take courses in child development and early childhood education to prepare for fieldwork within a community. Faculty might also build service learning projects into their courses in collaboration with child care programs. Such service learning projects would familiarize students with child care and allow them to utilize their skills in a real-world context. The community experience might even help students develop career options—options that are much needed for graduates of anthropology, linguistics, and other social science programs.

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