

# Subcontracting Native Speakers in Linguistic Fieldwork: A Case Study of the Ashéninka Perené (Arawak) Research Community from the Peruvian Amazon

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In light of a growing need to develop best practices for collaboration between the linguist and community researchers, this study provides orientation points on how to engage native speakers in linguistic fieldwork. Subcontracting native speaker-insiders is a variety of empowering collaborative field research, in which trained collaborators independently make audio and video recordings of fellow speakers in the research community, with subsequent transcription and translation of the collected texts. Using fieldwork in the Peruvian high jungle communities of Ashéninka Perené (Kampan, Arawak) as a case study, this paper examines practicalities of subcontracting such as identifying potential subcontractors, negotiating and signing an agreement, training to use practical orthography and equipment, and evaluation of the end-product.

**1. INTRODUCTION.** This paper examines practicalities of subcontracting primary language consultants in the context of collaborative fieldwork undertaken for language documentation purposes, using the Ashéninka Perené (Arawak) research community as a case study.<sup>1</sup> Considering that there is a growing need to develop best practices for collaboration between linguists and community researchers in language documentation, this investigation focuses on the specifics of each stage of the subcontracting process, from the identification of potential candidates to negotiating a contractual agreement, to training for equipment use, to the assessment of the contributed recordings and transcribed texts. The analysis also considers the expediency of subcontracting consultants in a particular field context, as well as benefits and pitfalls of this variety of linguistic fieldwork.

This study attempts to provide tentative points for further discussion of collaborative field research by raising questions of the value and efficacy of the subcontracting process, and by offering practical suggestions on its management within the frame of the critical theory of collaboration in language documentation proposed by Glenn (2009). When aligned with subcontracting, Glenn's dimensions of collaboration include coordination of participatory research, distribution of labor between the linguist and community researchers, interoperability (exchange) of collected data between the team members working together, authorship and authority, and continuous evaluative feedback on language

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<sup>1</sup> The analysis presented in this paper is based upon work funded by the National Science Foundation Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant BCS-0901196 and the Endangered Languages Documentation Programme Small Grant 0002. Thanks are due to the granting agencies, the language community of Ashéninka Perené, and an anonymous reviewer. I am also grateful to Edith Moravcsik for her insightful comments on an early draft of the paper.

documentation products by native speakers at different stages of language documentation. The paper addresses these points in the context of the fieldwork situation in the Ashéninka Perené research community from Central-Eastern Peru.

Subcontracting arrangements with primary consultants arose from a peculiar socio-economic situation in the Perené valley of the Peruvian Amazon. The 35 Ashéninka Perené settlements are scattered in the Perené valley, at the foot of the eastern Andes and the western fringe of the Amazonian jungle. Ashéninka Perené (also known as Upper Perené or Alto Perené) is a highly endangered Amazonian Arawak language, spoken by approximately 1,000 speakers in the Chanchamayo Province of Central-Eastern Peru. It is considered to be closely related to other members of the Northern branch of the Kampan subgrouping of Arawak, composed of varieties of Ashéninka (Pichis, Ucayali, Apurucayali, Pajonal), Asháninka (Tambo-Ene), and Kakinte (Michael 2008:218). Having been extensively colonized since the 1950s, the native population participates in the regional market economy as agricultural producers or seasonal laborers, as the result of “a transition from a primarily subsistence economy to an economy that combines subsistence production with seasonal sale of labor, and from there to a peasant economy that combines subsistence with commercial production” (Santos-Granero & Barclay 1998:232). Commercial agriculture (coffee, fruit, and cattle raising) is a critical means of obtaining cash and access to market goods (Santos-Granero & Barclay 1998:254).

Another factor that contributed to the commercialization of indigenous households is the unusually high price for Peruvian coffee seeds, one of the country’s primary exports. With the assistance of international nongovernmental organizations, small farm and cooperative-organized coffee growers have been provided guaranteed prices that are higher than the international average (Tulet 2010:136-137). The area along the central highway, Lima-Satipo, also attracts a steady flow of tourists from the coast, mainly *Limeños*, who are seen as main consumers of traditional crafts and on-demand, staged dancing and singing performances. Having experienced improved socio-economic conditions over recent decades, native speakers became more assertive and successful in their pay negotiations.

Overall, the rapidly increasing degree of household market incorporation and dependence, with concurrent orientation of native communities toward commercialization, have significantly affected the views of those in individual households, who are seeking to increase crop production profitability as well as seeking other ways to generate greater income. The dynamic of cultural change appears to be directly stimulated by “the fervor to develop and the allure of money and market goods” (Henrich 1997: 340, 348), evidenced in many recorded conversations and narratives from the Ashéninka Perené corpus which revolve around income-generating concerns.

This paper will proceed as follows: section 2 will situate subcontracting within the frameworks of contemporary research models; the expediency of subcontracting will be discussed in section 3; section 4 is devoted to the specifics of subcontracting, followed by a general discussion of subcontracting methodology in section 5.

**2. SUBCONTRACTING VIS-À-VIS EXISTING FIELD RESEARCH MODELS IN LANGUAGE DOCUMENTATION.** This section considers the place subcontracting practices occupy on the continuum of contemporary research models in field linguistics. Arguably, the continuum is set up by two criteria: (i) academic tradition, that is, academically tradi-

tional and less academically traditional research models are distinguished, and (ii) locus of engagement, that is, the difference is made between linguist-focused and native speaker/community-focused research models, defined by the level of linguist/speaker engagement in language work (Cameron et. al 1993:93; Czaykowska-Higgins 2009:19).<sup>2</sup> The traditional academic research model is typically linguist-led and linguist-focused, or conducted by linguists and for linguists; in this model, the language community's engagement in the research is restricted to being the source of data (Czaykowska-Higgins 2009:16-17). An example of the academic traditional research model is immersion fieldwork whose criterial properties are given below.

*Immersion fieldwork.* Immersion fieldwork involves “observing the language as it is used, becoming a member of the community, and often being adopted into the kinship system”; it is a long-term, often life-time commitment to the language and to those who speak it; it produces “reliable and potentially all-encompassing data” (Aikhenvald 2007:5-6). This type of fieldwork research ideally creates a relationship of “intellectual partnership” (Dixon 2010:316), “an open and respectful relationship” between the fieldworker and the speakers of the language which develops and puts to use the talents of the speakers in a productive and creative way (Newman & Ratliff 2001:4). The model presupposes that a long-term “consultant” relationship, built on trust and mutual respect, will eventually grow into the “collaborator” relationship.<sup>3</sup>

The linguist-focused traditional research model is considered to be ill-suited for meeting the pressing demands of contemporary field linguistics, which is confronted with a formidable number of endangered and under-described or undocumented languages (Glenn 2009:157-158). Boas's commentary on the lamentable state of North American field research – “the number of trained investigators is very small, and the number of American languages that are mutually unintelligible [is] exceedingly large” (1911/1966:56) – still rings true, underscoring the futility of a lone researcher's efforts to keep up. The linguist-oriented traditional research model (also known as “lone-ranger” or “lone-wolf” research), in its idealized form, presumes the non-reciprocity of language work and singularity of control and power vested with the outsider linguist, in which “the linguist would go in,

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<sup>2</sup> A caveat is due here: the aim of this section is limited to outlining the most relevant dimensions of the contemporary field research models; for a more profound treatment of research models in field linguistics see Czaykowska-Higgins (2009) and Rice (2006). Moreover, this paper does not argue in favor of any specific model(s) since it is assumed that a particular research model might be more appropriate than the other(s), depending on various circumstances.

<sup>3</sup> The negative connotation of the term “informant” is commonly acknowledged by many field linguists, because it presupposes the speaker's naïveté and ignorance in linguistic matters, likens a speaker to a police informer, conceives of the speaker as a kind of machine spitting answers in response to the linguist's questions, and denies the speaker any control over data gathering, sharing, and storage (Bowern 2008:10; Crowley 2007:85-86; Newman & Ratliff 2001:4; Rice 2006:129-130,141-142; Samarin 1967:20-21).

collect the data, get out, and publish” (Dwyer 2006:50).<sup>4</sup>

After the “professionally impartial” and “apolitical” positioning of the outside linguist in the language community became a subject of academic debate in the 1990s (Dorian 1993:575; see also Hale et al. 1992, Ladefoged 1992), ways of doing research in linguistics were re-conceptualized and speaker-oriented research models were gradually introduced. Yet, the more traditional (immersion) and less traditional research frameworks typically overlap in their commitment to the production of comprehensive text corpora and the establishment of “a negotiated working relation infused with respect” (Grinevald 2003:60).

The less traditional research models include “cooperative”, “participatory”, “collaborative”, “empowerment”, “community-based” research models which characterize a variety of field research foci conveying a general idea of the outside linguist and community researchers working together for the purposes of language documentation.<sup>5</sup> The critical difference between these models of research seems to concern “the level and type of engagement that a linguist has in a language-speaking community and that community members have in the research” (Czaykowska-Higgins 2009:19). Consider brief outlines of each of the models below.

*Cooperative fieldwork.* Cooperative fieldwork is based on the “consultant relationship”, with the linguist essentially controlling the research agenda and the project workflow. The cooperative model requires setting up a community research team whose members are assigned different tasks matched with their talents; the team regularly meets for mutual consultation and exchange (Dwyer 2006:55-56; Mosel 2006:81-83). Dwyer points out that “cooperative arrangements between community members and outside researchers have a number of convincing advantages: they are enormously efficient in terms of human and economic resources, matching local skills to local tasks and transferring technology; they provide linguistic and ethnographic field methodology training...; they tend to produce huge quantities of data” (2006:54-55).

*Collaboration.* The collaborative model typically involves conducting “extensive research ... by two persons with complementary skills and knowledge” (Nida 1981:173); it does not necessarily demand an organization of community research teams. Collaborators function as co-partners in the project management (Rice

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<sup>4</sup> The “lone-ranger” field research model is described in Aikhenvald (2007), Bowern (2008), Crowley (2007), Dixon (1984), Macaulay (2004), Rice (2006), Samarin (1967), and in many contributions to Newman & Ratliff (2001).

<sup>5</sup> Cooperative research ought not to be confused with the collective research model originally developed at the Lomonosov State University of Moscow. Collective research is realized by hierarchically organized teams including a Head researcher, experienced linguists/faculty members, and students. All activities are coordinated by the Head, who is responsible for the project’s logistics and academic planning, as well for the interim and final synthesis and presentation of collected data. Each faculty member is responsible for a particular domain of the researched matter, e.g., phonology, morphology, coordination linkage, relative clauses, etc.; students simply assist the researchers (Chelliah & de Reuse 2011:183). See Aikhenvald for a critique of this research model (2007:5-6).

2006:143).

*Empowerment model.* Associated with collaborative fieldwork, the empowerment research model intends to empower the language community by addressing issues of control and agentivity in the process of creating a record of endangered language (see Cameron 1998:25).<sup>6</sup> It establishes a more equitable and a more equal relationship between the community members and the linguist, engages the community more successfully in language documentation, and ensures the transfer of the linguistic technology and infrastructure back to the community (via training community researchers and donating equipment to them), thereby creating an environment for the emergence of locally-based, independent linguistic research geared to the community's needs (Benedicto, Dolores & McLean 2002:376).

*Participatory model of linguistic research.* Participatory research operates within the framework of the collaborative empowering model, evidenced by its goal "to empower native speakers to document their own language for the purposes they deem necessary" (Chelliah & de Reuse 2011:184). The participatory model views speakers and the field linguist as collaborators, jointly creating knowledge for the native and academic communities, with the linguist working for the speakers and with the speakers (Cameron et al.1993:93; Rice 2006:132).

*Community-based language research.* Community-based research can be a component of empowerment research, but it is critically distinguished from other models by the acknowledgment of community linguists' expertise; linguists are trained by and learn from community members about language issues. It is research on a language, for, with, and by the native community members, and not primarily for or by outside linguists (Chaykowska-Higgins 2009:24-25).

The recent shift towards collaboration in linguistic fieldwork is central to this study's concern with subcontracting practices in the Ashéninka Perené community of Peruvian Amazon.<sup>7</sup> The 2009-2011 Ashéninka Perené documentation and description project, launched with a two-fold objective of producing a grammar (which was a doctoral dissertation) and compiling a multi-genre corpus of video and audio recordings, came to fruition largely within the subcontracting process. The availability of adequate grant funding, combined with the pressure to produce and defend a grammar within a two-year period, significantly contributed to the direction of collaborative fieldwork conducted in the research

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<sup>6</sup> Cameron et al. (1993:91) and Cameron (1998:26) make a distinction between "action" research and empowerment research. Unlike "action" research, which primarily focuses on meeting community demands, empowering research does not necessarily have to meet community needs; rather, the research agenda is negotiated by the linguist and consultants, so that research is of utility to both academic and native communities.

<sup>7</sup> As the terms "collaborative" and "participatory" field research in language documentation are essentially overlapping, they will be used in this presentation interchangeably.

community. The criterial dimensions of subcontracting which were crystallized during the fieldwork period are sketched out below.

*Subcontracting.* Subcontracting native speaker-insiders to conduct field research independently involves training them to use equipment and practical orthography, assigning individual tasks of making audio and video recordings of fellow native speakers, and subsequent transcription and translation of the collected texts, all done on a contractual basis for a monetary remuneration negotiated in advance. Under contractual arrangements, the direction of the individual projects is largely dictated by the community needs, rather than by the linguist's research agenda.

This study argues that subcontracting is a variety of empowerment research, considering that there is a variety of collaborative research models, each being implemented and negotiated under different circumstances (Cameron 1998:27; Rice 2006:144). It is also claimed here that subcontracting meets the criterial principles of empowerment research, such as the use of interactive methods enabling engagement with consultants rather than mere observation, negotiation of a jointly beneficial research agenda, and sharing of expert knowledge with consultants (Cameron 1998:24-27).

What follows is an examination of how subcontracting is aligned with the empowerment research principles. With regard to consultant engagement and relationship building, many primary consultants thought of me as their pupil or apprentice and treated me with friendliness, often with a flourish of bossy protectiveness, as older kin would do. Some consultants were more appreciative of an intellectual challenge while contributing to analyses of grammatical phenomena during our meetings, rather than of the social bond between us. Obviously, the importance of establishing a relationship of trust and intellectual partnership cannot be overrated in this case, considering "how much better is the information obtained by observers who have command of the language, and who are on terms of intimate friendship with the natives" (Boas 1911/1966:57). The validity of Boas's point is fully recognized in today's field linguistics, with its emphasis on a good relationship between the field linguist and indigenous partners as key to success in field research (Dwyer 2006:50). Unsurprisingly, the best Ashéninka Perené collaborators and subcontractors have proven to be the ones with whom a consultant relationship grew into a collaborator-partner relationship, characterized by congeniality and mutual respect. For detailed information about the selection criteria for best candidates for subcontracting among Ashéninka Perené native speakers, see section 4.1.

My other role of a central coordinator-employer was negotiated for the purpose of carrying out the Ashéninka Perené language documentation project. In empowering collaborative research, a central coordinator is required to synthesize and organize a variety of input. In subcontracting, the central coordinator's tasks extend to offering primary consultants an opportunity to launch well-paid individual projects and "to become an agent in uncovering knowledge" (Benedicto, Dolores & McLean 2002:384). Indeed, in a situation of true rapport and a community-driven research agenda, the lump sum payment arrangement goes beyond the relationship of "paid help" (Aikhenvald 2007:5-6). Details of negotiating individual arrangements with Ashéninka Perené collaborators are given in section 4.2.

As far as Ashéninka Perené collaborators' projects are concerned, their individual as-



signments were originally crafted in response to the community's urgent need to have pedagogical literature for the local bilingual teachers; the following year's individual assignments were motivated by the speakers' concern about the attrition of whole domains of botanical, hunting, and ideophonic vocabulary. In fact, from the very beginning of the language documentation and grammar-writing project, I was urged by community members to redefine my research agenda by allocating grant funds and coordinating labor division among consultants for the purpose of storybook and bilingual dictionary/thesaurus productions.

The overriding principle of subcontracting concerns the establishment of joint authority and control over collected language materials. All Ashéninka Perené subcontractors (and other native data providers who worked with the subcontractors) have the right to keep the hard and/or digital copies of the contributed data and any annotated materials they hand in under their contractual arrangement. In addition, equipment was donated to subcontractors after extensive training in handling recording equipment and utilizing the practical orthography so that they could continue language documentation work after the linguist's return to her home base. Detailed commentary on training of Ashéninka Perené collaborators is provided in section 4.3.

*Summary.* Subcontracting falls into the category of empowerment collaborative research by virtue of its defining characteristics:

- (i) establishing an equitable, respectful employer-employee relationship, based on the clear understanding of what is expected from a collaborator and how much the collaborator will be paid for the end-product, e.g., Ashéninka Perené collaborators were paid lump sums from 300 to 1,000 Peruvian *soles* [1 USD =2.8 PEN] for the contracted work; the direction of individual projects comes from both community and linguist's needs;
- (ii) providing training and transfer of technology and equipment, e.g., Ashéninka Perené primary consultants received training in conducting interviews and compiling word lists, as well as in MS Word and Excel, Gmail, and in operating digital recorders and laptops, which were eventually donated to the consultants;
- (iii) obtaining joint control and authority over gathering, sharing, and storage of collected data, e.g., Ashéninka Perené consultants retained digital copies of all collected field materials, stored on their CDs, DVDs, flash memory, laptops, and in print; the names and photographs of contributing collaborators appear on the front pages of published materials.

**3. EXPEDIENCY OF SUBCONTRACTING.** Before I discuss the specifics of the subcontracting process, I will address the expediency of subcontracting and contextualize the field research situation in the Chanchamayo Province of Peru, Region Junín, as it stood in the summer of 2009 when the Ashéninka Perené language documentation project began. The fundamental reason for having native speaker-insiders conduct independent field research is the quality and quantity of data obtained. As Mithun states, "the more the native speaker is invited to shape the record, the richer the documentation of the language" (2001:51).

The richness and uniqueness of data collected by native speaker-insiders can “illuminate patterns otherwise inaccessible to researchers” (Rosenblum & Berez 2010:2). As far as the Ashéninka Perené subcontractors are concerned, they collected nearly eight hours of invaluable audio and video recordings of fellow speakers and transcribed and translated over 400 pages of the collected texts, spanning a range of conversations, jokes, commentary on past customs, songs, traditional advice from parents to children, incantations, and a tribal chief’s speeches.

Field linguistics scholarship acknowledges the importance of considering logistical and political expediencies while developing a cooperative relationship with native speakers. For example, Dwyer points out that logistical limitations such as remote or inaccessible locations may render the goals of a language project unattainable, or for reasons of national or regional security or personal safety, some places may be closed to the linguist (2006:51). Power struggles between existing authority structures may put the linguist-run language project at risk (Crowley 2007:72-73). Subcontracting primary language consultants to conduct independent field research was a useful collaborative arrangement in the high jungle environment because many native communities are difficult to access due to rough terrain. Among 35 Ashéninka Perené settlements, approximately half of the villages are nestled in the hills on both sides of the Perené River, whereas the rest are located on the Perené valley floor. The hillside villages are connected by narrow gravel roads or footpaths and are usually accessed by a motorbike or on foot. In 2009-2011, I had regular access to three villages located on the valley floor (Pampa Michi, Villa Perené, and Bajo Maranki-ari), which lie in close proximity to the central highway, Lima-Satipo. Remote villages were surveyed by the two male subcontractors, who were able to travel on motorbikes to six other native communities to collect textual data (Churingaveni, Mariscal Cáceres, Alto Esperanza, Pucharini, Santo Domingo, and Platanillo Shimaki).

Collaborative arrangements also work well when the outside linguist does not have permission from political or tribal leadership to enter communities, which may be due to the area’s political instability, distrust of foreigners, complacency about the researched language’s vitality, political factions’ rivalry, or other factors. Under similar circumstances, I met twice in June 2009 with leaders of the area’s political organization CECONSEC (Central de Comunidades Nativas del la Selva Central), and they were reluctant to allow me to travel to the villages and doubted the utility of the language project to the native population. Their skepticism was fueled by the notorious practices of abuse of native people’s property rights by outsiders, and possibly by a concern for my personal safety in the context of the turbulent political situation in the region in the summer of 2009. I was also told by a number of native speakers from different villages that to be granted an official permit by the head of the organization’s council, a non-native outsider is expected to pay a bribe. Nonetheless, after the change of leadership a year later, the newly elected head of CECONSEC, who happened to be a son of one of my primary consultants, enthusiastically endorsed the project.

Despite a lack of support from political leaders who didn’t think much of the project and believed it to be unnecessary, along with the region’s political volatility preventing me from moving freely in the area in 2009, I managed to recruit three families willing to engage in language documentation work, each from a different village. A few literate consultants who agreed to work with me were interested in both language and technology



aspects of the project and had enough education to handle the writing assignments. They also asked me whether the project could support production of a multi-genre color storybook for the local bilingual teachers and individual households, providing that the bulk of the collected texts was included in the proposed storybook. Another concern was a lack of acceptable writing conventions, prompting literate speakers' requests to assist with orthography development.

Since our research agendas clearly intersected, it was both necessary and feasible to enlist a few primary consultants to make recordings of native speakers from other villages. Thanks to the support of the granting organization, our team was well-equipped: in addition to a Sony PCM50, used as my field recorder, I brought along two other digital recorders, a Zoom H2 and an Olympus WS320M, with the intention to train primary consultants to use them in their family settings. I also had a digital verbal consent template, tweaked to make it resemble a contractual agreement spelling out the exact tasks, payment, and deadlines (see Figure 1). After hearing about the nature of the job offer and being given copies of the revised consent template, the consultants asked me to give them some time to mull it over before signing it. The papers were eventually signed by three primary consultants, setting the precedent for negotiating other collaborative contractual agreements with native speakers.

La Universidad de Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Consentimiento para participar en la investigación

**CONSENTIMIENTO DEL CONSULTOR INDÍGENA**

*Este formato del consentimiento ha sido aprobado por la JRI por el período de un año*

**1. INFORMACIÓN GENERAL**

**Título del proyecto:** Ashéninka Perené: Documentación y gramática.

**Personas a cargo del proyecto (Investigador Principal y Co-Investigador):** Fred Eckman, profesor de lingüística del Departamento de Lingüística y Elena Milnes, doctora del Departamento de Inglés de la Universidad de Wisconsin-Milwaukee. El proyecto está fundado por la Fundación Nacional de Ciencias, ABCS-0601196.

**2. DESCRIPCIÓN DEL ESTUDIO**

**Esta siendo invitado a participar en la investigación. Su participación es completamente voluntaria. No tiene que participar si no quiere.**

El propósito de estos dos años de duración en el proyecto es documentar y escribir una gramática del Ashéninka del Alto Perené, una de las lenguas nativas de Perú. Este proyecto de documentación ayudará en la creación de registros de historias orales, tradicionales, el discurso natural y promoción de la alfabetización en Ashéninka del Alto Perené. Como resultado del proyecto, una gramática descriptiva del Ashéninka Perené será publicada y los datos recogidos serán depositados en el Instituto de Investigación de Lingüística Aplicada en Lima y en el Archivo de las Lenguas Indígenas de Latinoamérica en la Universidad de Texas en Austin.

**3. PROCEDIMIENTO DEL ESTUDIO**

**¿Qué me va a pedir que haga si participo en el estudio?**

Si está de acuerdo en participar se le solicitará lo siguiente:

Grabar, escribir y traducir: 5-8 adwinzas, 5 trabalenguas, 8-10 consejos tradicionales, 3-5 cuentos rituales, 5-7 refranes rituales (por ejemplo cuando un hombre y una mujer se casan, ¿qué dicen o cantan?), 3 conversaciones (que duran 4-5 minutos), 2 enseñanzas (instrucciones) como hacer algo.

**4. BENEFICIOS**

**¿Voy a recibir algún beneficio por participar en el estudio?**

Le prestaré la grabadora digital Olympus WS-320M que me vuelve antes del 20 de Julio. Le doy un cuaderno y lapiceros para escribir sus grabaciones.

**¿Se me pagará o se me dará algo por estar en el estudio?**

Le pago 200 soles para su trabajo completo.

**5. COSTO DEL PROYECTO**

**¿Se me cobrará algo por participar en el estudio?**

No le cobrará nada por participar en el estudio.

FIGURE 1. Page 1 of a subcontractor agreement

*Summary.* Hiring native speaker-insiders for independent field research may work well in areas with arbitrary administrative policies, or difficult terrain, or political volatility. Crucially, subcontracting arrangements are motivated by the goals of gathering unique, culturally diverse data in a variety of genres and obtaining data which are broadly representative of the studied language variety, to capture variation among different communities.

**4. MAIN STAGES OF THE SUBCONTRACTING PROCESS.** This section examines particulars of each stage of the subcontracting process ranging from the selection criteria of potential candidates, in section 4.1, to negotiating a contractual agreement, in section 4.2, to training for equipment use, in section 4.3, followed by an outline of evaluation of the contributed recordings and transcribed texts in section 4.4.

**4.1. SELECTION OF CANDIDATES.** In this section, I discuss the selection criteria for subcontractor recruitment in the context of the socio-cultural background of the Ashéninka Perené community. As mentioned above, I did not receive any guidance from the community leadership when I began field research in 2009. As a result, most consultants were recommended by my non-native acquaintances, by friends of consultants, or by friends of friends.<sup>8</sup> At my request, primary consultants also got involved in recruiting their fellow speakers, often close and remote kin. (The overall number of speakers who have contributed to the Ashéninka Perené 2009-2011 documentation project is 44.) The point I feel compelled to emphasize here is that a search for language consultants never stops since the goal of a community-driven language documentation project is to engage as many extant native speakers as possible in language work.

Among the Ashéninka Perené primary and secondary consultants, the youngest possessing full communicative proficiency are in their late 40s-to early 50s. Males are significantly better educated and have (or used to have) jobs in education or medicine, the two professions with great social clout in Ashéninka society. The two primary male consultants who joined the subcontractors' team are SIL-trained bilingual teachers; one of them manages the Intercultural Bilingual Education unit at the Department of Education in La Merced, Chanchamayo Province, overseeing the work of bilingual grade-school teachers. Both teachers have the equivalent of a United States master's degree in bilingual education and are familiar with the extant SIL orthographies designed for the neighboring varieties, Ashéninka Pichis and Ashéninka Tambo-Ene. The bilingual education specialist writes in the vernacular using the standardized, Tambo-Ene-based alphabet, currently implemented in native grade-school classrooms by the national Ministry of Education. Although teachers are reported to be prone to prescriptivism (Chelliah & de Reuse 2011:173), the two teaching subcontractors did not show any more proclivities for prescriptivism than not-so-highly educated non-teachers. In fact, Ashéninka consultants in general exhibit fierce purist tendencies when it comes to rechecking the written work of others.

I established good rapport with both of these consultants, and one became a friend and co-partner in managing the language documentation project. The bilingual teachers are excellent narrators and are good at explaining difficult things in a simple way. Both teachers are language enthusiasts, with strong cultural ties to the native community, speaking the language daily with their parents, older kin, friends, and neighbors. Their social networks include a fair number of monolingual Spanish speakers, by virtue of their having public jobs in education. The male subcontractors have traveled extensively in the region and have accumulated a wide range of acquaintances and experiences, which makes them better-qualified consultants than females, who generally have a more sedentary lifestyle.

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<sup>8</sup> Guérin & Lacrampe (2010) is a good source to consult on the logistics of building consultant networks. This matter is not addressed here because it lies beyond the scope of this analysis.

Due to these differences between male and female lifestyles, the female collaborator was asked to work with her fellow villagers, while the two males recorded native speakers from six other villages.

Females typically have a few years of education; older females tend to be illiterate. The only female language consultant among subcontractors has a high school diploma; at some point, she attended college in Lima for a year, but had to quit because of a lack of money. When she joined the language documentation project in 2009, she was a home-maker; later on, she converted a part of her house into a dining outlet which serves refreshments, soft drinks, and beer to the villagers. The female collaborator has an astounding work ethic, complemented by her intellectual curiosity and a methodical attitude to tackling difficult tasks. Besides having excellent communicative proficiency in the native language and good Spanish writing skills, she is very confident in her knowledge of Ashéninka Perené, her first language, which she speaks daily with her family members (they all live in the same village, within walking distance). Overall, female consultants are more readily available for long meetings and are slightly better than males at keeping their appointments, although it may depend on the time of the year (e.g., in the spring, females spend a lot of time tending to family vegetable gardens), family crises (e.g., a child's or spouse's illness), or social obligations (e.g., participation in the obligatory community work). Being the same gender as the linguist, females open up about sensitive issues like family violence, child abuse, women's diseases and ailments, and childbirth.

*Summary.* The most suitable candidates for subcontracting proved to be literate and well-educated language consultants, defined, in line with Grinevald's diagnostics, as "young" native fluent speakers, "bilinguals with great fluency and mastery of the ethnic language that they ... have learned as their first language" (2003:64). Note that a general recommendation for any kind of field research is to enlist at least two literate consultants who can read and write in the target language and can work independently to provide translation of transcribed texts (Chelliah & de Reuse 2011:172). It comes as no surprise that teachers meet this criterion exceptionally well and often serve as researcher's primary consultants (e.g., Rice's language consultants were all teachers (2006: 142)). In the context of field research in the Peruvian Amazon, males are better positioned to have elaborate and diverse social networks, an extensive travel record, comprehensive life experiences and knowledge of the world, and ultimately enjoy more clout in the community than females, so their membership on the subcontractors' team is a must. However, literate females are an invaluable asset as well, by virtue of their flexibility in terms of setting up appointments, possession of intimate knowledge of peculiar domains of female life, regular access to their family members, who tend to live in the same village, and an incredible work ethic.

It should be noted that having a female subcontractor on the team is important for another reason. In Ashéninka society, women traditionally play a subordinate role, and their advancement to a leadership position is still a rare occasion (Vilchez Jimenez 2002). Being given an opportunity to independently conduct language work in the community, enlist fellow villagers to work as secondary consultants, administer payment to data providers, and conduct consultant meetings has significantly helped the female subcontractor gain more authority in the language project and in the community.

**4.2. NEGOTIATING AN AGREEMENT.** This section focuses on the issues of compensation for collaborators' work. Field linguistics manuals recommend taking the issue of compensation seriously. Researchers are advised to pay consultants in an appropriate way (with money, gifts, or labor) and "in scale with local economy," on the basis of "the rate to the closest equivalent job (e.g., a teacher)" (Bower 2009:162-163). There is a significant advantage to formalizing the relationship between the field linguist and speakers. Establishing an employer-employee relationship encourages consultants to keep their appointments and treat the job seriously, "rather than [as] a hobby that happens only if there's time" (Bower 2009:163); it helps alleviate the problem of being stood up, frequently reported by field linguists (e.g., Macaulay 2004:199; Chelliah & de Reuse 2011:174, 179).

The 2009-2011 payment arrangements were such that Ashéninka Perené subcontractors received both monetary compensation and gifts. Monetary compensation was provided in the form of a lump sum payment at the end of contractual work, whereas gifts, purchased in the U.S. prior to the field trip, typically at the collaborator's request, were given at the beginning of the fieldwork season (e.g., a watch, multivitamins, T-shirts with my university's logo, a backpack, a CD-player). Two of the subcontractors also received hourly payment at the end of our regularly scheduled meetings, four-to six times a week each. Finally, like all primary consultants, subcontractors were given a small bonus at the end of the fieldwork season.

Concerning payment rates, in 2009 I began with four Peruvian *soles* per hour, a baseline number advised by non-native acquaintances from La Merced (the capital of the Chanchamayo Province) and a U.S. linguist who had worked in Peru for many years, on the grounds that five *soles* is a basic rate for a schoolteacher in Peru. Nevertheless, native speakers' reactions to the proposed hourly rate was tepid: one male consultant told me that the importance of this work is such that after he dies, he will be rewarded by Jesus for being paid so little and remaining so humble. Female consultants from Bajo Marankiari reported that a great deal of gossip about the low pay rates was circulating in the village. After revising my grant's two-year budget projections on language consultant spending (from the budgeted USD2,617 to USD3,057 per annum, achieved by trimming my subsistence expenses), I raised the hourly rate to eight *soles* per hour, but when the time came to hire subcontractors to do individual projects, they felt that I should pay them at least 10 *soles* per hour. Creative and high-skill projects such as consulting work on the phone or production of illustrations for the storybook were even more costly, ranging from 15 to 35 *soles* per hour. Considering a conspicuous increase in the skill level of the primary consultants who received training in linguistic analysis and operation of Mini Dell netbooks and digital recorders from 2009-to 2011, the consultant baseline hourly rate for the 2012 field season is budgeted in the range of 10-15 *soles*.

Along with market integration of native communities and individual households, expectations for fair remuneration from an external employer largely account for the established payment rates and pay negotiation practices. Located in a zone of high colonization pressure, indigenous households in the Perené valley spend most of their time and resources on market-related activities (Peralta & Kainer 2008: 148). Crucially, at present, indigenous people "abandoned their role as cheap laborers for colonists ... to become independent producers" (Santos-Granero & Barclay 1998:260). In this situation, native speakers feel very strongly that any contractual work should be paid fairly and mince no

words while negotiating their pay. For example, an elderly language consultant from the community of Pampa Michi told me that she never narrates for Peruvian tourists from Lima because they do not offer her payment. Her response was, “Pay me!” Another language consultant from Bajo Marankiari stopped working with me in 2009 because he said it wasn’t worth his while. Yet another consultant demanded a higher price for his work in light of his qualifications. Negotiations of this kind are not uncommon and can be resolved in a number of ways (e.g., see Dixon 1984:83; McLaughlin & Seydou Sall 2001:196-197; Rice 2006:138). It should be noted that two subcontractors (a male and a female) were exceptionally gracious and would agree on the proposed rate or the lump sum amount without much ado; the other male subcontractor typically questioned the basis for my calculations and made higher counteroffers, citing his experience and qualifications.

The common pay negotiation strategy I utilized with the subcontractors (and other language consultants) was to offer a certain number in Peruvian currency and explain how I arrived at this number. Specifically, when meeting with a subcontractor I would provide the most detailed explanations possible, addressing (i) the nature of the work (e.g., collection, transcription, and translation of texts; transcription and translation of texts recorded by me or another consultant; completing a lexical database; consulting on language issues over the phone; production of illustrations); (ii) the approximate number of hours expected or the length of contractual time period; (iii) explicit statement of deadlines; (iv) description of field methods and equipment necessary to complete the job; (v) payment amount; and (vi) compensation for travel expenses and payment to data providers. The job description, responsibilities, and payment sum were also stated in the hard copy of the contractual agreement that would be given to the subcontractor. Mindful of my early recruitment experiences, I would always ask collaborators to take their time (one week or more if needed) to think about the proposed job and payment, and ask me questions or suggest changes if they found the arrangement problematic. As mentioned previously, one collaborator was a tough negotiator, but his direct questions would always give me good insights into the negotiation practices of well-trained language consultants whose skills in handling digital technology and knowledge of linguistic field work factored into their expectations for higher pay. Overall, when a speaker’s price proposal was too high, I would cite the grant budget numbers and emphasize its limitations. The highest pay proposal that I ever received from a subcontractor was for compiling a lexical database of 1,300-plus items; the subcontractor expected to be paid one Peruvian *sol* for each Ashéninka equivalent of the Spanish lexical item.

*Summary.* In pay negotiations with Ashéninka Perené speakers, openness, transparency, and reasonable flexibility were of paramount importance. It proved quite helpful to disclose the grant budget numbers and remain respectful of the speaker’s rationale for work pay. No less useful was to have on hand a hard copy of the contractual consent and explain in full detail the job description, payment calculations, and deadlines.

**4.3. TRAINING.** In this section, I discuss training language consultants in linguistic field methods, linguistic analysis, and field equipment. Training is an essential part of empowerment collaborative field research: a native speaker is able to become “an equal participant” in a language project when “specific training is given so a speaker or speakers can take over the role of linguist” (Rice 2006:143). If training is successful, the experience and skills

gained by speakers during the fieldwork period prepare them for future language revitalization work in the research community after the linguist leaves.

The key factor in successful training is the speaker's openness to it (Chelliah & de Reuse 2011:176). Ashéninka speakers in general value acquisition of any useful knowledge, including training in language and language work. Subcontractors were always trained on an individual basis, either at their home residences or at a location agreed upon prior to the meeting. The principal characteristic of training was its ongoing format: once a basic skill set was acquired (e.g., operating a digital recorder), new skills were targeted (e.g., transferring the recorded audio files from the recorder to the laptop and saving them to flash memory). To this end, time was regularly set aside during the meetings to present new hardware or software (or recapitulate the points about the previously studied item) and practice using it.

Now I turn to the mechanics of Ashéninka Perené subcontractors' training in linguistic field methods, linguistic analysis, and field equipment. Training in field methods was limited to explaining the basics of obtaining verbal consent from a secondary consultant. Subcontractors were also coached on how to conduct an interview with a fellow speaker with the purpose of collecting information about his or her background, and to note down other useful metadata (e.g., where the interview took place). To accomplish this job, copies of the native speaker questionnaire were given to the subcontractors. Besides the questionnaire task, consultants were entrusted with administering payment to the data providers whom they recorded, with receipt forms to be signed and money to be paid at the end of each meeting with the fellow speaker.

Linguistic analysis concerned identification of the problematic sounds and their transcription, a common problem among native speakers who have a hard time hearing phonetic and even phonemic distinctions (Chelliah & de Reuse 2011:186). Two Ashéninka Perené subcontractors were often confused about the difference between the aspirated and unaspirated affricates /ts<sup>h</sup>/ and /ts/, written respectively as <ts> and <tz>. One consultant consistently used <ts> and another <tz> as a way of coding both phonemes. Another problematic pair was /tʰ/ and /tʃ/, respectively encoded as <ty> and <ch>. One consultant had difficulty distinguishing between the two and used <ch> as the default spelling. It should be noted that training in practical writing conventions was compounded by the lack of agreement among literate consultants on the design of Ashéninka Perené graphemes. Although practical writing conventions were regularly discussed at the language consultants' meetings in two villages in 2009-2010, robust consensus was not reached. Nevertheless, the alphabet recommended at the September 2010 final language consultant meeting in Bajo Marankiari (and utilized in the published Ashéninka Perené storybook (2011)) was similar to the SIL-CAAAP alphabets.<sup>9</sup> Due to the lack of agreement on the orthography issue, the transcription work was done on the basis of three alphabets, one of each used by a different subcontractor: the extant SIL alphabets developed for the Pichis variety of

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<sup>9</sup> The Bible Translation organization Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) and the Catholic humanitarian organization Centro Amazonico de Antropología y Aplicación Practica (CAAAP) initiated and financed bilingual teacher training programs and developed literacy materials for Ashéninka/Asháninka speakers of Central-Eastern Peru in the second half of the 20th century. The SIL-CAAAP writing conventions are utilized in Heise et al. 2000.



Ashéninka, the currently implemented unified alphabet of Asháninka,<sup>10</sup> and the naïve orthography developed by the female subcontractor.

Linguistic field technology was by far the most exciting part of our training sessions. The collaborators preferred to learn by observing and enjoyed multiple repetitions of the same training task. In the beginning, I tried to write down instructions in algorithm form in the consultant's notebook, but the trainees appeared to have opted for the trial-and-error method instead, rarely consulting the notes. From the start of the technology-based individual projects, subcontractors' audio or video files were checked for sound and picture quality, and additional training would take place if necessary. The subcontractors' common mistakes were positioning the recording equipment too far from the recorded fellow speaker(s); recording at a low sound level; periodically adjusting the position of the recording equipment during the recording session, thus adding extraneous noise to the recording; or making a recording in a noisy environment. As a result, the files needed regularization, which was done with the help of the Audacity software for audio files and HD Writer 2.6 for video files.

The equipment was loaned to the subcontractors for the duration of their projects; at the end, they were to return it in working condition. A piece of equipment was damaged only once when a subcontractor's handling of the H2 Zoom recorder's buttons was too rough and the machine stopped working. Other than this one incident, the subcontractors kept the equipment in good order, and it was donated to them at the end of the language documentation project (namely, there were two recorders, two external optical drives, two netbooks, and some computer accessories). Figures 2-5 illustrate subcontractors practicing how to use the Dell Mini netbook's keyboard, check the quality of an audio recording with a Tascam DR-07, launch the VLC software to play a DVD, and position a Panasonic video camera HDC-HS100, respectively.



FIGURE 2. Practicing typing on the Mini Dell netbook's keyboard.



FIGURE 3. Practicing using the VLC software to play a DVD.

<sup>10</sup> At present, the Asháninka Tambo-Ene variety serves as the written standard for all Ashéninka/Asháninka varieties. The Asháninka Tambo-Ene-based unified alphabet, approved by the November 4, 2008 Resolución Directoral 0606-2008-ED of the Peruvian Ministry of Education, is currently being implemented in the bilingual grade schools of the Perené valley area.



FIGURE 4. Checking the quality of the audio recording of a fellow speaker (recorded with a Tascam DR-07)



FIGURE 5. Practicing videoing with a Panasonic video camera HDC-HS100

*Summary.* Training native speakers to conduct individual research projects is a time-consuming activity which requires commitment on the part of both the linguist and the native speaker. There is a possibility that expensive equipment will be damaged or lost; most likely, subcontractors' audio and video recordings, as well as their MS Word files, will require extensive editing. However, training is by far the most important step toward the goal of forming an indigenous linguist team in the context of the language documentation project. In effect, the Ashéninka Perené subcontractors have acquired basic skills in handling recording equipment and have advanced in terms of their computer literacy. They also received some training in the basics of language structure which may further their future work in translation, as well as in compiling storybooks and dictionaries. Field research training raised the subcontractors' profiles in the research community as they became known to fellow speakers as local language researchers.

**4.4. EVALUATION OF THE INTERIM AND FINAL PRODUCTS.** This section deals with the final stage of the subcontracting process, namely evaluation of the products of subcontractors' research. Subcontracting arrangements are just as product-oriented as field linguistics is, with its emphasis on the production of a body of data (Glenn 2009:157). During the 2009-2011 language documentation project, interim products were evaluated by the linguist, largely with the purpose of assisting with the technological aspect of the native speakers' individual projects, whereas the final products were assessed by the linguist and fellow speakers (i.e., language consultants from editing teams or other subcontractors), in order to give comprehensive feedback on the accuracy of transcriptions and translations. Making data available to the end-users for feedback increased the subcontractor's responsibility to deliver a meticulous, carefully crafted product and better engaged the native community in the collaborative enterprise of creating knowledge.

As mentioned in section 4.3, Ashéninka Perené collaborators received feedback on their interim products (and additional training if necessary) to ensure good-quality recordings and annotations were made. Evaluation of the final products was a two-tier process which involved the linguist verifying the acceptability of handed-in digital files and written materials, followed by a critical assessment of the submitted written materials by fellow speakers. When a subcontractor indicated that the materials were ready for submission,

a consultative meeting was scheduled to assess the delivered products. The recordings were transferred to the linguist's flash drive, each recording and a matching annotated text was checked (sometimes, an audio recording was missing or transcription was not complete), and the issues that should be addressed and corrected would be identified, with the understanding that the collaborator would be paid upon completion. Needless to say, in such consultative meetings the significance of the collaborator's contribution was always acknowledged.

The climax of the collaborative effort was collegial feedback on the subcontractors' written work, with ensuing corrections, by other language consultants who acted as editors. It is advisable to make handouts of the subcontractors' work to distribute to the native speaker-editors (Mosel 2006:81). Since the subcontractors' handwriting was not always legible, the handouts were made on the basis of the texts' digital versions, for which the linguist was responsible. Entering the texts into the computer text collections was a laborious activity, but it was a good way of consolidating and sharing the collected text corpora. The distributed printed materials were kept in hardy folders for the sake of their protection from natural elements and for better organization. The evaluation of the written work proceeded in the following way: editors from three villages read and commented on the subcontractors' work and issued recommendations which were frequently double-checked with other editors. The recommended changes were introduced during the creation of the final digital version of each discussed text. Figures 6-7 show editors from Villa Perené and Bajo Marankiari; Figure 8 illustrates the subcontractors' ultimate final product, the published storybook.



FIGURE 6 (above left). Editor (and also subcontractor) from Villa Perené at work.

FIGURE 7 (above). Editors from Bajo Marankiari at work (the younger female is a subcontractor).

FIGURE 8 (left). A subcontractor demonstrating the ultimate final product of the collaborative work of eighteen native speakers, the storybook "Añaani katonkosatzi parenini" [The language of Upper Perené].

*Summary.* In a collaborative project, evaluation of the end-products by Ashéninka Perené stakeholders tested the materials' acceptability to the native community as a whole and ensured their accuracy for the linguistic community. Providing multiple sources of feedback on the end-products also distributed authority and control over the collected texts among native speakers. Logistically, converting subcontractors' written materials into a digital form was extremely time-consuming for the linguist, but the steadily improving subcontractors' computer skills combined with opportunities to regularly use the donated computer and recording equipment, will, it is hoped, mitigate this problem in future research projects.

**5. CONCLUDING REMARKS.** The long-term goals of language documentation projects are to build collaborative consultant networks and train an indigenous linguist team to make the research community self-sufficient in terms of language work. This analysis of the subcontracting process in the research community of Ashéninka Perené Arawaks from Central-Eastern Peru has demonstrated a practical way to make headway in achieving those goals. As a variety of empowerment collaborative research "on, for, and with" native speakers, the subcontracting model tested well in the language community of Ashéninka Perené. Since 2009, the Ashéninka Perené language consultant team has achieved some degree of linguistic and technological sophistication, produced a well-received multi-genre storybook, and gained a sense of self-worth and accomplishment, with some team members having moved into positions of prominence in the native community. However, the complexity of the issues involved can hardly be overstated. In particular, a few principal points need to be addressed here in light of Glenn's (2009) critical theory of coordination and interoperability in language documentation.

Glenn's theory exposes particular issues that have a critical impact on the success of collaborative field research, including the subcontracting variety. First, the requirement of a "central hub" (Glenn 2009:154) or central coordinator in charge of synthesizing and organizing the input and distributing work puts a lot of pressure on the linguist. Coordination of a language documentation project that relies on subcontracting requires the central coordinator-linguist to do a great deal of interpersonal mediation among language consultants to minimize the effects of rivalry between males and marginalization of females.<sup>11</sup> Being responsible for the division of labor and its coordination inevitably increases the linguist's workload and work hours, which can be overwhelming at times. Indeed, building a collaborative enterprise is much more time-consuming than working alone (Dwyer 2006:60). The employer-employee labor division also brings tension into the collaborative relationship when the linguist hires native speakers and administers payment for the completed contractual work, since collaborators have "unequal investments in the outcome of the research" (Glenn 2009: 155). Ironically, empowerment collaborative research "cannot be undertaken

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<sup>11</sup> For example, faction and gender power struggles internal to the community at large were reproduced inside the Tuahka (Mayangna) language consultant team, formed in Wasakin, Nicaragua in 1995 with the help of U.S. linguists; later on, as the language work progressed, this variable's effect diminished (Benedicto, Dolores & McLean 2002:380, 382).

successfully without the researcher's having a certain authority (or in other words, without a degree of inequality between the researcher and the researched)" (Cameron 1998:37).

Next, the requirement for interoperability of collected data concerns an exchange of information or services "to make satisfactory use of what is exchanged" (Simons 2007:4). Exchange of information takes on even more significance since it is intertwined with feedback that subcontractors receive from other collaborators. In practice, when the collected data are exchanged and native speakers' feedback is communicated to the subcontractor by the linguist, the subcontractor often feels defensive and may even reject the critical comments altogether, branding them as petty and insignificant.

The issue of authority and authorship in a collaborative project inevitably brings up questions about who owns what and subcontractors' rights with regard to their end-products. The collaborators' concern with their rights is directly motivated by the desire to generate more income from participating in the language documentation project. The question that subcontractors and language consultants-at-large often asked was whether it was permissible to sell copies of their recordings (at the end of every fieldwork season, I made CDs and DVDs for the data providers including subcontractors) and copies of the storybook, "*Añaani katonkosatzi parenini*" "*The language of Upper Perené*", to prospective buyers, or if they would receive any royalties from the published storybook. As stated in section 1, the selling imperative clearly reflects the area's general entrepreneurial climate and commercialized attitudes toward collaboration. In this situation, the linguist's explanations of the granting agencies' humanitarian goals which disallow distribution for profit of grant-funded indigenous literature were hardly effective.

Although the significance of subcontracting practices may be limited in scope, since the nature, organization, and logistics of such collaborative projects greatly depend on the availability of grant funding and, most importantly, on socio-cultural and economic backgrounds of native communities, it is hoped that bringing forth subcontracting issues here will further stimulate discussions of best practices for collaboration in field linguistics and language documentation.

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