

## Research Models, Community Engagement, and Linguistic Fieldwork: Reflections on Working within Canadian Indigenous Communities

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This paper reflects on different research models in linguistic fieldwork and on different levels of engagement in and with language-speaking communities, focusing on the Canadian context. I begin by examining a linguist-focused model of research: this is language research conducted *by* linguists, *for* linguists; the language-speaking community's participation is limited mostly to being the source of fluent speakers, and the level of engagement in the community by a linguist is relatively small. I then consider models that involve more engaged and collaborative research, and define the Community-Based Language Research model which allows for the production of knowledge *on* a language that is constructed *for*, *with*, and *by* community members, and that is therefore not primarily for or by linguists. In CBLR, linguists are actively engaged partners working collaboratively with language communities. Collaborative models of research seem to be closest in spirit to models advocated by Indigenous groups in Canada and elsewhere. I reflect here on (1) why one might choose to work within a collaborative research model, and (2) what some of the challenges are that linguists face when they conduct research collaboratively. In a broad sense the purpose of this paper is to think through some questions that an "outsider" linguist might face when undertaking linguistic research in an Indigenous community today.

*"One Elder has said: 'Without the language, we are warm bodies without a spirit'."*

ELDER MARY LOU FOX, OJIBWE CULTURAL FOUNDATION SUDBURY, ONTARIO<sup>1</sup>

*"The scientific investigation of a given language cannot be understood in isolation. In carrying out field research, linguists are inevitably responsible to the larger human community which its results could affect."* (HALE 2001:76)

**1. INTRODUCTION.**<sup>2</sup> As a linguist I have spent most of the past twenty-five years interested in and studying the Salish languages of northwestern North America. For part of

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<sup>1</sup> Quotation from "Living Languages, chapter 3: Gathering Strength," in Highlights from the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1996). Retrieved from <http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ap/pubs/rpt/rpt-eng.asp#chp5>.

<sup>2</sup> I have had many discussions over the years with Canadian linguists about community work, but I

those twenty-five years I have had the privilege to learn from native speakers of Salish languages, and have worked within communities that are traditionally Salish-speaking. In those twenty-five years the ways that linguists carry out fieldwork on Indigenous languages in Canada and throughout the world, and the ways that linguists think about working in Indigenous language communities, have changed considerably. In this paper I set out my reflections on some of these changes, with the intention of contributing towards the slowly growing body of literature in the field of linguistics that discusses why and how linguists practice linguistic fieldwork the way that we do (see, for example, Benedicto, Modesta, and McLean 2002; Dorian 1993, 2002; England 2002; Gerds 1998; Hale et al. 1992; Hale 2001; Hill 2002; Grinevald 1998, 2003; Rice 2006; Stebbins 2003; Yamada 2007).

My paper attempts to do three things in particular. It attempts, first, to contribute towards theorizing models of fieldwork research in linguistics by reflecting on the different levels of engagement and collaboration with language-speaking communities that are possible in fieldwork. It attempts, second, to define an explicitly community-based model of linguistic fieldwork, referred to here as Community-Based Language Research, and to provide arguments for why a linguist might choose to work within this kind of model, focusing in particular on ethical rather than methodological considerations. And, third, it attempts to formulate some of the challenges that linguists face when they choose to work in more collaborative and engaged ways with a language-speaking community. While the focus in this paper is the Canadian context, in a broad sense my purpose here is to think through some of the conceptual and ethical questions that a linguist such as myself faces when undertaking linguistic research in any Indigenous community near the beginning of the twenty-first century.

When I first became a linguist most research on Indigenous languages in Canada and throughout the world was conducted according to a model of documentation, description, and analysis that is almost exclusively linguist-led and linguist-focused.<sup>3</sup> In other words, Indigenous language research was for the most part conducted by linguists, for linguists,

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<sup>3</sup> In this paper, I use the term "Indigenous" to refer to Canadian Aboriginal (that is, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis) communities and people, as well as to Indigenous communities and people throughout the world.

and the language-speaking community's participation in the research was limited mostly to being the source of fluent speakers with whom a linguist could work. In its idealized form, this model of research assumes that linguists and the communities they work with belong to separate worlds, that there is a divide or boundary between researcher and researched, expert and non-expert, linguist and language-speaking community.

Increasingly, however, linguists working within Indigenous communities in Canada and elsewhere have been emphasizing research practices that bridge the divide between linguist and community, that more actively engage with and partner with (members of) a language-speaking community. Thus, in Canada and elsewhere, linguists have contributed to language teaching materials or to documentation such as dictionaries or texts for the communities within which they work. Others have assisted communities in developing language programs aimed at language revitalization, or have acted as consultants for studies conducted by individual Indigenous communities on place names or ethnobotany, for instance; and still others have written about the best practices of language research, or the effects of language loss on language communities and how this affects language research. And finally, some linguists have become involved in working in partnership with communities to develop and carry out community-based language projects together.<sup>4</sup> All these research practices involve greater levels of engagement in and with language-speaking communities than does a model of research that is exclusively linguist-focused, but a community-based model involves the greatest level of engagement and contrasts most strongly with a linguist-focused research model. Community-Based Language Research, as I define it here, not only allows for the production of knowledge on a language, but also assumes that that knowledge can and should be constructed for, with, and by community members, and that it is therefore not merely (or primarily) for or by linguists. In a model of this kind, linguists are not the sole researchers, nor are they necessarily the leading researchers; rather, they are partners working in a collaborative relationship with members of the language-using community.<sup>5</sup>

The shift in Indigenous language research towards an emphasis on grass-roots concerns and understandings and on collaboration and community engagement has points of contact with those aspects of postcolonial, feminist, socialist, and similar theories that focus on re-conceptualizing Euro-American understandings of knowledge and knowledge con-

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<sup>4</sup> There are many examples of linguists working collaboratively in Canadian Indigenous communities; rather than single out a few cases while leaving out many others, I have opted here not to mention any specific examples.

<sup>5</sup> It is important to note that there have always been linguists who have engaged with the language-speaking communities in which they conduct fieldwork. One thing that is different in today's context is the numbers of linguists who are working in engaged ways, and who are aware of and advocates for collaborative research methodologies. As a reviewer points out, this is particularly true for linguists working in North American Indigenous language communities, and, I would suggest it is also true for linguists working in Central America, parts of South America, Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific.

struction to include non-Euro-American modes of thought.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the shift in Indigenous language research towards an emphasis on collaboration, relationships, community involvement, and attention to community needs and concerns can be seen as part of a larger trend in humanities and especially social sciences research, a trend that is most visible in models of research such as Participatory Research, Action Research, Participatory Action Research, Community-Based Research, and other similar collaborative models. Many of these theories and models share the goal of seeking practical knowledge to contribute to social improvement or social change, both for the sake of the communities within which research takes place, and more generally, for the betterment of the global situation. Finally, the community-based model seems to be closest in spirit to the kinds of research practices advocated publicly by Canadian Indigenous groups (see, for example, the six principles for Aboriginal programs identified by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in section 2.4), by many Canadian universities and their Human Research Ethics Boards, and by Canadian research funding agencies such as the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (see the Tri-Council Policy on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, section 2.4). It is also close in spirit to the research practices that many Canadian linguists are either adopting or working towards adopting. It is therefore important to explicitly conceptualize such a model for linguistics and to consider what the consequences of doing work in this kind of model might be for linguists.

The political and social contexts within which linguistic field research takes place vary immensely, not only from continent to continent, but even from community to community within the same country. For this reason, alone, it would be irresponsible to argue that there is only one right way to practice linguistic fieldwork. And for this reason, too, I do not advocate any particular model of research in this paper or in general. However, I would argue that there are specific situations in which collaborative models of linguistic fieldwork are more likely to be more appropriate than the more traditional linguistic-focused models. This paper discusses one such situation in British Columbia, Canada. Through briefly examining some of the political and socio-historical contexts of this situation, I reflect on some of the reasons why a linguist might choose in this kind of situation to work within models of research that are more rather than less collaborative.

The present paper begins in section 2 by considering four different research models, each of which reflects different levels of community engagement. This section also touches briefly on collaborative research models, such as Participatory, Action, and Community-Based Research, as they have been defined outside of linguistics. Section 3 reflects on reasons for working within more collaborative research models. Section 4 turns to a discussion of some of the properties of more community-based collaborative language research.

This paper is written from the perspective of a linguist who has been brought up in a Central European-Canadian immigrant family, and has been trained in the Euro-American university system. It inevitably reflects my own experience, research, and understanding;

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<sup>6</sup> Terms such as “Western,” “Euro-American,” “Euro-centric,” “non-Indigenous” are used, some of them interchangeably, throughout the literature on Indigenous forms of knowledge and research, and in fields of study such as postcolonial theory. They contrast with terms such as “non-Western,” “Indigenous,” “majority world,” “non-privileged world,” “subaltern,” and “marginalized.”

so when I use the term “linguist” here, I am referring especially to someone whose personal and academic experience is at least somewhat similar to mine and who is therefore an outsider with respect to the communities within which s/he works. In addition, since many of the Salish languages are spoken in the Canadian western province of British Columbia where I have lived and studied most of my life, the view of language research presented here is influenced by the British Columbian context. Finally, the paper reflects my experiences, since approximately 2002, with a community-based Community-University Research Alliance research project<sup>7</sup> entitled “Language revitalization in Vancouver Island Salish communities: A multimedia approach.”<sup>8</sup>

**2. CONCEPTUALIZING FIELDWORK RESEARCH MODELS.** Different research models conceive of the relationships between linguists and Indigenous language communities in different ways. This section considers four kinds of research relationships that a linguist and a community can have with each other, beginning with the most academically traditional and ending with the least academically traditional. The four kinds of research relationships are distinguished from each other by the level and type of engagement that a linguist has in a language-speaking community and that community members have in the research. I assume that each of the four kinds of research relationships represents a model of fieldwork research.

In Indigenous language research, “community” refers in the first instance to all members of a language-speaking community, from the grass-roots language speakers, language learners, and language teachers, to various decision-making bodies (see section 4.1 for more discussion of “community”). In practice each research project, especially if it is collaborative, needs to define for itself how it will constitute “community” for the purposes of the project and the research situation (Benoit et al. 2005, Tinkler 2004). In this section, I will simply assume very broadly that there are two types of participants in linguistic fieldwork research: outsider linguists and members of a language-speaking community, however that community may be constituted.

In discussing the research models outlined below and in section 3, I focus on ethical issues associated with the different levels of community engagement that distinguish the models. However, each type of model could also be distinguished in other ways: for exam-

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<sup>7</sup> Community-University Research Alliance Projects are funded by a program of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Their purpose is to “support the creation of alliances between community organizations and postsecondary institutions which, through a process of ongoing collaboration and mutual learning, will foster innovative research, training and the creation of new knowledge in areas of importance for the social, cultural or economic development of Canadian communities.” <[http://www.sshrc.ca/web/apply/program\\_descriptions/cura\\_e.asp#1](http://www.sshrc.ca/web/apply/program_descriptions/cura_e.asp#1)>. The Coast Salish language revitalization CURA involves a partnership between the Hul’q’umi’num’ Treaty Group, the Saanich Native Heritage Society, the First Peoples’ Heritage, Language, and Culture Council, the First Peoples’ Cultural Foundation, and the University of Victoria.

<sup>8</sup> Although this paper is informed by my experiences on the Coast Salish Language Revitalization CURA project, I do not discuss these experiences directly in this particular paper because the story of the project is not mine alone, and as such is not mine to tell alone.

ple, they could be distinguished in terms of practical methodological issues related to best practices in fieldwork, or by the types of documentation outcomes one might expect from the different ways of working in and with communities. I have chosen to focus on ethical issues here because these are the issues that have affected my own research practice the most significantly (see Dwyer 2006:54–55 for discussion of advantages and disadvantages of collaborative research approaches).

**2.1 THE LINGUIST-FOCUSED MODEL.**<sup>9</sup> For the most part, primary linguistic research or fieldwork on Indigenous languages in the last 100 years has been led by researchers who are not members of the language-using community and has focused on promoting the interests of these researchers. For the most part, too, these researchers have been non-Indigenous people such as missionaries, explorers, or professional scholars, including especially anthropologists and linguists. This kind of research on Indigenous languages has mostly resulted in various forms of documentation and description, including the production of linguistic grammars and dictionaries, and in the collection, presentation, parsing, and translation into non-Indigenous languages of texts (stories, conversations, prayers, and other forms of discourse longer than a sentence or two).

The initial step in most Indigenous language research has tended to be the “collection” of linguistic “data,” and the principal method of this research has involved some form of documentation or fieldwork. Therefore, when considering models of Indigenous language research and research relationships, we can take the definition of fieldwork as a starting point.

One standard conception of fieldwork is spelled out in Samarin’s classic textbook (1967) on field linguistics:

Field linguistics is primarily a way of obtaining linguistic data and studying linguistic phenomena. It involves two participants: the speaker (or speakers) of a language and the linguistic researcher. The means of carrying on investigation is the most direct possible, by personal contact. The speaker of the language, the informant, is the source of information and the evaluator of utterances put to him by the investigator. ... Field linguistics can be carried on anywhere, not just in the field. (Samarin 1967:1)

This understanding of linguistic fieldwork clearly takes as primary the point of view of the linguist and the goal of obtaining data on a language. The speakers of the language are seen as sources of information, and in this sense are of interest to the linguist first and foremost as means to a linguistic end and as objects of study. A similar focus on the linguist’s point of view is also evident in a second textbook on fieldwork, that of Vaux and Cooper (1999), written thirty years after Samarin’s text:

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<sup>9</sup> The discussion in sections 2.1, 2.2, and 2.4 is based on Czaykowska-Higgins 2002. See also Rice 2006 for a more extended discussion of Cameron et al.’s (1992) research models, Yamada 2007 and Leonard and Haynes 2009 for discussion focused on the empowerment model.

Field work can also bring a great deal of personal enrichment associated with visiting exotic locations and meeting new and unusual people. Documenting an unstudied language also instills the satisfaction of creating something new, and adding knowledge to the world. There are also a number of reasons for theoretical linguists to carry out field work... [For example,] field work also provides the linguist with access to a broader range of data than be culled from published sources... Finally, field work instills an appreciation of the complexity of language. (Vaux and Cooper 1999:6–7)

One can assume that when the linguists whose words are quoted above were working in the field they did their work in a respectful way, developed good working and personal relationships with the speakers that they interviewed, and in general could be said to have behaved ethically. I am therefore not quoting from these texts in order to be critical of individual linguists, but rather to point out that the conception of language research suggested in these two excerpts is one in which linguists are responsible and accountable primarily to themselves and to their academic or scholarly communities.<sup>10</sup> As a result, the outputs of the research reflect the understanding and priorities of the linguists, and are produced for the linguists and not for those whose language is being studied (see Cameron 1992:117–118 for discussion of this point). Furthermore, the outputs of the research are molded by the linguists' assumptions about knowledge, its construction, and its value, and rarely take into consideration the assumptions of the users of the language under study.

Unquestionably a great deal of irreplaceable knowledge about Indigenous languages and about “Language” as an object of study has been produced by linguists working in this traditionally Western model of scholarship and research. This is the model that almost all currently practicing linguists have been trained within and for this reason it is a good starting point for discussion. For this reason, too, it is worth thinking about various limitations of this model. I consider two ethical limitations here.

One limitation is that there is no inherent reason why all the priorities and assumptions of linguists should always be privileged over those of the language-users. A linguist-focused model grows out of Western assumptions about the nature of knowledge and scholarship, but, as much work within radicalizing theories (e.g., postcolonial theory, feminist theory, Marxist theory, etc.) has been arguing for years, and as Indigenous scholars themselves have argued (e.g., Smith 1999, and papers in Battiste and Henderson 2000), traditional Western modes of thought and scholarship should not be the only ones that determine research practice.

Second, in a linguist-focused model of Indigenous language research, the research tends for the most part to be conducted as if the researchers were working outside of the linguistic and social conditions in which it takes place. In this kind of model, rooted as it is in the Euro-American empirical and positivistic scientific tradition, academic linguists see themselves primarily as disinterested observers and recorders of facts. For the most

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<sup>10</sup> Vaux and Cooper (1999) also write that “[...] with many endangered languages the field worker can actually play a role in saving the language [...]” (6–7), but, this statement’s primary focus seems to be the linguist and not a language-speaking community (Czaykowska-Higgins 2002).

part, therefore, the linguists working in this model do not see themselves as participants in a social and linguistic context. While the linguists must be aware of the extent to which the social and linguistic context affects their ability to “collect data,” the research paradigm does not require them to be interested in the extent to which their work has the potential to affect the context in which they are working.

In the most traditional version of a linguist-focused model the linguist tends to be in a position of intellectual power with respect to the language-users. The linguist’s conception of knowledge and understanding of language are privileged over those of the language-users. And the research situation as construed within the research paradigm allows a linguist to enter a community and to leave it without regard to consequences for the community. This model thus assumes a strong distinction—a divide or boundary—between linguist and community.<sup>11</sup> There are certainly many research situations in which a strong distinction between linguist and the community of speakers of the researched language is not likely to be problematic. In particular, if the language being studied is spoken by millions of people, is strong politically, or is spoken by members of a fairly wealthy nation, then power issues or social issues may not have the same kind of immediacy or relevance. However, all Indigenous languages in a country like Canada (and many such languages throughout the world) are small and endangered and/or are spoken in relatively disadvantaged communities. It is in these kinds of contexts that a linguist-focused model may need to be re-considered. Accordingly, in the next section I consider alternatives to the linguist-focused model, each of which views the linguist-community relationship differently.

**2.2 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: ALTERNATIVES TO THE LINGUIST-FOCUSED MODEL.** In an interesting analysis of language research, with particular focus on sociolinguistic research, Cameron et al. (1992) distinguish three models of research, Ethical Research, Advocacy Research, and Empowering Research (see also Rice 2006). Their Ethical Research model is essentially what I am calling the linguist-focused model:

#### **Ethical [Linguist-Focused] Research**

In ethical research...there is a wholly proper concern to minimise damage and offset inconvenience to the researched, and to acknowledge their contribution... But the underlying model is one of ‘research *on*’ social subjects. Human subjects deserve special ethical consideration, but they no more set the researcher’s agenda than the bottle of sulphuric acid sets the chemist’s agenda. (Cameron et al. 1992:15)

I provide this quote here because of the way in which Cameron and her colleagues characterize this model as one involving research on a language. In defining Community-Based Language Research below, I have built on Cameron et al.’s characterization of the different models of research. It is also useful to note, in reading this definition, the extent

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<sup>11</sup> Shaw (2001) refers to this distinction more benignly as “complementarity.”



to which it assumes the clear boundary that I mentioned above between researcher and researched.

Advocacy and Empowering Research both go beyond the Ethical Research model in that they both respond directly to their context, involving researchers as active participants in that context. Thus, in Advocacy Research, the researchers act on behalf of the language-users to try to effect positive changes in the language-users' contexts:

### **Advocacy Research**

[T]he 'advocacy' position is characterized by a commitment on the part of the researcher not just to do research *on* subjects but research *on and for* subjects. Such a commitment formalises what is actually a rather common development in field situations, where a researcher is asked to use her skills or her authority as an 'expert' to defend subjects' interests, getting involved in their campaign for healthcare or education, cultural autonomy or political and land rights, and speaking on their behalf. (Cameron et al. 1992:15)

An example of linguistic Advocacy Research cited by Cameron et al. is Labov's work on behalf of Black English in the United States (see Labov 1982; see also Sutton and Walsh 1979, cited in Rice 2006). Advocacy Research requires the researcher to understand and be sympathetic to the linguistic and social context of the language-users and to work for them. In this model the researcher is still the expert, using the experts' discourse, and the research still primarily reflects the priorities and perspectives of the researcher, although it is also expanded to include some priorities of the language-users. In this latter sense the boundary between researcher and researched is broken down to some extent.

Within the context of Canadian Indigenous languages, a linguist working within an Advocacy model might, for instance, undertake research on place names which could then be employed by the language-using community to support its position in land-claims disputes.

The Empowering Research model goes a step further than the Advocacy model in breaking down the boundary between researcher and language-users. This is the model exemplified in the papers found in Cameron et al. 1992. In this model, research is conducted not only *on* the language of the language-users, and *for* the users, but it is also conducted *with* them. In other words, the researchers in this model do not assume that their own priorities and knowledge are always the only ones worth pursuing, and they work with members of the language-using community to set the priorities of the research and to carry out the research:

### **Empowering Research**

We understand 'empowering research' as *research on, for and with*. One of the things we take that additional 'with' to imply is the use of interactive or dialogic research methods, as opposed to the distancing or objectifying strategies positivists are constrained to use. It is the centrality of interaction 'with' the

researched that enables research to be empowering in our sense. (Cameron et al. 1992:15)

In this model, linguists working with Canadian Indigenous communities might work with community members on a teaching grammar of the community language, might train community members in linguistic methods, might put together a users' dictionary, or might participate in the design and writing of language teaching materials. In this model, as I understand it, however, the linguist is still the principal expert in the research process.<sup>12</sup>

While both Advocacy and Empowering Research involve different forms of collaboration between the researcher and the communities within which they work on language, it is possible to conceive of a model that goes even further than either of these models does in its acceptance of collaboration and partnership. This model, which I call Community-Based Language Research, can be thought of as being at that end of a community-engagement continuum that is farthest from a linguist-focused model. Community-Based Language Research, as I define it, assumes as given three "programmatic statements" proposed by Cameron et al. (1992) in their discussion of Empowering Research. These are (a) "Persons are not objects and should not be treated as objects," (b) "Subjects have their own agendas and research should try to address them," and (c) "If knowledge is worth having, it is worth sharing" (23-24).<sup>13</sup> It goes beyond the Empowering model, though, in assuming that the linguist is only one of the *experts* in the research process, and that community members as well as linguists should be directors of and active partners in the research, as opposed to being simply empowered research subjects. Thus I propose the following definition of Community-Based Language Research:<sup>14</sup>

### Community-Based Language Research

Research that is *on* a language, and that is conducted *for*, *with*, and *by* the language-speaking community within which the research takes place and which it affects. This kind of research involves a collaborative relationship, a partnership, between researchers and (members of) the community within which the research takes place.

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<sup>12</sup> For an extensive recent description of collaborative work within an Empowering model, see Yamada 2007.

<sup>13</sup> Cameron et al.'s (1992) statement that "If knowledge is worth having, it is worth sharing" must be understood here as referring to Western academic knowledge. Many communities have domains of knowledge which are secret or which are shared by only a small number of people such as members of a particular family or members of a group like the Big House societies of some western Canadian First Nations communities. In general, knowledge of this kind cannot be shared; the restrictions on this kind of knowledge need to be respected by all.

<sup>14</sup> Grinevald (2003) also adds the preposition "by" to the Empowering Research framework, but she does not define Community-Based Language Research as a distinct research model.

In its fullest form, Community-Based Language Research involves training members of the language-using community to do the research themselves, and can have as one of its goals the aim of making redundant the presence in the community of academic linguists who are not from the community.<sup>15</sup> This can also be a component of an Empowering model (see Rice 2006). However, what crucially distinguishes CBLR from all other models is that CBLR explicitly acknowledges and welcomes the extent to which linguists are trained by and learn from community-members in issues related to language, linguistics, and culture, as well as about how to conduct research and themselves appropriately within the community. Thus, CBLR is based on the recognition that community members have expertise and can be experts. Because it recognizes that linguists are neither the sole researchers nor the only experts and that their role is to be partners in a collaborative relationship in which all partners learn from each other, the Community-Based Language Research model goes further than the Advocacy and Empowering research models in breaking down the boundary between researchers and language-users and/or community members.

**2.3 COMMUNITY IN NON-LINGUISTIC RESEARCH MODELS.** More collaborative linguistic research models parallel participatory, collaborative, or community-based models found in disciplines such as nursing and other health sciences, sociology, social work, environmental research, and, especially, education. In this section I briefly discuss three collaborative models in social sciences: Participatory Research, Action Research, and Community-Based Research. As we see below, linguistic research at the Community-Based Language Research end of the research model continuum is most closely aligned in spirit with research that falls under the label of Community-Based Research (CBR).

While various possible definitions of CBR exist, there seems to be general agreement in the literature on three components of CBR. First, CBR is always defined as involving collaboration between researcher and community. In the definition of Community-Based Language Research given above, the collaborative nature of the research and the importance of partnership are central.

Second, CBR involves what can broadly be referred to as democratization of knowledge: in CBR, in other words, community knowledge, community ways of knowing, community ways of constructing knowledge, and community ways of disseminating knowledge are highly valued by all parties. Western, Euro-centric, or academic knowledge is thus not privileged to the exclusion of other knowledge. To the extent that models like Community-Based Language Research involve true collaboration and partnership—where collaboration ideally means that the community and outsider linguist(s) work together at every stage of the research process (Strand et al. 2003:10)—they also inevitably involve reciprocity and sharing in the creation of knowledge. It is in this way that they open up the

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<sup>15</sup> See Stoecker 1999 for a discussion of this point with reference to participatory research models and social sciences research.

possibility of valuing all forms of knowledge and all those who have knowledge relevant to the language research.<sup>16</sup>

The third central component of CBR can be defined, in the words of Strand et al. (2003:8), as “social action and social change for the purpose of achieving social justice.” This component of CBR is especially influenced by Participatory Research (PR) and Participatory Action Research (PAR) models that specifically aim to change social structures (see, for example, Brown and Tandon 1983, Stoecker 1999).<sup>17</sup> In this latter regard, PR and CBR have their roots in the work of, and are especially influenced by, such thinkers and leaders from the “majority world” as Paulo Freire, whose most widely cited work, *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (2000 [1970]) is an important reference for many Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators.

While the goal of social change is not spelled out in the definition of Community-Based Language Research given in section 2.2, it is nevertheless implicit. If a project undertaken within a CBLR type of framework succeeds or goes some way towards succeeding in its attempts to create real partnership and collaboration between linguists and language community members; and if, as a result, community-members become more self-sufficient in research; and if, in addition, community knowledge is validated and valued; then social change has begun to happen. The gaps between linguist and community, expert and non-expert, researcher and researched, academic world and non-academic world, begin to be bridged. New or different structures are created; new and different understandings are reached; the imbalances between academic and community begin to be shifted.

A fourth component of CBR, which is not necessarily included in definitions of CBR, but which nevertheless underlies most community-based research, is the assumption, inherited from Action Research (Reason and Bradbury 2001), that research is not simply an intellectual act, but that it is also a practical act that can have practical implications and applications, especially for improving social conditions. To the extent that a model such as Community-Based Language Research is focused on producing knowledge and materials that can be useful to communities for language education and language revitalization, Community-Based Language Research thus also has a strong, practical, community-focused component.

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<sup>16</sup> A reviewer rightly points out that not all knowledge is equally valid or of equal consequence. Ideally, in collaborative research situations democratization of knowledge could involve discussing and perhaps negotiating answers to questions associated with the validity of different kinds of knowledge.

<sup>17</sup> The goal of social improvement is also found in Action Research models. In the introduction to their impressive Handbook of Action Research, for instance, Reason and Bradbury (2001) write that the wider purpose of Action Research “is to contribute through practical knowledge to the increased well-being—economic, political, psychological, spiritual—of human persons and communities, and to a more equitable and sustainable relationship with the wider ecology of the planet of which we are an intrinsic part” (see also Greenwood and Levin 1998). Unlike participatory research models, however, action research models focus less on challenging existing power structures than on “resolving conflict” (Stoecker 2001).

Although collaborative research models such as CBR, PAR, and PR have been in practice throughout the world over the course of the last fifty years, they have not been discussed in the linguistic literature to any great extent. This does not mean that the ideas and understanding and especially the fieldwork practices that are found in collaborative/participatory models have not been found in linguistics, but merely that they have not usually been explicitly referred to as such. This may well change in the future, since CBR and other participatory models appear to be increasingly valued in academic communities, especially because universities are increasingly recognizing a need to be accountable to and to work together with the communities of which they are a part (see Strand et al. 2003 for discussion).

**2.4 ADDITIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON FIRST NATIONS RESEARCH.** As mentioned above, the four research models presented are, in effect, points on a continuum representing different kinds of relationships between linguist and community and different levels of community engagement by linguists. Which model a linguist ends up working within depends to a great extent on the goals, aspirations, and needs of the community of language-users that the linguist is working with, as well as on the goals and aspirations of the linguist. The type of research relationship represented by each model can be useful in exactly the right situation. The Community-Based Language Research model is, however, the one that seems closest to the vision of research endorsed by many First Nations, Metis, and Inuit individuals and organizations in Canada, and by research organizations and agencies that fund research associated with Canadian Indigenous languages. In addition, the perspective represented by a model of the Community-Based Language Research type is in harmony with the views on research discussed in the work of many Indigenous thinkers. The words of Battiste and Henderson (2000), who live in Canada, eloquently represent these views:

[Indigenous peoples] want their communities and their knowledge and heritage to be respected and accorded the same rights, in their own terms and cultural contexts, accorded others in the area of intellectual and cultural property. They want a relationship that is beneficial to all. (Battiste and Henderson 2000:132)

Ethical research systems and practices should enable Indigenous nations, peoples, and communities to exercise control over information related to their knowledge and heritage and to themselves. These projects should be managed jointly with Indigenous peoples, and the communities being studied should benefit from training and employment opportunities generated by the research. Above all, it is vital that Indigenous peoples have direct input into developing and defining research practices and projects related to them. To act otherwise is to repeat that familiar pattern of decisions being made for Indigenous people by those who presume to know what is best for them. (Battiste and Henderson 2000:132)

In describing Kaupapa Māori research in New Zealand, Smith says also that research “has to address seriously the cultural ground rules of respect, of working with communities, of sharing processes and knowledge” (1999:191). And the 1996 report of the Royal

Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (First Nations Education Steering Committee 2006:ii) reveals a similar understanding, when it identifies six principles that contribute to the success of Aboriginal programs:

1. *Aboriginal people are central decision makers;*
2. *The programs address the needs and priorities of Aboriginal People;*
3. *The programs include Aboriginal perspectives and methodologies;*
4. *They open doors for the participation of Aboriginal people;*
5. *They emphasize partnerships and mutual understanding;*
6. *They find creative ways to overcome obstacles.*

Finally, the Canadian Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, in discussing the context for Aboriginal research, proposes the following among a long list of “Good Practices” for research in Aboriginal communities (see <http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/english/policystatement/section6.cfm>):

- \* To respect the culture, traditions and knowledge of the Aboriginal group;
- \* To conceptualize and conduct research with Aboriginal groups as a partnership;
- \* To consult members of the group who have relevant expertise;
- \* To involve the group in the design of the project;
- \* To examine how the research may be shaped to address the needs and concerns of the group;
- \* To make best efforts to ensure that the emphasis of the research, and the ways chosen to conduct it, respect the many viewpoints of different segments of the group in question;
- \* To provide the group with information respecting the following
  - Protection of the Aboriginal group’s cultural estate and other property;
  - The availability of a preliminary report for comment;
  - The potential employment by researchers of members of the community appropriate and without prejudice;
  - Researchers’ willingness to cooperate with community institutions;
  - Researchers’ willingness to deposit data, working papers and related materials in an agreed-upon repository;
- \* To acknowledge in the publication of the research results the various viewpoints of the community on the topics researched; and
- \* To afford the community an opportunity to react and respond to the research findings before the completion of the final report, in the final report or even in all relevant publications.

**3. LINGUIST AND COMMUNITY: CHOOSING ENGAGEMENT.** As I suggested in section 2, different models of conducting research involve different kinds of relationships between linguist and community. I also pointed out that in the most idealized version of a linguist-focused research model, a linguist is a disinterested observer in a community, and

not a participant in it, while in the most idealized version of community-based research the linguist is just one member of a language research team. In this section I reflect on reasons why a linguist might decide against the linguist-as-disinterested-observer role, and might instead choose some form of engagement in and with a language-speaking community. My focus here is on ethical considerations and the Canadian context.

First, following the arguments of practitioners of the various participatory research models, I believe it is fair to say that research is not conducted in a social, political, or cultural vacuum. Choosing not to engage with the research context, in effect acting as if research were conducted in a vacuum, can have unintended and even negative consequences in the kinds of social and political situations that many Indigenous languages find themselves in today. I am aware of cases in British Columbia, for instance, where the negative experiences that First Nations elders had in years past with linguists conducting linguist-focused research, treating elders as sources of data for publications in linguistics, have made those elders hesitant to work with language programs today. I would argue that if a linguist works more rather than less collaboratively with members of an Indigenous language-speaking community, negative consequences are less likely to occur. And if this is the case, it suggests that it may often be ethically more appropriate to work in a collaborative, engaged fashion when doing linguistic fieldwork in an Indigenous language community such as those found in Canada.

Second, an aspect of working collaboratively with members of a language-speaking community that I wish to focus on here involves being aware of and responding to the linguistic and social conditions and the linguistic goals and aspirations of language-speaking communities. In particular, at the present time in British Columbia and elsewhere, many Indigenous individuals and communities want to improve their linguistic and social conditions. Because linguists working with communities have skills that may contribute to the community goals and aspirations surrounding language, linguists have an ethical obligation, I believe, to respond in some fashion to those goals and aspirations.<sup>18</sup>

By way of exemplifying my reasoning, I briefly discuss, in section 3.1, some of the linguistic and social conditions and goals of Indigenous communities in British Columbia. In section 3.2 I consider whether conducting research is a neutral activity, and what the answer to this question might mean for linguists.

**3.1 THE LINGUISTIC AND SOCIAL CONTEXT OF LANGUAGE RESEARCH.** In this subsection, I briefly consider four points related to the situation of Canadian Indigenous languages. Although they are well known within the Canadian linguistic context, it is never-

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<sup>18</sup> It is reasonable to ask, as one reviewer does, how one would determine what a community's goals and aspirations are. I touch upon this question in sections 4.1 and 4.2 in discussing how relationships and roles in community-based research might be determined. An extended discussion of issues associated with how to define "community" and how to determine what a community's goals and aspirations are is beyond the scope of this paper, but in the context of British Columbia the keys to answering both those questions lie in consulting broadly within a community and in responding to how the community constitutes itself.

theless useful to spell them out in this paper, since they might be applicable to the situation of Indigenous languages in other parts of the world as well.

The first point is that most Canadian Indigenous languages are in danger of being lost within the next few generations. Second, this drastic language shift is one result of the historical colonization and domination of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Third, many Canadian Indigenous individuals and communities are working towards reversing the consequences of colonization and domination. And, fourth, for Canadian Indigenous peoples, one aspect of the work of reversing the consequences of colonization and domination includes attempting to reverse language shift (Fishman 1991).

Over the last fifty years especially, there has been a consistent and strong trend towards loss of the fifty to sixty languages historically spoken in Canada (for a summary of the language situation, see *Towards a New Beginning* [Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures 2005]). For instance, of the thirty-odd languages historically spoken in British Columbia, only one can be considered to be enduring; this language, Cree, is a relatively recent arrival to the province. According to the Yinka Déné Institute website (2006), “almost all of the native languages of British Columbia are dying; most are seriously endangered,” and three are extinct.

While there are inevitably many factors that have contributed towards language loss and endangerment, contemporary Canadian political and social discourse singles out as especially significant the patterns of colonization, domination, and assimilation that have occurred over the last several centuries in Canada, as in many other former European colonies. An excellent overview of these patterns is found in the *Highlights of the Report on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1996), a document produced with input from all sectors of Canadian society. The report points out that protection and domination of Aboriginal people “took the form of compulsory education, economic adjustment programs, social and political control by federal agents, and much more. These policies, combined with missionary efforts to civilize and convert Indigenous people, tore wide holes in Aboriginal cultures, autonomy and feelings of self-worth” (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1996, Ch. 2). In British Columbia especially, a form of compulsory education involved placing children in residential schools to teach them the ways and languages of the dominant society, and thus to stamp out “savagery” (Turtle Island Native Network, 1998–2002). These schools instilled into the minds and hearts of many of the children who attended the schools a strong sense of shame and fear surrounding their native languages. One elder that I knew told me about having his tongue burned with a cigarette when a teacher found him using his language at one of these schools. This elder, to his great sorrow, was not able to bring himself to speak his language as an adult, even though he understood it.

A central aspect of the movement among Canadian Indigenous peoples to resist the attempts at assimilation that have historically been imposed on them is the push towards the maintenance and renewal of Indigenous languages. The Canadian movement parallels, in many ways, the struggles of Indigenous communities throughout the world to reclaim their lands and habitats, and to fight for their basic human rights as Indigenous peoples. As Nettle and Romaine (2000) point out, since Indigenous language loss is closely tied to the loss of lands and to assimilation into the dominant society, language death and language renewal have necessarily become human rights issues. Thus, it is argued, the right of Indig-



enous peoples to land and autonomy must include the right of language choice (e.g., Battiste and Henderson 2000, Hinton 2001, *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* 1996, Skutnabb-Kangas 2000, G. Smith 2000, L.T. Smith 1999, *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* 2007). The *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, for instance, proposes the establishment of a “Aboriginal Languages Foundation to document, study and conserve Aboriginal languages and to help Aboriginal people arrest and reverse the loss of languages that has already occurred” (*Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* 1996, Ch. 3).

British Columbia is no different from other parts of Canada or from many parts of the postcolonial Indigenous world more generally in having strong and often passionate movements in Indigenous communities towards making their languages fully alive again. The passion to make languages live again is evident at local community, institutional, and provincial levels. For instance, little more than seven years ago, two teachers at the SENĆOŦEN-teaching ŁÁU,WELNEW Tribal School in Brentwood Bay, B.C., Peter Brand and SENĆOŦEN speaker and teacher John Elliott Sr., dared to dream about using the internet to archive language material for teaching purposes. Their dream became FirstVoices.com, an Aboriginal-developed and -led suite of web-based tools and services designed to support Aboriginal people engaged in language archiving, language teaching, and culture revitalization. Today more than sixty Indigenous communities are using FirstVoices; most of these communities are in British Columbia.

Another sign of the strength of the language revitalization movement in B.C. is the proliferation throughout the province of programs and organizations whose focus is language maintenance and renewal. These include First Nations organizations whose mandate is language issues and whose jurisdiction covers the province,<sup>19</sup> programs that involve partnerships between First Nations communities and institutions of higher learning,<sup>20</sup> and programs and activities based in individual communities.<sup>21</sup> The strength of this movement has even influenced the provincial government (albeit to a small degree): for example, on March 31, 2006, Gordon Campbell, premier of the province, held a First Nations summit on language to which community members prominent in language work were invited.

In British Columbian Indigenous communities, as in many other postcolonial Indigenous communities, the movement for language maintenance and renewal is inspired and fed by ideas and beliefs about the relationships between language and survival, language

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<sup>19</sup> Examples of First Nations organizations whose mandate is language include: First Peoples’ Heritage, Language and Culture Council, First Peoples’ Cultural Foundation, and the Languages Subcommittee of the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNEESC).

<sup>20</sup> Examples of such programs include Developmental Standard Term Certificate language-teacher training programs that involve partnerships between post-secondary institutions and Aboriginal communities, the Certificate in Aboriginal Language Revitalization program at the University of Victoria, and the First Nations Languages Program at the University of British Columbia.

<sup>21</sup> Examples include the Yinka Déné Institute, the En’owkin Centre Okanagan Language Program, and the Secwepemc Cultural Education Society.

and culture, language and identity, language and spirituality, language and health, and language and empowerment. Hinton (2002) summarizes these beliefs as what she calls community-internal themes associated with language renewal. They are (1) that language is a key to healing communities; (2) that language is a key to identity; (3) that language is a key to spirituality; and (4) that language is a carrier of culture and world view. Thus, for instance, a report prepared for the First Nations Education Steering Committee of British Columbia (2006:iii) quotes the following statement made by the Assembly of First Nations, a Canadian Aboriginal organization:<sup>22</sup>

Language is our unique relationship to the Creator, our attitudes, beliefs, values and fundamental notions of what is truth. Our Languages are the cornerstones of who we are as a People. Without our Languages our cultures cannot survive.

In a similar vein, the *Highlights from the Report on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1996) says that

Language is one of the main instruments for transmitting culture from one generation to another and for communicating meaning and making sense of collective experience....

The threat of their languages disappearing means that Aboriginal people's distinctive world view, the wisdom of their ancestors and their ways of being human could vanish as well.

The importance of Indigenous languages is emphasized in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2007) and the *Report from the Seventh Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues* (21 April–2 May 2008):

93. ...Languages are not only a communication tool, but an intrinsic aspect of identity, traditional knowledge, systems of values, world views and tradition. Consequently, policies of assimilation that lead to the destruction of languages have often been considered a form of ethnocide or linguistic genocide. It is essential, not only for the preservation of traditional indigenous knowledge and biological diversity, to take immediate and effective measures to prevent the impending irretrievable loss that language extinction entails.....

The ideas expressed in these three excerpts echo the words of First Nations individuals who are invested in language maintenance and renewal. For instance, an elder from the Hul'q'umi'num' (Cowichan)-speaking communities on Vancouver Island, B.C., said in a discussion about planning for language renewal (quoted in Urbanczyk 2002:6):

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<sup>22</sup> This quotation is found in the FNEC Report on DSTC Programs (2006:iii).

That Cowichan part of our language is tied to our culture. I usually hear our people saying “our culture is tied to our language.” That’s how I hear it, from the old people. And without language you have no culture. That’s how they say it.

Similarly, Linda Elliott, a SENĆOŦEN language teacher from Brentwood Bay, B.C., in talking about the need for teaching language to children, told me that

Our language has a feeling by itself that speaks to your soul, that tells of ancient understanding, and English doesn’t have that...That’s what our children are missing. We need a plan of how to get their heads back to SENĆOŦEN...but we don’t have that much time.

It is not my purpose here to engage in a discussion of history, or of the ideas and understanding that lie behind the movement toward language renewal. Instead, my purpose in referring to the linguistic situation in British Columbia is to emphasize the extent to which the history of place and people and ideas about language are an integral and inherent part of the context within which research on languages unfolds. Any linguist wishing to work with a language must take such a linguistic situation into account.

For many Indigenous people, language is one of the most tangible symbols of cultural and group identity: language expresses intellect and cultural understanding; it is a link to the past, and a link to the land. When an Indigenous language is lost, it is a tragedy for people. I remember being at a gathering of elders when they realized that not one of them knew the word for “collarbone” in their language. For the elders and their descendants the word was gone forever, and with it one small link to the past.

Over the years I have heard many elders tell stories of being punished as children for using their languages at school, and have felt their grief and shame as they recounted why they decided to protect their own children from punishment, and so did not teach those children to speak their language. I have heard those same children as middle-aged adults talking about the sorrow they feel in not being able to speak their languages. And I have also sensed the hope and joy of grandparents when they hear their preschool-aged grandchildren singing traditional songs learned in band-run preschools.

Making their languages fully alive again is seen by many Canadian Indigenous people as a key to their future, as one aspect of enabling communities to overcome the effects of domination and assimilation and to move towards taking control over their own situations. Because of their training and knowledge, linguists have skills that can be used in this context and that can play a role in the linguistic and cultural renewal that Canadian Indigenous communities are striving towards. Non-Indigenous linguists who wish to conduct research on Canadian Indigenous languages therefore have to make an informed choice about how to respond to this context: do they choose to conduct their research entirely outside it, or do they choose to engage with the context in some fashion, to participate in it, and thus perhaps to make some kind of positive contribution to it?

**3.2 RESEARCH AS A NON-NEUTRAL ACTIVITY.** Although many linguists, including me, have been trained in a research practice that is informed by positivistic assumptions about the objective and neutral nature of empirical scientific investigation, there are many rea-

sons to think that doing research is not a neutral activity. In this section, therefore, I will consider some of these reasons and suggest that the fact of non-neutrality leads to a second kind of argument for participating in and engaging with the research context.

As Ken Hale says in the quotation given at the beginning of this paper, “[t]he scientific investigation of a language cannot be understood in isolation” (Hale 2001:76). Linguistic research is thus at the very least a social act and not simply an isolated intellectual act. In a paper published in the same volume as Hale’s paper, Dimmendaal (2001) provides a more elaborated version of Hale’s point. He says,

When linguistic research takes place in the natural setting where the language under investigation is spoken rather than at a desk in an air-conditioned office at one’s home university, this has consequences for the endeavor. In the field, one becomes part of a social network in the speech community under investigation, and thus this type of research necessarily involves as much personal and social effort as it does linguistic “brain work.” (55)

As a social act, doing research is also political and cultural. Therefore, doing research has consequences for its context. Even the seemingly simple act (for a linguist) of using a version of the International Phonetic Alphabet to transcribe a language with no previous orthographic tradition can have profound consequences. For instance, in one community that I know of there was a rift between families very involved in language work because one family agreed with the linguist’s use of the phonetic alphabet as an orthography, while the other family did not. This disagreement over orthography had political consequences and affected the subsequent teaching and studying of language in the community for many years. Clearly, if doing research has the potential to have these kinds of consequences, it is not a neutral activity.

Writing a reply to a series of essays on endangered languages, in which it was suggested that linguists have obligations to the language-speaking communities within which they work (see Hale et al. 1992), Ladefoged (1992) argued that the situation of endangerment should not affect language research. His arguments are informed by the Western conception of research as scientific and objective, concerned with facts, and governed by professional detachment. Ladefoged says, for instance, that

[t]he case for studying endangered languages is very strong on linguistic grounds. It is often enormously strong on humanitarian grounds as well. But it would be self-serving of linguists to pretend that this is always the case. *We must be wary of arguments based on political considerations.* (810; emphasis added)

Later in his paper, in discussing a study of language use in teaching in Uganda, undertaken immediately before the time of Idi Amin and with the cooperation of the Ugandan government, Ladefoged writes

In this changing world, *the task of the linguist is to lay out the facts concerning a given linguistic situation...* We summarized all our data so that the government

could assess the linguistic situation...It would have been presumptuous of us to weigh the loss of a language against the burdens facing Uganda. *We tried to behave like responsible linguists with professional detachment.* (811; emphasis added)

The kind of position advocated by Ladefoged (1992), embedded as it is in the Euro-American intellectual tradition, is unrealistic. What Ladefoged did not seem to fully appreciate is that even if the linguist chooses to behave with “professional detachment” this kind of response is not in actuality neutral, objective, or detached. As Dorian (1993) says, in arguing against Ladefoged, “the linguist cannot enter the threatened-language equation without becoming a factor in it” (578). Dorian also makes a point very similar to mine about the lack of neutrality inherent in any response one makes to a linguistic research context:

The implication [of Ladefoged’s arguments] is that apolitical positions can be found and adopted. Scientists of many stripes like to consider their undertakings apolitical and their professional activities objective and impartial. In actuality, [even] linguistic salvage work which consists solely of “record[ing] for posterity” certain structural features of a threatened small language is inevitably a political act, just as any other act touching that language would be. (575)

Dorian’s claims about the political nature of what one might think of as the most neutral kind of linguistic research, namely documentation, are also emphasized in the work of England:

It was perhaps a shock to some linguists, as it was to me, to realize that good will and good relations with the individual collaborators in our past research [on Mayan languages in Guatemala], a dedication to sound scientific principles of linguistic research, and even instruction in literacy and linguistics on the part of many of us were not enough to avoid rather severe criticism of our role in Mayan linguistics...*Mayas make the point that linguistics is not done in a political vacuum.* (Hale et al. 1992:30)

Finally, writing about Canadian communities, Darnell (2005) says that

[i]t is impossible to evade the political, both internally to those communities and in terms of Aboriginal relationships to the non-Aboriginal public and the Canadian nation-state. They are inseparable from the everyday life of the society within which self and other necessarily coexist. (Darnell 2005:156)

Similar points are made in the work of postcolonial theorists. One of the important voices in postcolonial thought, Edward Said, suggests, for instance, that

[T]he general liberal consensus that “true” knowledge is fundamentally non-political (and conversely, that overtly political knowledge is not “true” knowledge) obscures the highly if obscurely organized political circumstances obtaining when knowledge is produced. No one is helped in understanding this today when the adjective “political” is used as a label to discredit any work for daring to violate the protocol of pretended suprapolitical objectivity. (Said 1978:10)

In addition to not being a politically neutral activity, research is also not a culturally neutral activity. If we assume that research involves the construction of knowledge, then this point is made very clear in works that contrast the differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous forms of knowledge. For instance, in the introductory essay of a book on protecting Indigenous knowledge and heritage, Battiste and Henderson (2000) argue that the interests in universals found in many areas of traditional Euro-American academic research are not, by and large, found in Indigenous cultures:

The traditional ecological knowledge of Indigenous peoples is scientific, in the sense that it is empirical, experimental, and systematic. It differs in two important respects from Western science, however: traditional ecological knowledge is highly localized and it is social. Its focus is the web of relationships between humans, animals, plants, natural forces, spirits, and land forms in a particular locality, as opposed to the discovery of universal “laws.” It is the original knowledge of Indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples have accumulated extraordinarily complex models of species interactions over centuries within very small geographical areas, and they are reluctant to generalize beyond their direct fields of experience. Western scientists, by contrast, concentrate on speculating about and then testing global generalizations with the result that they know relatively little about the complexities of specific local ecosystems. (Battiste and Henderson 2000:44)

Arguably, the differences in the kinds of knowledge that Battiste and Henderson (2000) suggest are created within Indigenous communities and those created within Euro-American academic communities are as true of language knowledge as of other kinds of knowledge. What this means for language research is that linguists cannot assume that their purely linguistic questions about a language are understood or valued in the same way by the language speakers they work with, or by the speakers’ community.

Within a linguist-focused model the construction of knowledge takes the point of view of the linguistic researcher as primary. Therefore it runs the risk not only of ignoring speakers’ insights and understanding of their own language, but also of affecting the language-users and their communities in unforeseen ways. As Cameron (1992) argues, the structure of knowledge has socially significant consequences precisely because “Knowledge about your language is knowledge about yourself and your history” (118).

Various kinds of unintended consequences of pursuing linguist-focused language research have occurred throughout the history of Indigenous language research. Shaw (2001) discusses one consequence that has negative implications for both the language community and the linguists, namely the maintenance of what she refers to as “power imbalances”

(which presumably include such factors as differing cultural, social, and economic privilege). Shaw suggests that maintaining imbalances between researchers and the language-using community can lead to (often justified) anger and resentment.

The traditional model of Linguist as Expert and Native Speaker as Consultant entails a significant power imbalance. This imbalance characteristically serves the academic's research and professional advancement goals very well, but significantly disadvantages the community in many ways. For e.g. [sic], frequently a community has come to be dependent on the Linguist for the vital documentation of their vanishing heritage. Such dependency can have quite negative pragmatic implications, like being dependent on the Linguist's time, availability, funding sources, etc.... This manifest lack of control can easily engender anger, resentment, volatile feelings of being ripped off because the researcher, like the Colonialists, has taken what they wanted but not lived up to the community's expectations of continuity and reciprocity. (2001:7)

A second kind of consequence of culturally-based assumptions about knowledge and its construction through language-research involves issues of appropriation of linguistic and cultural materials. Both Hill (2002) and Errington (2003) discuss the assumption made by many Euro-American academic linguists that all languages, including endangered Indigenous languages, are part of the common universal heritage of human beings, and for this reason must be preserved. As Hill (2002) says, this assumption about the universality of language ownership can be (mis)interpreted as a desire to take the language away from its speakers:

Many members of communities that have the first claim on endangered languages may not share these logics. [For them] it may make little sense to say that a language "belongs" to someone who has no intention of learning it, has never heard it, and has never known any of its speakers...*Thus a statement that an endangered language belongs to everybody rather than specifically to its speakers and their relatives and neighbors can easily be heard not as an expression of a universal human value, but as a threat to expropriate a resource.* (122; emphasis added)

Hill also relates a story that reveals the kind of hurt that can be associated with issues of appropriation:

A linguist who had learned to speak an Indigenous language was conversing in it on the sidelines at a dance. He was assaulted by a drunken local man who threatened him with a knife, saying, "You white people have stolen every single thing we ever had, and now you're stealing our language. (122)

The intensity of the negative response to language research illustrated in this story is probably rare, but the story nevertheless brings to the fore the fact that the relation of

outsiders from the “colonial” world to Indigenous languages can be viewed as troubling by language-community members. Linguistic research in contexts that have the potential to be so emotionally-charged must therefore be regarded as serious business, and researchers, in my view, must take this into account.

A very clear statement of this position is provided in a paper on the ethical dimensions of anthropological fieldwork written by the American anthropologist, Clifford Geertz (1968).<sup>23</sup> It is useful to substitute “doing research” for “thought” when reading this quotation:

[T]hought is conduct and is to be morally judged as such...the reason thinking is serious is that it is a social act, and that one is therefore responsible for it as for any other social act...Since [the work of the American pragmatist philosopher John] Dewey [1859–1952], it has been much more difficult to regard thinking as an abstention from action, theorizing as an alternative to commitment, and the intellectual life as a kind of secular monasticism, excused from accountability by its sensitivity to the Good. (Geertz 1968:140)

As I have tried to suggest here, linguist-focused language research as a research model idealizes abstention from action and excuses accountability precisely because in its most idealized form, it tries to ignore the context in which it takes place. For this reason, in the contemporary social and linguistic context found within Canadian and other Indigenous communities, attempting to follow a linguist-focused model of language research is at the very least uncomfortable, is often unsustainable, and at the worst can lead to conflict and serious misunderstanding.

The kinds of arguments that I have presented here for the non-neutral non-positivistic nature of language knowledge and knowledge-production are similar to arguments that have been made in the past by those working within models of research inspired by, for instance, feminist, socialist, or postcolonial thought. Intellectual perspectives such as these include strong traditions of research practice that involves activism and engagement with the research context. This latter point is emphasized even in a brief introduction to postcolonial theory, which focuses on the extent to which postcolonialism seeks to overturn established western (Euro-American) modes of thought and scholarship:

“[P]ostcolonial theory” involves a conceptual reorientation towards the perspectives of knowledges, as well as needs, developed outside the west. It is concerned with developing the driving ideas of a political practice morally committed to transforming the conditions of exploitation and poverty in which large sections of the world’s population live out their daily lives...Above all, postcolonialism seeks to intervene, to force its alternative knowledges into the power structures of the west as well as the non-west. It seeks to change the way

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<sup>23</sup> This statement has profoundly influenced me since I first read Geertz’s work in 2002.



people think, the way they behave, to produce a more just and equitable relation between the different peoples of the world. (Young 2003:6–7)

The postcolonial aims of bringing about social and political change are thus similar to those that lie behind the participatory and community-based research models discussed in section 2.

Once one becomes conscious of the fact that the type of academic research practice one chooses to follow can and does have implications and consequences for the community within which the research takes place as well as for oneself as researcher, most linguists would agree that it becomes difficult to ignore this fact. Not surprisingly, then, alternatives to researcher-focused models which require the academic to choose engagement with communities have been developed and practiced throughout the world, and especially in communities where social conditions are difficult. And also, not surprisingly, for these same reasons, many linguists in Canada with interests in Canadian Indigenous languages have chosen some form of engagement with language-speaking communities and thus have also chosen to undertake fieldwork within research models that are more collaborative. In the words of Shaw (2001:11), speaking about linguistics in Canada,

[L]inguistic research on critically endangered languages in Canada has been undergoing a fundamental ideological and implementational shift. Under the extreme threat of loss and a powerful impetus for local control, the roles of both linguists and of community members are being redefined, each being challenged to move from a relatively strict complementarity to a more interactive collaboration.

**4. COLLABORATION IN LANGUAGE RESEARCH: ROLES, RELATIONSHIPS, CHALLENGES.** In section 3 I laid out reasons that linguists might choose to work more rather than less collaboratively with language-speaking communities. Like me, most outsider linguists undertaking research on Indigenous languages in British Columbia and elsewhere have been or are being trained in the Euro-American intellectual tradition, in post-secondary institutions steeped in the practices of linguist-focused approaches to scholarship. Moreover, most linguists are studying in or are employed by academic institutions that assume more traditional Euro-American models of research, scholarship, and academic production, and which depend on funding agencies that make similar assumptions. Therefore, for most linguists, engaging in research such as that embodied in non-traditional collaborative models, especially models like Empowering Research and Community-Based Language Research, is a multi-faceted challenge: it involves learning different ways of thinking about research and about being a researcher, and learning new ways of conducting research; it requires participating in processes of consultation and, thus, learning how to participate in consultation; it requires learning how to listen and respond to all kinds of

values and assumptions, including one's own; and it requires negotiating the often-contradictory demands and expectations of academic institutions and the goals and needs of the language-using community.

There is a great deal that could be said about collaborative research in linguistic fieldwork and much that already has been said.<sup>24</sup> In this section I briefly discuss a few issues that I personally have found challenging, troubling, or important in my own research. They are not listed in any particular order, but I have divided them into four sections, two focusing on the "new" roles and relationships that emerge in more collaborative models of doing research, a third focusing on institutional challenges, and a fourth thinking about the research questions that emerge when working within more collaborative research frameworks.

**4.1 ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS.** As we know, every language is different. Each community within which a language is spoken is different and has different needs and aspirations or goals. And each academic and community researcher is different. Given these differences, I have found in my own work that the most important prerequisite to and *sine qua non* of any kind of linguistic fieldwork, particularly when it involves any degree of collaboration between linguist and community, and even more particularly when it is Community-Based Language Research, is establishing and maintaining solid, respectful, reciprocal, and trusting working relationships between individuals and groups within the language-using community who have an interest in or knowledge about the community language and the linguists who wish to work with the community; between researchers and members of the governing bodies of the language-speaking communities; and between the language-speaking communities and the institutions that the linguists come from (see Grinevald 2003 on the "human factor" in linguistic fieldwork, Stebbins 2003 on relationship building, Rice 2006 on the importance of the 4 R's: "respect, responsibility, relationships, and reciprocity").

In collaborative research situations such as those found in Community-Based Language Research, linguists are just one set of partners in a partnership whose principal focus is to conduct research on or associated with a particular language. Who the other partners are, and thus how "community" is defined, depends on the language-using group itself, and on the specific research project. In most Canadian Indigenous communities, for instance, the elders of the community are always central in the research partnership. It is the elders who generally have the greatest knowledge of the community language as well as of the community culture and who can thus serve as transmitters of that knowledge, in the role of researchers and teachers, and in the role of advisers. In many communities younger people also play an important role in language use as teachers or as administrators, and as learners or activists. To a great extent, then, language research depends primarily on the involvement of individuals at the grassroots level of the community. In addition, though, school boards, schools, colleges associated with a community, teachers and teaching assistants, language authorities, and cultural organizations are groups that can be considered

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<sup>24</sup> Works that have resonated with or aided in the development of my own views on and understanding of the issues discussed in this section include: Dwyer 2006; Gerdtts 1998; Gil 2001; Grinevald 1998, 2003; Mithun 2001; Mosel 2006; Rice 2006; Stebbins 2003; Yamada 2007.

“stakeholders” in language research and revitalization, and are therefore part of the web of relationships within which community-based research takes place. And, in many Canadian situations, political organizations such as Chief and Council are part of the web of relationships as well.

Finally, the academic participants in collaborative research who are not themselves members of the language-using community are primarily the outsider linguists and their assistants, who are often university students. Since linguists are usually affiliated with an academic or research institution, the institution and its various sub-organizations, such as Research Administration services, are also included in the web of relationships.

Full research partnerships are based on the assumption that all members of the partnership have an equal, although not necessarily identical, voice in the research. Thus, research shows that successful working relationships in collaborative community-based frameworks are founded on respect, consultation, collaboration, and continuous negotiation surrounding responsibilities and expectations (Benoit et al. 2005 and references therein). The core of respectful relationships requires ensuring that the voices of all those involved in the relationship are listened to by all partners and are responded to appropriately by all partners. Respectful relationships also require flexibility and the ability to acknowledge when something is not working, and to try again, together. In community-based forms of research, especially, consultation has to take place regularly and often, not only to ensure that the voices of all parties involved in the research are heard and answered, but also to allow for transparency and openness. Partnership and collaboration involve understanding and accepting that all participants in the research have their own particular and valuable contribution to make to the research. They also involve addressing and formalizing various aspects of the research relationship together.

Establishing and maintaining relationships essentially involves common sense and obvious kinds of sensitivity to others. Academic research, however, is often fairly intense and goal-directed, especially in situations where an academic is trying to complete a thesis or dissertation, or to get tenure or promotion. In such situations, it is possible to overlook or underestimate the need and the time needed for common sense and sensitivity. One challenge for outsider linguists therefore is to pay attention to and to make time for relationships in linguistic fieldwork situations that involve non-academic community members.

**4.2 DETERMINING ROLES.** In the most traditional versions of a linguist-focused model of language research, as I discussed in section 2, the language-user that a linguist worked with was regarded as an “informant,” a source from which knowledge could be taken (Samarin 1967). Later researchers began to use words such as “consultant” or “teacher” for the language-users they worked with (see Rice 2006:140–143 for an excellent discussion of this terminology). In Community-Based Language Research, recognition of the central role of the language speaker has evolved further: those members of the language-using community who work with linguists to document and describe their languages are naturally seen to be researchers and experts in their own right and, therefore, as research co-investigators or partners, whose knowledge is integral to the research process (see Strand et al. 2003). The linguist and the language-speaker are partners in establishing and creating knowledge about the language; each brings their own set of experiences, knowledge, skills, and understanding. As Rice (2006:149) says, “the linguist speakers of the community have

a story to tell about their language. We thus must question whether it is ethical to assume that the descriptive and theoretical models that linguists have developed for looking at language are the only models, and whether they are the most appropriate models.” This shift towards viewing the role of a language-speaker as an expert is one of the important conceptual shifts found in a Community-Based Language Research model. Cameron’s (1992:117) criticisms of a linguist-focused model of research include the point that research in this model is a “discourse of experts talking to other experts.” However, if the language-users are themselves the experts, then the priorities of all the experts, and not just the academic ones, are likely to be reflected in the discourse and practice of research.

A similar understanding of the role of the language speakers is also found in Participatory (Action) Research. Thus Benedicto et al. (2002:376), who work in that model, write that “local [community] members” are “agents in the process of knowledge generation” and not “objects” of research, and Freire (2000 [1970]) has argued that shared control and creation of knowledge lead to the empowerment of community members.

An important goal of research projects has always been the training of (graduate) students in academic research practices. By working with language-community members within academically non-traditional collaborative research models, students in Euro-American institutions ideally are trained to think in less academically-traditional ways about the process of research, about the relationship between outsider linguist and community, and about the role that an academic linguist might take on in a community (see Gerdt’s 1998’s discussion of “What are linguists good for?”; see also Mosel 2004:40). In addition, as mentioned above, one goal of community-based forms of research is often to train community members (whether or not they are themselves university students) in academic research practices and in academic subjects. This kind of training, besides sharing specific academic knowledge and skills, provides community members with some familiarity and level of comfort with academic methods and structures. Thus training of students and community members is an important way not only to increase the pools of researchers but also to change traditional differences and Euro-Western-inspired imbalances between academic and non-academic knowledge and knowledge systems, researcher and researched.

It is also interesting to note that in any kind of collaborative research partnership the exact role of a linguist cannot ever be simply the traditional academic role. The linguist’s role can vary considerably depending on the needs and goals of the research project (see Dwyer 2006). In the most idealized form of community-based types of language research, the linguist and the community together conceptualize, plan, and carry out the project from the start of the research process. But a linguist can also be an outside “expert” or resources person (Stringer 1996), who is consulted at various steps in the research process on matters relating to linguistics or who provides training to the community. Or, the linguist can be the initiator and conceiver of the research, who nevertheless undertakes the research only with community involvement and approval and who works closely with the community and its experts throughout the research process. Whatever the exact form of the research partnership and the role of the linguist in a collaborative research model, however, I think that even linguists with the best of intentions are challenged to keep in mind that even if the aims of the research include improving or changing linguistic and social conditions—for instance, through language revitalization programs—the role of a linguist should not

be that of a knight in shining armor who rides into a community to rescue it.<sup>25</sup> If a linguist takes on the role of a knight in shining armor, the nature of the inequalities between outsider linguist and community members may shift, but the essential fact of power imbalance between linguist and community nevertheless remains.

**4.3 INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES.** In addition to having to shift how they see themselves in relation to the communities they work within, linguists are often also faced with institutional challenges.

By comparison to concrete and “measurable” outcomes of non-collaborative research (e.g., articles, books, reports), the results of collaborative research are often more intangible. For instance, they can include working out an agreed-upon process for undertaking the research; determining the kinds of protocols that all partners are comfortable with; succeeding in holding meetings with concrete outcomes; reaching a point where trust is established; developing work plans for the various people involved in doing the research; developing Memoranda of Understanding; and establishing new partnerships. Because community-focused research depends to such a great extent on the establishment and maintenance of relationships, because relationships between researchers and language-using communities in the postcolonial context of Indigenous language research are not always straightforward, and because consultation and communication take a great deal of time, the actual processes of maintaining those relationships and of keeping lines of communication open are themselves results of the research. In other words, in community-based research it is often the case that *the process itself is a result*.

One criticism that has been leveled at CBR and other collaborative forms of research in fields other than linguistics is that it is too informal, not sufficiently scientific or rigorous (Tinkler 2004), and too intangible to evaluate. A challenge for linguists and the academic institutions within which linguists are housed, in Canada and the United States at least, then, is to find ways to evaluate and to value the intangible and less formal outcomes of community-focused research. In addition, CBR has been criticized for confusing community development and activism with research (Kemmis and McTaggart 2000), and this criticism could potentially be raised about community-focused fieldwork such as that involved in contributing to language revitalization, for instance. A second challenge associated with evaluating and valuing community-based language research is thus to find ways to address this possible criticism and to understand the different kinds of research and knowledge that are arrived at through collaborative community-based processes.

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<sup>25</sup> Gerds (1998), whose work I read after I had written several drafts of the present paper, begins her abstract with the phrase “We linguists see ourselves as the knights in shining armor of the language endangerment issue.” Her paper, on her involvement as a linguist in efforts to revitalize the Halkomelem language, raises many important questions about working in Canadian Indigenous communities. One important point that she makes is that linguists are not always trained to carry out tasks that communities might wish them to undertake. As one reviewer asks, are linguists qualified to assist with school curricula, train teachers, etc.? Gerds’s answer to this question is that in the best language revitalization situations, linguists are part of a team that ideally should also include people with expertise in pedagogy. She also suggests that linguists need to be clear to their community partners about the limits of their expertise.

A third challenge for academic institutions and organizations, and especially those that serve as funding sources for academically-related research (for example, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada), is to find ways to accept and accommodate the new kinds of demands that are made on them when non-academic community groups are involved in research. Sources of research funding such as granting agencies and institutions themselves almost always have strict restrictions and regulations governing the spending of the research funds and controlling the kinds of research that can be funded. However, since community-based types of research involve new ways of doing research and new kinds of research outcomes, and since these are constantly evolving, funding bodies and institutions need to be prepared to negotiate their requirements, regulations, and expectations. Unfortunately, although many funding bodies and institutions are willing to consider changing their practices, change is often slow and negotiation can be painful.

Collaborative research thus involves not only learning new ways of doing research and participating in research relationships, but it also involves negotiating new forms of institutional understanding and functioning. In effect, then, collaborative research involves creating a new culture of research (Stoecker 2001). This new culture of research also affects the kinds of research questions that can be asked.

**4.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS.** Many linguists who are interested in Indigenous languages in Canada today began to “do” linguistics because they are interested in the properties and quirks of individual languages, and in “Language” as a systematic and structured entity that sets human beings apart from other living creatures. Doing linguistics is thus a fairly specialized descriptive and theoretical enterprise. In the case of Salish languages, to take the example of the language family I know best, a linguist such as myself is interested in such (esoteric?) questions as how to characterize long-distance assimilation processes that involve some form of tongue root retraction, whether lexical suffixes are bound roots, and whether Control is a functional category in the syntax. In contrast, most Canadian Indigenous community members are interested in documentation and descriptions of their languages that will allow those languages to be taught and learned by their communities (see Gerdts 1998). They want dictionaries that are useable and accessible. They are interested in how languages are learned, how they should be taught, and how language shift can be reversed. And they want to be able to produce language learning and teaching materials to enable language revitalization. Linguists are also interested in the kinds of applied linguistics questions that Indigenous community members are interested in, but at the present time, few language-speakers are interested in linguists’ specialized types of questions.

In a collaborative research context, linguists’ theoretical questions tend not to be of pressing concern to communities, and so are rarely at the heart of collaborative research. As Rice (2006:148) points out, “the grammatical models that linguists are interested in are not necessarily appropriate models for language teaching.” And Gerdts (1998:9) writes that “the most important failing of modern linguistics limiting the usefulness of the linguist to a language revitalization program is the fact that it has almost totally abdicated its interest in language teaching.” Linguists with traditional linguistic training are thus not likely to be in control of the research agenda when they participate in Community-Based Language Research. This is not always easy for linguists to cope with, since, by virtue of their training, Western academics do expect to be in control of their research questions. Therefore, it

is not always comfortable for linguists to work within collaborative or community-based research structures.

However, it is not at all unreasonable that the focus of a research partnership should be research that is of interest and benefit to all the partners. In the current Canadian Indigenous context, therefore, the focus of a research partnership will inevitably be primarily applied linguistic research. As I suggested in earlier sections of this paper, research that is undertaken within a linguist-focused model usually reflects the priorities of the linguist and not of the language-speakers; hence, such research can contribute to various kinds of imbalances between researcher and language-speakers, to discouraging trust between researcher and language-speakers, to issues of misappropriation of language materials, and to the perpetuation of strong barriers between linguists and language-speakers. In today's Canadian context, it would be very difficult to establish trusting relationships between linguists and most language communities if linguists insisted that the research undertaken in any kind of collaborative research project should primarily reflect linguists' theoretical priorities. Dwyer (2006:36) similarly suggests that "[c]reating research products useful to communities is an issue which will become more and more central to the ethical practice of the research enterprise" and Rice (2006:150) writes that "[c]ollaborative 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." That being said, in trusting, respectful, and well-established collaborative research contexts, there may come a point at which there are opportunities for linguists to ask theoretical questions, in addition to participating in research that reflects the applied priorities of the communities with which they collaborate. For this reason, formalizing research relationships so that all parties understand and agree with the objectives of the research turns out to be an essential element of a successful collaboration. Where there is trust, respect, and good will on all sides, much is possible even if the process of collaboration is not always easy for linguists or for communities.

**5. FINAL WORDS.** In this paper I have laid out different possible models of Indigenous language research. I have also considered the role that ethical, as well as historical, social, political, and cultural factors, such as those found in the Indigenous communities of British Columbia and elsewhere throughout the world might play in the decisions that linguists make about engaging in research undertaken in partnership with members of language-using communities. In the future, as more linguists engage in collaborative kinds of research with communities, collaborative research models will become more readily understood within the Western academic world. Linguists in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have more opportunities for choosing how to practice linguistic research than they had in the past. New types of knowledge, new benefits for linguists and for communities are likely to result. It is a very interesting, exciting, and challenging time to be a linguist.

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