The monolingual approach in American linguistic fieldwork

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In the first decades of the 20th century, fieldwork — collection of language data through direct interaction with a native speaker — was foundational to American linguistics. After a mid-century period of neglect, fieldwork has recently been revived as a means to address the increasing rate of language endangerment worldwide. Twenty-first century American fieldwork inherits some, but not all, of the traits of earlier fieldwork. This article examines the history of one controversial issue, whether a field worker should adopt a monolingual approach, learning and using the target language as a medium of exchange with native speakers, as opposed to relying on interpreters or a lingua franca. Although the monolingual approach is not widely practiced, modern proponents argue strongly for its value. The method has been popularized though 'monolingual demonstrations' to audiences of linguists, which, curiously, are not wholly consistent with the character of 21st-century fieldwork.

Keywords: field methods, monolingual approach, monolingual demonstration, linguistic fieldwork, 20th century American linguistics, Franz Boas, Kenneth L. Pike, Daniel L. Everett

1. *Introduction*

A hallmark of early 20th-century American linguistics was its commitment to fieldwork. Sustained and meticulous linguistic fieldwork — collection of language data by direct interaction with native speakers — was the basis on which Franz Boas (1858–1942), his immediate intellectual descendants, and their students aimed to document the features of Native American languages and discover relationships among them. Then in the 1960s, fieldwork ceded its foundational role in mainstream American linguistics. As the attention of the discipline shifted to theory-building and debates about the nature of human linguistic competence, fieldwork was largely replaced by psycholinguistic testing and the collection of grammaticality judgments and speakers' intuitions through introspection. However, fieldwork

returned to prominence in the 1990s, recovering from what Newman and Ratliff (2001b: 1) represent as a long interval of neglect. The impetus for its revival was linguists' recognition that language loss was accelerating worldwide, and their hope that language documentation based on fieldwork could be the foundation of an effective "salvage linguistics" (Newman 2009: 119, echoing a term used in Boas's day [Darnell 1998: 187]). Thus across a mid-century hiatus, fieldwork has again become a major preoccupation within the study of language in the U.S., attracting public and professional attention and institutional support. Fieldwork in the 21st century inherits certain assumptions and practices from the first, Boasian, wave. But it also introduces significant conceptual and technical innovations.

This article focuses on one facet of fieldwork methodology, namely, a practice called 'monolingual field research', 'monolingual elicitation' (Everett 2001), or more generally 'the monolingual approach' (Cowan 1975). In its purest modern iteration, monolingual field research insists that a fieldworker learn the target language and gather data by interacting with its speakers without relying on interpreters, or on a contact or trade language or lingua franca to translate to and from the target language. Harris and Voegelin (1953: 59) raise an important point of departure. Although the convention is to contrast 'monolingual' to 'bilingual' methods, both implicate (at least) two languages, and in this sense both are 'bilingual'. The critical difference is the locus of bilingualism. In so-called 'monolingual' methods, a linguist communicates with a target-language speaker in the target language, and therefore the linguist bears the burden of connecting the target language to the language(s) of analysis and of dissemination of research findings. In 'bilingual' methods, it is the native speaker of the target language (or an interpreter) who exercises his or her bilingualism, by identifying equivalences across the target and contact languages, and communicating those equivalences to the linguist.[1]

Conceding that in this sense 'monolingual' is used loosely, the foundation of monolingual fieldwork — promotion of a researcher's direct acquisition of the target language — is attested in discussion of field methods from the early 1900s, although it did not always wholly exclude use of interpreters or a contact language. Under diverse definitions, some scholars have advocated a monolingual approach as a straightforward, efficient, basis for fieldwork (Samarin 1967: 131; Sarvasy 2016), or as the uniquely legitimate option (Uhlenbeck 1961: 433; Everett 2013: 51, 59, citing Kenneth Pike). Others have depicted it as a difficult-to-achieve ideal practice (Boas 1966/1911: 55–59), contradicting a competing view that a lingua franca is the most favorable basis for fieldwork (Hockett 1958: 102). Still

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1. An anonymous reviewer points out that only linguists' investigation of their own native language would comprise truly 'monolingual' fieldwork.

others have identified the monolingual approach as demanding special procedures and expertise (Nida 1949: 175–178; McLeod 1961; Cowan 1975), or as a fallback technique to which one may resort if necessary (Burling 1984: 101–106). Sometimes monolingual fieldwork has been treated as simply unfeasible (Gleason 1961: 290).

Regardless of its reputation, the monolingual approach is rarely observed in its orthodox, unalloyed, form. Nevertheless, it has attracted a high public profile since 1946 through the practice of staging 'monolingual demonstrations' at professional meetings of linguists and linguists-in-training. These performances have been recorded on video and disseminated on the internet, even though in some ways they are inconsistent with present-day second-wave fieldworkers' *modi operandi*. This article closes with an analysis of two recorded monolingual demonstrations, and reflects on how they represent modern linguistic fieldwork.

The organization of the article is as follows. Part 2 characterizes first-generation American fieldwork, and the stance key figures took on the monolingual approach. Part 3 describes the thinning-out of fieldwork that occurred in American linguistics from about 1960 to the 1980s. Part 4 narrates its return to prominence, pointing out continuities and differences between first- and second-generation fieldwork, especially with respect to the status of monolingual approaches. Part 5 analyzes two examples of monolingual demonstrations captured on video, which introduce the technique and showcase its glamour, while undermining certain foundations of modern linguistic fieldwork. Part 6 concludes.

The focus in this article is on fieldwork carried out by linguists affiliated with the discipline in the United States. In the early 20th century, there was a recognizably American style of linguistic fieldwork. But toward the end of the century internationalization of the discipline increased, with publications, students, faculty members, publication venues, and funding sources flowing more freely across national boundaries. While sources and figures cited in this text become less narrowly identifiable as 'American' after the 1980s, the central concern is with fieldwork carried out by scholars trained in or affiliated with institutions in the United States. Even today, distinctive national traditions still exist and demand individual study that goes beyond the remit of this article.[2]

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2. For example, Russian scholar Aleksandr Evgen'evič Kibrik (1939–2012) construed linguistic fieldwork as a group activity. He led teams of students on expeditions to fieldwork sites, where each participant assumed responsibility for a specific topic in the target language. Students worked in parallel, collecting data one-on-one with a native speaker, then pooling their results (Dobrushina & Daniel 2018; Sumbatova 2018). They used any convenient contact language, since Kibrik placed no emphasis on target-language learning (1977: 52–53). France's Centre National de Recherche Scientifique is associated with another variety of fieldwork, employed

2.   *Monolingual approaches in the first 20th century wave of American fieldwork*

Dixon (2007: 12) asks "What is [linguistic fieldwork]?", then offers the following pithy definition:

> Going into a community where a language is spoken, collecting data from fluent native speakers, analyzing the data, and providing a comprehensive description, consisting of grammar, texts and dictionary. (Dixon 2007: 12)

Dixon's definition does not exhaust all possibilities. For example, must fieldwork necessarily be carried out within the target language culture? What if the only speakers are neither fluent nor have native-like control of the language? Nevertheless, as a characterization of prototypical fieldwork, Dixon's definition serves well for both the 20th and 21st centuries. In particular, it invokes two features that have had long-staying power in the American tradition: it roots fieldwork in direct interaction with speakers, and it posits the 'Boasian trilogy' as a goal (Foley 1999: 470), that is, production of a grammar, dictionary, and texts in the target language. It also implicitly registers Himmelmann's (1989) famous distinction between documentary linguistics ('collecting data…') and descriptive linguistics ('analysing the data…').[3]

Boas, of course, did not introduce fieldwork into American linguistics. It preceded him at the Bureau of American Ethnology (Darnell 1998: 73), which in turn was preceded by the work of a generation of in-person collectors of Native American language data such as John Heckewelder (1743–1823) and Henry Schoolcraft (1793–1864) (Andresen 1990). At greater time depth, missionary linguists had studied North American languages on site in the interests of evangelization since the 1600s (Koerner 2004), following as they did the worldwide expansion of European colonialization. Boas's specific contribution was to develop a lastingly influential style of fieldwork. He also trained and supported a generation of fieldworkers, some identified as linguists, some as anthropologists. Dixon's definition communicates the essentials of what Stocking (1974) called

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especially in research on central African languages. Bouquiaux and Thomas (1992: 3) identify it as influenced by André Martinet (1908–1999), André G. Haudricourt (1911–1996), and Émile Benveniste (1902–1976). It is translation based, documented in an encyclopedic collection of elicitation materials (Bouquiaux & Thomas 1992), and, like the Russian tradition, does not prioritize monolingual methods. Rather, it assumes that the ideal source is a target-language speaker fluent in the linguist's native language (Bouquiaux & Thomas 1992: 27–28). I thank two anonymous reviewers for pointing out to me the importance of clarifying the geographical focus of this text.

3. Chelliah and de Reuse (2011: 11–17) argue against the documentary / descriptive dichotomy; McDonnell et al. (2018) survey twenty years of its impact.

"the Boas plan for the study of American Indian languages", in which the highest-priority activity was the collection of texts: ideally, texts dictated to the linguist by a native speaker, which the linguist transcribed phonetically and analyzed. Later, the linguist extracted out of the texts the properties of the target language. Boas (1917: 2) weighed the advantages of linguist-collected texts relative to texts composed by literate native speakers, and specified that texts could range over myths, poetry, and incantations to spontaneous conversations and descriptive or procedural narratives. His immediate students accepted the central importance of texts, even as they diverged from their teacher's agenda in other ways (Darnell 1990; Murray 1994: 67–76). Boas set the standards; the first generation either followed those standards or covertly rebelled against them, but rarely re-considered or commented on Boasian techniques for eliciting the all-important texts.

To this representation of the "Boas plan", one might add three additional features characteristic of the American scene. All of them are present, at least in seed form, in Boas's Introduction to the *Handbook of American Indian Languages* (1966/1911: 56, 77–78), and they are intact in 21st century fieldwork: awareness that many Native American languages are in decline, which added urgency to the project; vigilant, principled avoidance of assimilating indigenous American languages into the familiar European languages; and implicit recognition of both the material trials of fieldwork and its rewards.

2.1   The language of fieldwork in Boas and his students

On paper, Boas strongly supported a monolingual approach in ethnological and linguistic-anthropological research. In an often-quoted discussion of the matter (1966/1911: 55–59), he first pointed out the demerits of using interpreters, then likewise of contact languages. While conceding the difficulties of working monolingually, Boas nevertheless declared that "we must insist that a command of the language is an indispensable means of obtaining accurate and thorough knowledge" (p. 56). He impressed this necessity on his students, as evidenced in a public exchange between two of them, Margaret Mead (1901–1978) and Robert H. Lowie (1883–1957). In an essay ostensibly promoting field language competence, Mead (1939) first dismissed the use of interpreters. But she then pivoted to minimize the value to ethnographic research of what she called "linguistic virtuosity" (p. 204), that is, (in her view) exaggerated and unnecessary pursuit of linguistic expertise. Instead, Mead endorsed acquiring just enough of the target language to pose strategic questions and establish rapport, on the grounds that an ethnographer's role is less to speak than to observe and listen "with full emotional

and intellectual appreciation" (p. 202).[4] Lowie (1940) countered Mead, citing his experiences where a lack of deep and precise control over the relevant language limited his research. He concluded that language acquisition in the field is both highly important and highly difficult to achieve: ethnographers "use interpreters, not because we like to, but because we have no other choice" (p. 89).[5]

Despite their differences, Mead and Lowie shared a Boasian commitment that language matters in ethnographic research. Boas communicated those same priorities to his students who pursued linguistic research. In all this, Boas seemingly set the bar higher than he himself reached. As many have pointed out, he never achieved fluency in any of the languages of the groups he studied (Rohner 1969: xxiv; Werner 1994: 75–78). In his letters from the field (Rohner 1969), it is clear that Boas routinely relied on English as a lingua franca. He also acquired some facility with Chinook Jargon, a trans-tribal pidgin that arose in the Pacific Northwest in the late 1800s, and used that to communicate with speakers of Tsimshian, Tlingit, Bella Coola, and Kwak'wala ('Kwakiutl'), among other languages. In his work with Kwak'wala, he recruited George Hunt to collect texts. Hunt's father was English, his mother Tlingit; he was raised among Kwak'wala speakers and had near-native skills in that language as well as decent English (Berman 1994). In some forty years of collaboration with Hunt, much of it carried out by letter, Boas wrote and spoke to Hunt exclusively in English.

Edward Sapir is often identified as Boas's most linguistically talented student, who by training and natural gifts surpassed Boas in this area. But like Boas, Sapir did not carry out monolingual fieldwork, for example in his studies of Southern Paiute with Tony Tillohash, of Nootka with Alex Thomas, or of Navajo with Albert Sandoval. In each case, he sought out these speakers for their double facility with the target language and English. Conversely, Sapir's writings reveal frustration in his 1915 work with the man given the name 'Ishi'. Ishi emerged from the foothills of the Northern Sierra Mountains into the scrutiny of social scientists in 1911. He was apparently the last speaker of Southern Yana, a language that had not previously been analyzed. Sapir had studied other dialects of Yana in 1907, and so was called in to try to communicate with Ishi. The working conditions Sapir met with were especially daunting: Ishi encountered Anglo culture without any knowledge of English, and he could only very imperfectly communicate with one of Sapir's informants from 1907 who spoke a different dialect of Yana and was

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4. Mead allowed that linguistic (as opposed to ethnographic) research demands a higher level of language competence insofar as it "go[es] beyond the formal analysis of the language" (p. 195).

5. Borchgrevink (2003) comments that, to deflect critique of their authority, modern anthropologists play down their generally poor language skills and correlative reliance on interpreters.

by then quite old. Moreover, Ishi became ill during Sapir's work with him, and died soon afterward. Sapir nevertheless held Ishi responsible for their difficulties in communication. In a report explaining his lack of success, Sapir wrote:

> Little…could be done with Ishi's language till he had learned enough of the white man's ways and speech to make at least an elementary communication possible… It should be remembered by any one who makes a study of Part III of this paper and who may be inclined to feel annoyance at the gaps in my analysis that Ishi's English was of the crudest. "Him's no good" did duty for "He (or it) is bad" or "That is not correct," while "sista" might mean equally "sister" or "brother."
> (Sapir 1923: 264)

Given these unusual working conditions, monolingual methods would obviously seem necessary. But Sapir's fixation on bilingual methods prevented him from seeking other ways to make the exchange more profitable. Ishi could not meet Sapir's essential criterion for fieldwork, namely, bilingual Southern Yana / English capacity. Therefore, their work together foundered.[6]

2.2   The language of fieldwork in Bloomfield and the post-Bloomfieldians

Leonard Bloomfield never directly studied under Boas, but nevertheless considered him "the teacher, in one or another sense, of us all" (1944: 5). In 1917, Bloomfield published the results of his fieldwork with a speaker of Tagalog, a University of Illinois graduate student. It comprises a collection of tales and narratives elicited and transcribed in the Boasian style, analyzed with meticulous fidelity (Wolff 1987), and supplemented with a grammatical analysis and glossary. Bloomfield went on to publish on several Algonquian languages, some based on his own fieldwork (Cree, Menominee, Ojibwa). Consistent with his general personal reticence, he did not leave a record of his interactions with informants. However, we do have a depiction of Bloomfield's work with Native American languages published by Charles F. Voegelin (1906–1986), a younger colleague, fellow Algonquinist, and postdoctoral student of Sapir.

Voegelin emphasized that Bloomfield did not adopt Boas's and Sapir's bilingual field methods, but instead worked monolingually (Voegelin & Harris 1951: 322), employing a "restrained method of sentence eliciting" (Voegelin

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6. A 1915 letter suggests that Sapir could sometimes transcend bilingual methods in working with Ishi. He reported that "the most interesting thing I was able to do with Ishi" was to elicit kinship terms by arranging paper clips on a tabletop in the style of a genealogical tree, using one color for males, another for females. From this, Sapir "succeeded in getting results which have every internal evidence of being correct" (Sapir & Kroeber 1984: 195).

1959: 115) and "nondirective interviewing" style (p. 114).[7] Bloomfield would transcribe a sentence the native speaker had produced in the target language, then read it aloud, "waiting for the informant to say something else, without explicitly asking him to" (p. 114). When a paradigm lacked a critical form, Bloomfield preferred to induce the speaker to supply it spontaneously, rather than to invent the missing piece then confirm its acceptability (Voegelin 1974: 37). Harris and Voegelin (1953: 62) contrast Bloomfield's working habits to the Boas-Sapir tradition which collected texts, established word-by-word glosses, extracted lexical items from the texts, and articulated how those lexical items entered into syntactic relations. In contrast, to Bloomfield, the central product of fieldwork was the transcribed text itself. Harris and Voegelin also mention that Bloomfield characteristically used a very relaxed tempo of speech in fieldwork, which set an appropriately slow pace for word-by-word dictation (1953: 62).

Hockett (1999: 302–303) adds to this tableau the assertion that insofar as possible Bloomfield immersed himself in target-language communities, and tried to acquire productive communicative ability. In 1987, to mark Voegelin's death and the centenary of Bloomfield's birth, the journal *Anthropological Linguistics* published an exchange of letters between the two men, handwritten in the summer of 1940, in which they communicated to each other in Ojibwa (Voegelin & Bloomfield 1987). Voegelin signed his name with the Ojibwa word for 'loon' and Bloomfield did likewise with the word for 'lion; panther'. Both signatures are accompanied by the writers' sketches of their animal namesakes.

Boas, Sapir, and Bloomfield all died within a ten-year interval, leaving a convergent legacy that valued fieldwork, and a divergent legacy of methods and practices. Mainstream American linguistics in the 1950–1960s, the 'post-Bloomfieldian' generation, continued to prioritize fieldwork. They still valued and carried out Boasian text-centered fieldwork. But they began to re-consider its methods, and moved toward bilingual, translation-based, practices. A burst of publications sorted through new options in fieldwork and their consequences, sometimes starting with elicitation of single words. Nida (1947, 1949: 175–189) advised collecting isolated nouns first, then nouns in possessive constructions, then verbs, then sentences, eventually building up to the collection of texts. Harris and Voegelin (1953) discussed the pros and cons of repetition, picture stimuli, and translation. Voegelin and Robinett (1954) added word lists as an additional tool, and sketched out a schedule which purported to cram two summers' work into a single month by exploiting the then-novel resource of magnetic tape recording. Hockett (1958: 102–111) and Gleason (1961: 286–311) developed pro-

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7. Samarin (1967) evinces skepticism about Voegelin's (1959) characterization of Bloomfield: "demurrers expressed outside of publication indicate that confirmation is needed" (p. 54).

grams for phonemic analysis that started with transcribing single words, followed by their arrangement and analysis according to proposed principles of economy, contrast, etc. Voegelin (1974:37) remarked that this generation felt free to invent plausible constructions or words to fill in gaps in a grammatical paradigm, then ask native speakers to judge their acceptability.

The methodological innovations of the post-Bloomfieldians seem to be less an explicit rejection of monolingualism than an embrace of both Bloomfieldian and Boas-Sapirian methods as useful tools, while at the same time they recognized the greater expediency of bilingualism. For example, Voegelin and Harris (1951:322) proposed that the advent of magnetic tape recording neutralized differences between monolingual and bilingual methods, because a linguist could record connected monolingual speech then study it at leisure, resolving points of difficulty by working through the recording with bilingual assistance. Harris and Voegelin (1953) noted the existence of monolingual and bilingual approaches, then evaluated an array of practices such as repetition, use of picture stimuli, and elicitation of texts versus sentences. Voegelin and Robinett (1954) and Yegerlehner (1955) added additional practical details for would-be fieldworkers, while seeming to presuppose a bilingual setting. The same could be said of the two most influential mid-century textbooks for students of linguistics. Hockett (1958) does not register any awareness of monolingual methods, and states outright that the "most favorable condition" for fieldwork allows the linguist to communicate with native speakers in a contact language or lingua franca (p.102). Gleason (1961:287, 290) discusses fieldwork at length, but presupposes a bilingual basis.[8]

2.3   The monolingual approach in 20th century American missionary fieldwork

As mainstream American fieldwork assumed an eclectic bilingual approach in the 1940–1950s, one stream of work branched away to champion monolingualism and carry it forward to an end-of-the-century revival. That stream is associated with missionary linguistics, in particular, with the Christian evangelical organization then called the Summer Institute of Linguistics, now SIL International, based in Dallas, Texas. A central figure is that of Kenneth L. Pike (1912–2000). Pike was an early SIL recruit, who served a term as President of the Linguistic Society of America in 1961. In a career spanning more than fifty years, Pike carried out extensive linguistic fieldwork toward the goal of Bible translation, first in Mexico and later in South America. He advised fellow missionary linguists

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8. Uhlenbeck (1961) explicitly recommended an immersive, monolingual, approach. However, as a prominent Dutch Indologist, he viewed American linguistics from afar.

worldwide and developed a distinctive linguistic theory that emphasized a holistic approach to language and culture (Wise, Headland & Brend 2003).

SIL affiliates typically settle in rural areas with speakers of minority languages that lack any orthographic tradition. They sometimes remain on site for years, while they learn the local language well enough to translate the Bible. Along the way, SIL members publish grammars, dictionaries, linguistic analyses, ethnographic materials, and support literacy projects in their host communities.[9] Those communities may initially share no language with the missionary linguists, so monolingual methods are the only option. McLeod (1961), working in Brazil, and Loving (1975), in Papua New Guinea, offer first-person records of methods and practices in conducting missionary linguistics monolingually. SIL recruits embraced, even insisted on, the challenges of monolingual fieldwork. Cowan (1975) illustrates how far one might take this stance. Under the auspices of SIL, Cowan conducted fieldwork on Amuzgo, an Oto-Manguean language spoken on the southern coast of Mexico. He writes how, from his first arrival in the field, he deliberately feigned not to know any Spanish (the conventional local contact language, in which he actually had good skills), and sustained that pretense throughout so as to accelerate his acquisition of Amuzgo.

Pike, as President of SIL from 1942 to 1979 and its leader in matters of applied and theoretical linguistics, set the tone for the group's field practices. Like Bloomfield, however, Pike left few details about his approach — with a single outstanding exception. That exception is that Pike performed multiple 'monolingual demonstrations' for the public and for assemblies of linguists, one of which is accessible on videotape. We return to the content and significance of Pike's demonstrations in Section 5 below.

2.4 Fieldworkers and their partners in the first half of the 20th century

Early 20th-century fieldworkers sometimes formed sustained and seemingly warm, personal relationships with native speakers of the languages under study, their "informants". Boas did so with George Hunt (Wilner 2015; but see White 1963: 30–34, 55), as did Edward Sapir (1884–1939) with Tony Tillohash (Fowler & Fowler 1986), and Leonard Bloomfield (1887–1949) with Alfredo Viola Santiago (Bloomfield 1917: 9–10). Nonetheless, fieldworkers in this era often seemed to hold tacit assumptions about their superior social-intellectual status relative to that of passive and uncomprehending target-language speakers. This shows up in Sapir's diction in the account of his work with Ishi. Sapir repeatedly wrote of "getting", "obtain[ing]", or "secur[ing]" data from Ishi, locutions that impute to Ishi no

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9. See Dobrin (2009) on controversies surrounding SIL.

real agency (Sapir & Kroeber 1984: 194–196). When fieldwork went well, Sapir took full credit: "what success I have had is due almost entirely to [Sapir's own] brute memory of stems and grammatical elements", whereas when work went poorly, he attributed the fault to Ishi in painfully crude terms: "it proved a difficult task to hold Ishi in leash in the matter of speed of dictation" (Sapir 1923: 194).

Sapir's narrative of his work with Ishi positions the two parties on an unequal footing, a stance linguists into the middle of the 20th century took for granted. Healey (1964) published an essay on field methods under the title "Handling unsophisticated linguistic informants", which analyzes the process of "*taking* data from an informant" (p. 5; emphasis added).[10] Nida (1949: 190–191) likewise advised fieldworkers-in-training on the "handling of informants". In a revealing text written more than 30 years later, Nida (1981) abandons that expression, but maintains its underlying assumptions. His thesis is that "informants" are the "unsung heroes of linguistic endeavors" (1981: 169), and he draws on his long fieldwork career to laud their under-appreciated contributions. However, Nida consistently depicts native speakers as naïve, ingenuous, figures whose potential it is linguists' responsibility to develop. Developing informants meant raising up and assimilating them into the concerns of the linguist: "an informant must be trained to the point where he understands the why's of a linguist's inquiries" (p. 173). Thus Nida's promotion of collegiality between linguists and informants does nothing to disturb the imbalance of power between the two. This posture was common in linguistic fieldwork: Mosel (2006: 75) aptly points out how until recently, advice to fieldworkers almost always includes hints about "what kinds of questions to ask or not ask, how to make the interview interesting and keep the informant attentive, etc." — all of which presupposes an active, controlling, linguist interacting with a native speaker who is deferential, passive, and lacks initiative.

3. *Shift in the status and practice of linguistic fieldwork, 1960 to 1980s*

Boasian fieldwork was central to American linguistics in the first decades of the 1900s (Haas 1976). By the middle of the century, however, generative grammar disrupted the status quo, turning the expression 'descriptive grammar' away from its use as a neutral label for the output of fieldwork, into a term of disparagement for mere assembly of language facts. Generativists aimed not to describe languages, but to articulate a theory that defined the limits of human linguistic

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10. Healey was an Australian national, but two U.S.-based linguists, Hale (1966) and Zgusta (1968), reviewed the text without objecting to its diction. Zgusta called Healey's title as a 'very apt euphemism' (p. 332).

variation (Chomsky 1966). Chelliah and de Reuse (2011: 61) point out that early generative theory did not extinguish fieldwork, because analysis of little-known languages by direct interaction with speakers continued. However, its character changed, in two ways.

First, fieldwork lost its status as an engine driving the discipline forward, a near-obligatory rite of passage for graduate students. Among those who did continue to carry out fieldwork, its duration and immersive character declined. Postal's 1962 Yale dissertation on Mohawk, for instance, was based on direct work with native speakers during his residence in what is now the Kahnawake Mohawk Territory near Montreal. However, he stayed only six months, abetted by additional consultation, of unspecified intensity, with Mohawk speakers living in New York City (Postal 1979: 1). Lindenfeld's University of California at Berkeley dissertation on Yaqui was likewise built on a total of six months of visits to Yaqui-speaking communities, spread out over several years (1973: v). Stanley (1969: 6–7) produced an MIT dissertation on Navaho through interaction with two adolescent speakers, each of whom spent half a summer working with him in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The three to six (often interrupted) months of fieldwork behind Postal's, Lindenfeld's, and Stanley's dissertations might have been an acceptable minimum by Boasian standards, in an era when most field research was confined to summer months. On the other hand, Boasian fieldwork was sometimes very protracted. Boas's student Robert Lowie (1940: 89) asserted that satisfactory ethnography required at least a year of sustained exposure to the community's language. Werner (1994: 88) extends that interval beyond a year. Surely linguistic, as opposed to ethnographic, research would require at least as much. By 21st-century standards, the three to six months of 1970s fieldworkers would be considered short, especially in cases like that of Stanley where the linguist is dislocated out of the target-language culture.[11]

A second distinctive feature of mid 20th-century American fieldwork was a shift in goals, in that it was self-consciously designed to explore the adequacy of generative theory rather than to produce the Boasian trilogy of a grammar, lexicon, and texts. That is to say, fieldwork became a means to test whether hypotheses about vowel alternations, the distribution of pronouns, or constraints on syntactic movement, could be extended to heretofore under-studied languages. Hale (1965) spelled out this shift and promoted its value. In a field methods class-

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11. An anonymous reviewer adds the following as evidence for a late-20th century shift in the character and status of fieldwork: (1) the emergence of fieldwork focusing on a single facet of a language (e.g., its phonetics or verbal morphology) as opposed to the full Boasian trilogy; and (2) the fact that even a full fieldwork-based descriptive grammar no longer sufficed as a doctoral thesis.

room setting, he asked a speaker of Tohono O'odham ('Papago') to combine pairs of sentences and replace full noun phrases with pronouns, as a demonstration of the speaker's tacit knowledge of transformational operations. Hale argued that this focused style of fieldwork yielded better insight into the structure of a language than merely "asking an informant to produce utterances, with little or no other direction" (p. 108). Postal (1979) may have employed Hale's techniques, as his dissertation culminates in formal statements of recursive, optional, and obligatory transformations in Mohawk (pp. 421–424). Likewise, Stanley's (1969: 5) analysis of Navajo concludes that generative phonology can account for heretofore recalcitrant features of the sound system.

It is revealing that few linguists who conducted fieldwork in this style reported their techniques for discovering properties of the target language.[12] That absence is telling, as it adds to the sense that the central concern of 1960s–1980s fieldwork was less with linguistic data than with the conformity of those data to generative theory. In these ways, American fieldwork diverged from its early 20th-century antecedents. According to Woodbury (2011: 167), works like those of Postal, Lindenfeld, or Stanley comprised a "counterdocumentary trend in the mainstream of linguistics from the 1950s onward", which "parochialized, redefined or repurposed" the Boasian program. Fieldwork in Woodbury's 'counterdocumentary' vein supported by generative theory did not disappear at the end of the 20th century, but it has made room for another style, which recapitulates something of early 1900s fieldwork.

4.   *Monolingual approaches in a second wave of fieldwork, from 1990*

By many accounts, a turning point in North America was a symposium organized by MIT linguist Kenneth Hale (1934–2001) at the 1991 annual meeting of the Linguistic Society of America, published as Hale et al. (1992). Hale and colleagues laid out the evidence for an accelerating, worldwide, crisis of language extinction, urging linguists to take action to document threatened languages.[13] Despite some dissenting voices, many responded energetically. Myriad

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12. Lindenfeld (1973: 5–6) is a partial exception. In a study of Yaqui relative clauses, she elicits translations of sentences presented in Spanish or English, and uses a sentence-combining method "inspired by the transformational model" (p. 6). Escalante (1990) points out errors in Lindenfeld's results, blaming the sentence-translation technique for having deformed her analysis.

13. A similar landmark came earlier in Europe: Himmelmann (2008: 339) dates it to a 1987 presentation about language endangerment given by University of Bremen typologist Johannes Bechert (1931–1994; see Haspelmath 2000).

publications and presentations addressed to the profession, the public, and governmental and international agencies have brought renewed attention to the need for study of endangered languages, and the need for resources to support their revitalization. Institutions, funding agencies, and graduate programs have been established, courses taught, journals founded, and national and international policies proposed. The surge in awareness of language endangerment brought linguistic fieldwork back into prominence as a means to document endangered languages, as opposed to testing a linguistic theory.

4.1   Comparison between first and second waves of 20th-century American fieldwork

The second wave of documentary fieldwork, which emerged at the end of the 20th into the 21st centuries, does not simply return to Boasian practices. It diverges in at least three ways. First and most obviously, technological advances revolutionized linguists' abilities to preserve, annotate, analyze, store, transmit, and share language data (Austin 2006; Margetts & Margetts 2012; Thieberger & Berez 2012). Between Boas's first field trips and the present day, technological innovation has made the collection and preservation of language data easier and more secure, facilitated its dissemination, and vastly expanded the technical expertise demanded of researchers. In addition, language data recorded digitally in audio or video format, including that amassed via fieldwork, can now be examined and measured at an unprecedented level of detail and objectivity. Because modern digital technology expedites data collection and analysis, professional standards (and researchers' responsibilities) have risen far beyond those set by the handwritten transcriptions and impressionistic notes of early 20th-century fieldworkers.

A second major difference between early 20th- and early 21st-century fieldwork is an increase in the inventory of techniques for data collection, and in self-conscious reflection on their strengths and limits. William Samarin seems to have anticipated this difference in his 1967 book *Field Linguistics: A guide to linguistic field work*. He begins by asserting that researchers to date had been 'extraordinarily silent' (p. v) on the topic of field methods, a claim that probably looks back across the 1950s to the early 20th century. Samarin's book fills that silence, offering advice that addresses but does not presuppose text-centered fieldwork, with extensive and sensitive discussion of working with native speakers, techniques of elicitation, processing a corpus, and procedures for analyzing phonological, morphological, syntactic, and lexical data. Samarin (1967) is still cited today, although his discussion of technology is thoroughly outdated, and although 21st-century guides to fieldwork include far more extensive inventories of techniques and practices, including 'prop-driven' elicitation, paradigmatic substitution, cor-

rective elicitation (Chelliah & de Reuse 2011: 357–412), 'scenario questionnaires' (Mosel 2012: 80), and all manner of audio and video stimuli, such as those freely available online from the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics.[14] Alongside an expanded array of methods and practices, a related distinguishing feature of contemporary fieldwork is its elaborate reflection on advantages and disadvantages. Unlike Boas and his direct students, Harris and Voegelin (1953) and Samarin (1967) surveyed a range of methods, and weighed their strengths and weaknesses. That reflective impulse has developed into a voluminous contemporary literature which meditates on the scope and applicability of specific techniques.[15] A consensus reached in that literature is that, as much as possible, researchers should license native speakers to control the direction and content of data collection at the expense of linguist-centered translation-based methods, so that speakers' target-language competence informs the data as fully as possible, and the imprint of the linguist's own language is minimized (Mithun 2001).

A third major difference between early 20th-century and contemporary fieldwork comprises a reconceptualization of the relationships between the fieldworker, the person who provides target-language data, and the target-language community. After the middle of the 20th century, field linguists re-evaluated the implicit position of privilege their predecessors had adopted in relation to native speakers, as materialized in a renovation of fieldwork onomastics. The term "informant", used as a default since at least Boas's day, began to be heard as pejorative (Samarin 1967: 20–21; Udell et al. 1972). Missionary linguists characteristically substituted the expressions "language helper" (Cowan 1975) or "translation helper" (Wallis & Bennett 1959). By the early 2000s most mainstream linguists preferred "consultant" (Bowern 2008: 10) or "assistant" (McLaughlin & Sall 2001: 193), terms which try to re-align the two parties as complementary participants in shared study of language, if not as peers.

The difference went far beyond words, too. As the discipline came to recognize the scope and consequences of ongoing language loss, linguists dug deeply into the ethical complexities of recording and archiving linguistic data in communities whose language is at risk of extinction.[16] What role should outsiders take with respect to language loss, especially outsiders identified with dominant groups that bear historical and moral responsibility for the destruction of indigenous cultures and languages? An influential article by Cameron et al. (1992)

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14. See http://fieldmanuals.mpi.nl/

15. Mosel (2012: 72) provides an overview, to which one might add Chelliah and de Reuse (2011: 227–448) and Bochnak and Matthewson (2015).

16. Examples include Dwyer (2006), Crowley (2007: 23–56), Bowern (2008: 148–169), Newman (2009: 118–120), Chelliah and de Reuse (2011: 139–159), and Rice (2006, 2012).

inspired a new model for linguistic fieldwork, a model that re-centers it on collaboration between linguists and target-language speakers. By these lights, the role of linguists is to support native speakers' empowerment to act according to their self-defined best interests with respect to language revitalization. Linguistic fieldwork that adopts a collaborative model (e.g. Yamada 2007; Penfield et al. 2008; Leonard & Haynes 2010; Rice 2011) acknowledges a community's ownership of their language, and valorizes speakers' goals and preferences. The collaborative stance itself has been fed into contemporaneous reflection on field methods (Hill 2006; Czaykowska-Higgins 2009). Dobrin (2008) and Dobrin and Schwartz (2016), for example, point out some natural limits to collaborative models and propose a revival, where appropriate, of the older approach of participant observation.[17]

Awareness of the responsibility that researchers bear to the communities they study came late to linguists relative to anthropologists (Shulist 2013), but it now suffuses the field. That awareness comprises a third trait that sets 21st-century fieldwork apart from its Boasian ancestors.

4.2   The language of fieldwork in the second wave of American linguistic fieldwork

With a century of the evolution of American linguistic fieldwork in mind, we return to the focus of this article, the monolingual approach. At present, the person most associated with promotion of monolingual approaches is the American field linguist Daniel L. Everett (b. 1951), who has published widely on the languages of culturally-insulated tribes living in the Brazilian Amazon basin, most extensively, Pirahã. Everett's early education in linguistics was as a student of Pike (Sakel & Everett 2012: 29) and SIL member. So was his initial fieldwork with the Pirahã, among whom monolingual field methods were the only option. Everett lived among the Pirahã for twenty years, and learned their language. When it came to writing a grammar of Pirahã, instead of adopting Pikean linguistic theory, his doctoral dissertation (1983) applied Chomskyan generative grammar to Pirahã syntax, in the style of Postal (1979). Everett is no longer associated with SIL, but in his afterlife as an anthropological linguist he has become a persistent

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17. 'Participant observation' labels a style of fieldwork identified in particular with Polish-British anthropologist Bronisław Malinowski (1884–1942). It requires a fieldworker to undertake a culturally-appropriate role within the community under study, and thus presupposes fieldwork on a monolingual basis. The term, however, was not readily adopted among US linguists, whose goals are not identical to those of anthropologists. Borchgrevink (2003) discusses anthropologists' history of field language learning.

critic of Chomskyan formalism (Everett 2005), while remaining a persistent advocate for monolingual fieldwork.

In its version as promoted by Everett, monolingual fieldwork entails using only the target language in all communication between the linguist and target-language speakers, without use of either an interpreter, or any contact or trade language or lingua franca by either party (Sakel & Everett 2012: 26). Modern-day arguments for the advantages of monolingual field research have been variously articulated in overlapping discussions by Everett (2001); Sakel and Everett (2012), and Sarvasy (2016), with some anticipated by Samarin (1967: 49–55, 131–132). The case rests on two assertions, addressed below: one bears on the quality of the data so derived; the second on the linguist / target-language speaker relationship. Proponents also concede certain disadvantages.

The first asserted advantage of monolingual fieldwork is that data obtained through monolingual methods are of higher quality, for several reasons. One is that monolingual methods reduce the degradation of linguistic material that occurs when it passes through a contact language. That distortion is magnified when one or both parties control the contact language inadequately, or control different varieties. Close typological or genetic relationships between the contact and target languages heighten the potential for contamination, and the use of linguist's own native language as the contact language makes interference of the former on the linguists' analysis of the latter harder to root out. In the common circumstance where the target language is endangered and the contact language wields public power and prestige, use of the contact language aggravates its imprint on the target language, inviting the further intrusion of loanwords or contact-to-target language calques. Moreover, contact languages regarded "as instruments of hypocrisy, of wheedling, ingratiating, or bullying" (Mead 1939: 194) jeopardize fieldwork.

In these ways, monolingual fieldwork purportedly evades prejudicial effects that attend use of a contact language. It is also touted as yielding better quality data compared to data collected through interpreters. Reliance on an interpreter inherits all the threats of distortion introduced by a contact language, but magnified because the uncontrollable intervening consciousness of the interpreter further insulates the linguist from target language speakers (Samarin 1967: 132–134; Moore 2009). To put it simply, "messages can easily get confused in the process of transmission" (Crowley 2007: 94).

Aside from removing the impact of extraneous influences, Everett (2001) argues that monolingual methods enhance the quality of language data in other ways. Direct acquisition of the target language requires linguists to reflect deeply on it "in the context of a slow process of language learning" (p. 184). In addition, a learner is confronted simultaneously with the full complexity of a language,

including its phonetics, morphosyntax, lexicon, and pragmatics. Encountering a language in its integrated natural state is, to Everett, an opportunity to see connections across domains of language that are obscured when linguists merely sample its properties in a controlled and piecemeal manner. Sarvasy (2016) agrees: wrestling with the holistic complexity of the target language opens a researcher to the possibility of valuable "serendipitous discoveries" (p. 471) about it, in the form of overheard native-speaker-to-native-speaker conversations outside of formal fieldwork sessions. In addition, monolingual methods help a field linguist construct what Sarvasy calls "pseudo-intuitions" (2016: 473; cf. Samarin 1967: 51–52; Gil 2001: 121): presumably, second-language learners' sense of grammaticality which, though fragile, can still inform the course of fieldwork or supplement native speakers' judgments.

A second asserted benefit of monolingual methods is that they contribute to positive relationships between linguists and target-language communities, by inverting the conventional distribution of power between the two. To Everett, linguists who present themselves as language learners assume "a subordinate role within the community…ignorant, clumsy and useless"; they must work to earn the respect of their hosts (2001: 171). To Sarvasy, this "humbles" and "endear[s]" the researcher, conceived as a prestigious outsider, to native speakers (2016: 473). At the very least, although undertaking linguistic fieldwork in the host culture language does not ensure that the linguist will cede leadership to the speaker, it makes that distribution of power more plausible.

Furthermore, acquisition of the target language opens access to more varied avenues of communication with native speakers, so that every interpersonal transaction becomes an instrument for advancing the fieldworker's knowledge. Even miscommunication is valuable: community members who correct a linguist's misshapen output provide informative negative evidence, plus evidence about which facets of the language warrant correction in their eyes. Dispensing with a contact language also allows fieldworkers to elicit language data from monolingual community members such as elderly persons and women, whose competence may differ from that of more linguistically-cosmopolitan speakers. Finally, where the target language is endangered, monolingual methods implicitly signal to native speakers that outsiders value it (and by implication the target-language community) as an independent phenomenon. That message counteracts the debilitating local depreciation of language and culture that often besets contexts of language loss.

Balancing these advantages of monolingual methods, supporters concede certain drawbacks. Most prominently, they acknowledge that fieldwork on a monolingual basis is more cognitively demanding and time-consuming than fieldwork that depends on an interpreter or lingua franca. No one denies that learning

a foreign language, likely without experienced instructional support, is hard work (Lowie 1940; Burling 1984; Chelliah & de Reuse 2011: 104–106). Everett (2001: 182) conservatively estimates that it adds a costly six months to a fieldwork schedule. Moreover those six months, during which researchers cannot yet distinguish what counts as appropriate speech and behavior, place them at extended risk of offending their hosts out of ignorance (Cowan 1975: 272). Another potential disadvantage is that if native speakers accommodate a linguist / learner by simplifying their speech, they may model an inauthentic 'foreigner talk' version of the target language in ways that escape recognition (Nida 1981: 170; Healey 1964: 12). Finally, Hill (2002) and Debenport (2010) report case studies where linguists' efforts to learn the local language have been met with suspicion or viewed as intrusive and unwelcome — in effect, turning inside-out what many assert to be the social-relational advantages of monolingual methods.

4.3   Controversy over monolingual methods

Everett (2001) and Sakel and Everett (2012) argue forcefully for the merits of learning and using the target language in fieldwork, for the reasons rehearsed in Section 4.2 above. At times, Everett's enthusiasm overflows from an experienced field linguist's judicious best-practices recommendations to promotion of monolingual field research as an emblem of professional seriousness. He depicts bilingual methods as "the 'cheat' of working through another language" (Sakel & Everett 2012: 31), praises monolingual approaches for "depriv[ing] the linguist of 'crutches'" (2001: 186), and asserts that "if a truly monolingual mode is desired, the linguist could make sure that the speakers never hear another language spoken by [the linguist]" (Sakel & Everett 2012: 28).[18]

Everett's advocacy of monolingual field research is widely acknowledged, but few 21st-century mainstream linguists follow him in wholly rejecting interpreters or lingua francas. Dixon (2007), for example, strongly supports the value of target-language learning, while advising fieldworker-trainees that "You will of course begin by communicating with [target-language speakers] in the lingua franca of the region…but you will gradually use more and more of the local language" (p. 20). Bowern takes a mellow stance in addressing future fieldworkers: "You may wish to work with monolingual as well as bilingual consultants" (2008: 106). She goes on to add that this is possible even without achieving full fluency in the target language, because one can record materials gathered

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18.   Everett's writings on monolingual fieldwork present its advantages in more absolute terms than he does on videotape, as discussed below. Everett depicts Pike as insisting on monolingualism while he himself admits more flexibility to exploit texts, elicitation, and translation, even as he still perceives the latter as "cheating" (2013: 51:00–52:34).

monolingually, then work over them later with a bilingual consultant (a recommendation that echoes that of Voegelin and Harris [1951: 322]). In an extended reflection on her own struggles to learn field languages in West Africa, Moore (2009) narrates how she managed to push through limited linguistic competence, or in some cases simply accept and work around it. No one seems to deny that being able to communicate in the target language is advantageous, but neither do most contemporary fieldworkers insist on a monolingual-only policy.

An additional controversy shifts the focus from Everett's support for monolingual methods onto how he employs those methods in amassing target language data, typically but not exclusively through elicitation. Even as Himmelmann (1998: 187) depicts elicitation as "the central technique of descriptive linguistics", detractors reject the practice of decontextualized elicitation of specific constructions or paradigms, as opposed to gathering connected texts or spontaneous speech in a context where the native speaker has full agency over the discourse. Dixon insists that elicitation "should play *no role whatsoever* in linguistic fieldwork" (2007: 23, 27; emphasis in the original). Aikhenvald (2007: 5–6) takes the critique a step further, setting up a hierarchy of kinds of fieldwork. The most satisfactory is "immersion fieldwork", where a linguist joins the target-language community and observes, learns, and records its language. Less satisfactory is "interview fieldwork", where the linguist has shallower contact with the community, and a narrower focus on a specific facet of the language; bilingual methods likely prevail. Even less satisfactory — Aikhenvald labels it "a highly lamentable malpractice" (p. 6) — is the style modeled in most classroom field methods courses, where, without any pretense of immersion, participants elicit translations of constructions or sentences designed to probe issues of interest as determined by the linguist.[19] Others have also evinced skepticism of elicitation, including Harris and Voegelin (1953: 73–75) and Mosel (2012: 84–85); Chelliah (2001), among others, proposes a compromise that interweaves elicitation with Boasian-style text collection.

It is important to note that although Everett freely uses the term 'monolingual elicitation' and has raised public awareness of it (so that others associate it with him, e.g. Bowern 2008: 106), his actual practices do not seem limited to elicitation in Dixon's sense. Everett relates, for example, how he deliberately integrated a schedule of daily language-focused sessions with Pirahã speakers with time spent working, hunting, fishing, and farming alongside them, and with what he calls "perambulatory elicitation", that is "walking around the village or community asking questions, and trying to use the information recently learned"

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19. Most classroom field methods courses rely on translation, but Sarvasy (2016) suggests that a strictly monolingual course is possible.

(2001: 177). Everett and Aikhenvald agree about the necessity of "immersion fieldwork". But in a style that Aikhenvald might label "malpractice", Everett supports linguist-controlled collection of specific data (for example in his efforts to discover Pirahã relative clauses [2001: 167]), provided the fieldworker / native speaker exchange remains in the target language.

5.   *The monolingual approach demonstrated*

5.1   Prehistory of the monolingual demonstration

Although monolingual field research, strictly speaking, is rare in the field, it retains an outsized public profile. This is driven in part by the staging of engaging, high-energy, performances that illustrate the practice to audiences of linguists. What might be called the prehistory of the monolingual demonstration goes back to the late 1930s.

Since 1928, the Linguistic Society of America (LSA) has held summertime Linguistic Institutes, weeks-long residential meetings of linguists and students of linguistics, which were a major factor in incubating the discipline in the United States (Falk 2014). In reviewing the 1937 Linguistic Institute, Voegelin (1959: 110–111) reported that he had lamented with Sapir and Zellig Harris (1909–1992) a neglect of graduate training in how to work with little-studied languages. As a remedy, the three of them sponsored a course at the 1938 Linguistic Institute entitled 'Methods of Field Work', in which Sapir showed students how to elicit the grammar of the Siouan language Hidatsa from a native speaker. When Sapir died the next year, the obvious person to step into the role was Bloomfield. Bloomfield was a renowned fieldworker, but his approach was idiosyncratic and his retiring disposition no match for Sapir's interpersonal verve (Voegelin 1974: 36). Instead, as one of two "especially noteworthy" events of the 1939 Linguistic Institute (*Bulletin* 1940: 20), fieldwork courses were led by Voegelin (assisted by a native speaker of Delaware), Murray Emeneau (Tamil), and George Trager (Lithuanian). Moreover, Voegelin and Emeneau demonstrated fieldwork practices and techniques to the general enrollment of the Institute, scheduled in the evening so that everyone could attend. The LSA *Bulletin* highlighted this demonstration as "the most valuable part" (1940: 20) of a series of all-Institute evening presentations. It may count as the first time a demonstration of linguistic field methods was staged publicly for members of the LSA.

At this point Kenneth Pike becomes important to the backstory of monolingual demonstrations. Pike met Sapir at the 1937 Linguistic Institute, and attended again in 1938 (Pike 1998: 151), although it is unclear whether he followed Sapir's field methods class. At the 1939 Institute, he gave a talk on the Oto-Manguean language Mixtec (*Bulletin* 1940: 6), and may have attended Voegelin and Emeneau's

demonstration. Six years later, in a report on the 1945 Linguistic Institute, mention appears of a "lecture demonstration using a speaker of Ibo as an informant", led by Pike. The *Bulletin* (1946: 16) represents it as "the center of much interest…[which] attracted an audience of 285".

In December 1946, Pike gave another presentation at the winter meeting of the LSA, held in Chicago. It was entitled "A Monolingual Approach to a Language Unknown to the Linguist — A Demonstration" (*Bulletin* 1947: 13). This marks both the first reference to demonstration of specifically monolingual methods, and the first mention of withholding the identity of the elicited language from the demonstrator. Pike (1993: Chapter 1) asserts that he initially conceived and developed the protocol for monolingual demonstrations ten years earlier, in 1936, as a 24-year-old neophyte missionary in Mexico still a year away from entering the University of Michigan's doctoral program in Linguistics. His goal was to convince fellow missionaries that it is possible to learn an unwritten language without relying on interpreters. On Pike's account, he invented the monolingual demonstration independent of stimulus from the 1939 Linguistic Institute. Strict adherence to monolingual methods, and the convention of withholding the identity of the target language, are apparently Pikean innovations. In his December 1946 presentation to the LSA, Pike may have fused his own style with Voegelin and Emeneau's tradition of performative elicitation before assemblies of linguists.[20]

5.2   Pike's and Everett's monolingual demonstrations

The gist of Pike's monolingual demonstration was to show that, in 20 minutes of unrehearsed interaction with a native speaker without relying on any shared language, a linguist could build up a miniature phonetic inventory and a model of the basic syntax of an unknown language, and from that begin to deduce its phonological and syntactic characteristics. One such performance by Pike was recorded on videotape at the University of Michigan television studio in 1977.[21] As Pike explains in an earnest introduction, he has no foreknowledge of the identity of the target language, except that it is not Mixtec, which Pike himself will use sparingly. The choice of Mixtec is strategic, as a language entirely unknown to the informant; this allows Pike to start the session off with a display of phatic communication without compromising the otherwise monolingual basis of the exchange.

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20.   Pike repeated his monolingual demonstration around the world. A chronology of Pike's life on SIL International's website lists eleven iterations (*Chronology* 2019). There were almost certainly many more, including two that Makkai (1986) mentions, and one that Everett witnessed in 1976 (Sakel & Everett 2012: 29).

21.   I am grateful to Robin Queen for access to this video, Pike (1977).

Pike also uses Mixtec to establish the routine of eliciting the names of items.[22] He closes his introductory remarks with a dramatic touch by observing that the demonstration "carries risks of failure" (0:45), by which Pike apparently means that his inferences about the target language on the basis of the elicited sample may be erroneous.

At the center of the studio stage is a table on which numerous objects rest — rocks, different sized leaves, sticks, fruits, a toy alligator, a basket. Three walls behind the table are covered with whiteboards. The native speaker stands on the margin of the stage, to the extreme right. Pike enters from the left, and briskly greets the speaker in Mixtec. When the speaker responds in the target language, Pike repeats what the speaker says, then pivots to transcribe it on the whiteboard behind him in the Americanist phonetic transcription, glossed as 'Hi'. Pike approaches the table, selects an object, and presents it to the speaker, asking — presumably — "What is this called?" in Mixtec. The speaker responds in the target language, which Pike interprets as naming the object. He repeats the speaker's response, and transcribes it on the whiteboard alongside its inferred meaning in English. After repeating this action with a different object, Pike dispenses with Mixtec and simply holds up objects with an expectant gesture, quickly filling the whiteboards with transcriptions and conjectured glosses. He elicits color and number terms, nouns with possessives and adjective modifiers, then mimes transitive and intransitive actions ('I hit you'; 'The stick falls') to elicit verbs and their dependents, gradually building up more complex constructions. Pike is fully in charge throughout: the pace is rapid, with no hesitations or gaps marking transitions.

After 20 minutes Pike turns to the studio audience and, in English, summarizes his provisional analysis of the sounds and basic syntax of the target language. On Pike's invitation, the speaker then switches to English. Pike walks him through the collected transcriptions and glosses to verify their accuracy, and then asks him to identify the target language (Javanese). The video ends with Pike addressing viewers. He emphasizes the importance of non-verbal behavior, and asserts that it is possible to "face the unknown" (26:31), breaking into a foreign language without reliance on translation, because "mankind is one" (26:34). Pike finishes by reciting one of his own poems on the theme of cross-cultural unity (26:55–27:16).

Everett explicitly modeled his monolingual demonstration on that of Pike (Sakel & Everett 2012:29). Like Pike, Everett has repeated the performance many

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22. Pike gestures abundantly, communicating with his hands, gaze, posture, and facial expressions, taking for granted that the native speaker interprets non-verbal signals correctly. Pike's reliance on non-verbal communication may undermine the conception of the exchange as strictly 'monolingual'.

times. It has twice been captured on YouTube (Everett 2002, 2013); in both cases, Everett highlights Pike's authority. In 2002, Everett used Pirahã to elicit what turned out to be Nepali; in 2013, Hmong.[23] There are a few differences between Pike's and Everett's demonstrations. Everett's pace is slower; he sustains use of Pirahã throughout (whereas Pike dropped the use of Mixtec after a few minutes); and he does not systematically review the transcriptions and glosses with the native speaker at the end of the session. Otherwise, all the core features of Pike's performance are intact, from its goals, to the sequence of events, to the layout of the stage. Like Pike, Everett speaks directly to the audience both before and after the demonstration, with a question and answer session at the end of Everett (2013) that continues for thirty minutes.

5.3   What do monolingual demonstrations aim to accomplish?

Both Pike's and Everett's monolingual demonstrations display the trappings of skilled public performances designed for maximum audience engagement. From the very first one mentioned in the LSA *Bulletin* of 1946, they have been staged, publicized, and framed by their protagonists more like shows than academic lectures. A text by Hungarian linguist Adam Makkai is revealing. Makkai (1986: 54–57) recounts a monolingual demonstration that Pike carried out on some unspecified occasion in which Makkai himself served, in heavy disguise, as Pike's informant. Makkai gleefully describes how he donned a costume and makeup to impersonate an elderly Hungarian peasant, then shuffled onstage to submit to Pike's questions. There is no mistaking the theatricality of the dénouement when Makkai unveils his identity. It is therefore reasonable to question the relationship between monolingual demonstrations and monolingual methods: do the demonstrations as captured on video realistically model fieldwork practices, or are they designed as entertainment, or to meet some other goal?[24]

In Pike's few writings on the topic, he makes it clear that by his lights the purpose of monolingual demonstrations is to prepare viewers for fieldwork:

> In 1936 I first developed a 'monolingual demonstration' to teach students what they could do if they were trying to learn a language in some area where there is no alphabet, no dictionary, no written grammar, and no interpreter available to help them...I developed this monolingual demonstration because I was (and for half a century since have been) involved in training students to work in the analysis of unwritten languages of the world. (Pike 1993: Chapter 1)

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23. As of 17 January 2021, Everett (2002) has been viewed 1,939 times, and Everett (2013) 39,374 times.

24. I am grateful to Steve Marlett for raising this issue, and challenging the position I take.

Recalling a conversation shortly before Pike's death, Everett reports Pike as saying that "monolingual fieldwork and monolingual demonstrations teach us about language as a holistic experience" (2012:30; see also Everett 2013:50:13–50:38). Everett himself adopts the same posture: what is demonstrated is authentic to the practice itself, a genuine sample of fieldwork, not an amusing or educational showpiece. In addressing the audience before launching into the demonstration, Everett (2002) states outright that "This is real fieldwork...It really is fieldwork" (0:53–1:04). Moreover, he routinely adverts to his demonstrations in published writings without distinguishing real from staged fieldwork (Everett 2001:187; 2012:29–30).[25]

In her introduction to Everett's 2013 demonstration, Sally Thomason of the University of Michigan, site of the 2013 Linguistic Institute, underscores the point. Thomason defines a linguist as "a person who, if you drop them by parachute into any place in the world...can start from absolute scratch and analyze the language" (Everett 2013:2:02–2:17). With this, Thomason implies that the monolingual methods about to be demonstrated onstage are so central to the field that control over them determines the boundaries of the discipline. She goes on to specify that "what a monolingual demonstration...provides you with, is a glimpse of what it's like to start from absolute scratch" (3:13–3:24).[26]

5.4   Monolingual demonstrations in the context of 21st century fieldwork

Notwithstanding a certain accompanying showmanship, then, Pike and Everett assert the verisimilitude of monolingual demonstrations to linguistic fieldwork. However, on a number of counts, Pike's and Everett's representation of how to go about studying a language in this setting, by these methods, is difficult to reconcile with the general character of 21st-century field linguistics. Monolingual demonstrations are anomalous in at least two ways.

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25. Werner (2017:140) provides evidence that others treat demonstrations as genuine fieldwork. He cites Pike (1977) and Everett (2013) in proposing an "ostension scheme" for organizing the results of monolingual elicitation.

26. An anonymous reviewer, an experienced field researcher, pointed out that linguists preparing to undertake fieldwork do not seek out training by watching Pike's or Everett's videos, but rather by enrolling in graduate coursework or by participating in workshops sponsored by (for example) the Institute on Collaborative Language Research (CoLang), affiliated with the Linguistic Society of America, or the biennial International Conference on Language Documentation and Conservation, hosted by the University of Hawai'i. I doubt that either Pike or Everett would argue that their demonstrations supplant the kind of thorough-going preparation that fieldworkers require. At question is not whether these demonstrations are comprehensive — which surely they aren't — but rather whether they offer a genuine glimpse of fieldwork. Both Pike and Everett assert that they do.

First, recall that a signature feature of modern fieldwork is its re-evaluation and critique of older methods. Pike's and Everett's demonstrations show how to carry out the initial stages of fieldwork without use of a contact language or interpreter, but otherwise their methods are oddly backward-looking. For example, although only the target language passes between the linguist and the native speaker, the basis of the exchange is still essentially that of translation: the linguist holds up a rock to elicit the speaker's word for 'rock'; the linguist mimes drinking a glass of milk to elicit 'I drink milk'. The linguist anticipates, and draws out, simple equivalences across the two languages, then transcribes them on the board, with the conjectured target-language form aside the English gloss. Surely some portions of a foreign language are amenable to study and acquisition in this way. But it is not a fully adequate method. The methodological florescence which began with post-Bloomfieldians' elaboration on Boasian text-collection, and which late 20th-century fieldworkers continued, has brought to light ways to study a language that do not presuppose narrow one-to-one equivalences. But Pike's and Everett's demonstrations do not take that on board. They challenge fieldworkers to bring a monolingual approach to the learning of a field language, but do not disrupt the older, translation-based, conception of how to discover the character of the target language.

An anecdote that Everett tells is illustrative. In the question-and-answer exchange that follows his 2013 demonstration, he mentions that he had been stymied after many attempts to elicit the Pirahã words for 'right (hand)' versus 'left (hand)'. Then one day on a walk into the jungle he overheard one Pirahã speaker directing another by saying "Turn upriver!", although there was no river nearby (2013: 58: 51–59: 34). With that, Everett realized that Pirahã uses absolute rather than relative directional terms. The story records a triumph for immersive fieldwork — the kind of fieldwork that took Everett out on walks through the jungle, away from the translation-based elicitation that Aikhenvald labeled "malpractice". Monolingual demonstrations dispense with interpreters and contact languages, but they still presuppose simple form-to-form equivalences in a way that would be unlikely to lead to insight into Pirahã directional terms.

It is reasonable to object that the linguistic complexity of the difference between "Turn left" and "Turn upriver" exceeds the horizons of the very first encounter with a field language as depicted in Pike's and Everett's presentations. Nevertheless, monolingual demonstrations could be adapted to display methods more consonant with modern practice, thereby introducing students *ab initio* to some of the hard-won sophistication of 21st-century fieldwork. For example, the table piled with rocks, leaves, fruit, and so forth, might be re-positioned so as to invite the speaker to select items from it for identification, or to volunteer comments about those items, instead of only passively responding to questions posed

by the linguist. Perhaps even more revealing would be to allow the speaker to determine the inventory of items that appear on the table, which might bring to light a target language's system for classifying natural phenomena.

There is a second anomaly of monolingual demonstrations in the context of modern fieldwork. Twenty-first-century field linguistics reconceptualized relationships between fieldworkers, target-language speakers, and their community, but Pike's and Everett's demonstrations do not exhibit the fruits of that reconceptualization. Rather, they look backwards to the era when linguists wrote about how to "handl[e] unsophisticated linguistic informants". For example, it is remarkable that Pike's attention never seems to rest on the speaker, nor does actual communication appear to be his objective. For most of the session, Pike's back is turned; even when the two are oriented toward each other, Pike's eyes often address the whiteboard. He also frequently looks at the rock or stick in his own hands at the moment of elicitation, rather than meeting the speaker's gaze. Even more remarkable are the discourse dynamics in the last segment of Pike's interaction with the speaker, when the two walk through the transcribed material. The objective at this moment is to confirm the accuracy of the collected data, so that the speaker's linguistic competence plays the starring role. Pike, however, repeatedly interrupts the speaker's comments, and nullifies the speaker's turns by overriding them with his own comments even in cases where the two men agree. In every case of overlap in speech, the speaker cedes his turn to Pike, who does not acknowledge taking a dominant role. There is nothing in Pike's manner that communicates the choice of a subordinate social position: in no way does he model what it means to be "clumsy, ignorant, and useless" in the target-language speech community, to use Everett's words. Pike is officious and in control at every moment.

Everett's interactions with target-language speakers are less overbearing, although he still adopts a Pikean authoritative stance. Everett bustles from table to blackboard, leaving the speaker to gaze about from the sidelines with an expression of blank uncertainty. In all three videos, videographers follow Pike's and Everett's cues, framing the shots with the linguist as the center of attention, and the transcribed data of secondary importance. The speaker is a distant third object of interest, appearing in passing as Everett elicits words and then retreats to the board. Eight minutes into his post-elicitation remarks, Everett realizes that he has forgotten to ask the speaker for her name (20:13–50:45). Another fourteen minutes pass before an audience member reminds him that he has neglected to ask the speaker to identify her native language (1:05:11–1:05:40).[27] These lapses are inconsistent with the behavior of an outsider who sincerely seeks the

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27. Everett (2002) is heavily edited, reducing its value in the study of interpersonal dynamics.

community's help in learning their language, and who works to earn their respect — the attitude that "humbles" and "endear[s]" the researcher to the community, in Sarvasy's (2016: 473) representation of the tenor of monolingual approaches.

In these several ways, Pike's and Everett's demonstrations exercise the linguist's greater social power in interaction with speakers of the target language. This is not inherent to monolingual demonstrations, in the sense that they could be re-designed to balance the distribution of power, if demonstrators would be willing to relinquish their authority and expert status, or even go so far as to adopt a collaborative stance. But as the protocols of monolingual demonstrations stand at present, the social-interactional values tacitly communicated in Pike (1977) and Everett (2002, 2013) are strikingly retrospective from the point of view of the history of American linguistic fieldwork. They are also at odds with Pike's and Everett's own rhetoric: a theme in Pike's writing is the prioritization of people over material or intellectual values (1982: xi; 1998: 156). Everett has written at length about respecting the integrity of indigenous cultures (e.g. Everett 2012).[28]

Granted the gaps between what is demonstrated and current disciplinary culture, the continued favor that monolingual demonstrations meet with needs explanation.[29] Perhaps one reason for the fascination they hold is the simple thrill of listening to a foreign language, especially when it is juxtaposed to an equally foreign language in novel pairings such as Mixtec / Javanese, or Pirahã / Nepalese. For an audience of linguists, it is a good exercise, and sheer fun, to try to identify the features or typological status of the target language. Moreover, Thomason's image of a linguist "drop[ping]…by parachute into any place in the world" to decode its language flatters our sense of the power of the discipline, without asking us to face any of the complex social-intellectual demands of genuine fieldwork.

6.   *Conclusion*

While still retaining something of Boasian tradition, 21st-century American linguistic fieldwork has evolved to meet the exigencies of a new century. It has

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28.   Moreover, concealment of the identity of the target language, always a feature of monolingual demonstrations, clashes with Pike's and Everett's holism and insistence that culture shapes language, as well as with Everett's recommendations that fieldworkers-in-training start by reading all existing materials on the target language (2001: 172).

29.   An internet search turns up many references to, and clips of, monolingual demonstrations. DeLancey (2016) recorded a monolingual demonstration at the University of Oregon to contextualize the 2016 science-fiction film *Arrival*. Dallas International University (2019), allied with SIL International, advertises the availability of guest lecturers who stage monolingual demonstrations on demand for schools, churches, or clubs, presumably as a recruitment tool.

harnessed modern electronic technology to the task of language description and documentation. It has developed a variety of fieldwork methods, self-consciously assessing and reflecting on them. It has also reconsidered the imbalance of power between fieldworkers and target-language speakers, and proposed alternatives, including collaboration-based models.

The language(s) employed in fieldwork is an issue of perennial interest. Boas valued acquisition and use of the target language, but like many others who acknowledge its advantages, he did not adopt monolingualism as an exclusive policy. Sapir and Bloomfield each developed characteristic fieldwork styles. Sapir elicited data through translation, while Bloomfield avoided doing so. The next generation saw advantages to both procedures. Pike developed monolingual methods as an essential tool for missionary translators, and codified them in an engaging public demonstration designed to reassure missionaries that they could succeed in learning a field language. From 1946, Pike presented his monolingual demonstration widely. Everett popularized Pikean monolingualism for use outside missionary linguistics, and carried forward the tradition of monolingual demonstrations. Pike's and Everett's demonstrations, however, preserve features of older fieldwork not wholly consistent with 21st-century practices. Even so, these performances retain their intrigue, perhaps because of their discipline-reinforcing glamorization of field linguistics.

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Résumé

Au cours des premières décennies du XXe siècle, le travail de terrain, défini comme la collecte de données linguistiques par le biais d'une interaction directe avec un locuteur natif, était à la base de la linguistique américaine. Après une période de désintérêt au milieu du siècle, le travail de terrain a récemment été réhabilité afin de répondre à l'augmentation du nombre de langues menacées d'extinction dans le monde. Le travail de terrain américain du XXIe siècle hérite de certains des traits du travail de terrain précédent. Cet article revient sur l'histoire de la question controversée du choix méthodologique d'un chercheur sur le terrain entre le recours à un interprète (ou une lingua franca) ou l'adoption d'une approche monolingue (qui suppose l'apprentissage et l'utilisation de la langue cible). Bien que l'approche monolingue ne soit pas très répandue, ses partisans mettent fortement en avant sa valeur. La méthode a été vulgarisée auprès de linguistes au moyen de 'démonstrations monolingues' qui ne sont pourtant pas totalement compatibles avec la nature du travail de terrain du XXIème siècle.

Zusammenfassung

In den frühen Jahrzehnten des 20. Jahrhunderts galt Feldforschung — die Erfassung linguistischer Daten durch direkte Interaktion mit Muttersprachlern — als grundlegend für die amerikanische Sprachwissenschaft. Nach einer Phase der Vernachlässigung um die Mitte des Jahrhunderts wurde die Feldforschung in letzter Zeit als Mittel wiederbelebt, um dem weltweit

zunehmenden Aussterben von Sprachen entgegenzuwirken. Im 21. Jahrhundert übernimmt die amerikanische Feldforschung viele, aber nicht alle Merkmale der älteren Feldforschung. Im vorliegenden Beitrag soll die Geschichte einer umstrittenen Frage untersucht werden, ob nämlich der Feldforscher ein monolinguales Verfahren verfolgen sollte, indem er die Zielsprache als Kommunikationsmittel mit Muttersprachlern erlernt und verwendet, oder sich eher auf Dolmetscher bzw. auf eine Lingua franca verlassen sollte. Obwohl das monolinguale Verfahren nicht weitgehend praktiziert wird, plädieren moderne Befürworter für dessen Zweckmäßigkeit. Popularisiert wurde diese Methode durch vor versammelten Sprachwissenschaftlern vorgestellte 'monolinguale Präsentationen', die kurioserweise dem Charakter der Feldforschung des 21. Jahrhunderts nicht völlig entsprechen.

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