

Assignment 3: Ethics response

Due February 28 before class. Submit on IVLE > Files > Student Submission > Assignment 3.

Ethics is one of the most important aspects of this course. Read Bown (2008) chapter 11 and Rice (2006) (on IVLE). The former offers much practical advice; the latter offers more of a historical overview of different models. The discussions here cover many subjects and are quite complex. The goal of this assignment is to engage with this material and reflect on its relation to our work in this class as well as (potentially) your future fieldwork. Write 1–2 pages. The task is open-ended but here are some questions you might think about:

- What responsibilities do we have as linguists when studying a language, to its speakers / communities / other linguists / the general public?
- Do our responsibilities differ based on the status of the language (higher vs lower prestige; more vs fewer speakers; etc.)? Do they differ between fieldwork “in the field” versus our activities in this class and similar situations?
- Can knowledge of a language be “owned” by its speakers? In conducting field research, are we “taking” something from a (often less privileged) community?
- How do we discuss distinctive features of a language without exoticization?
- Is studying language an inherently political act?

Pick a theme or two for your reply — don’t try to address all these questions. Discussion of questions not on this list are also welcome.

References

- Bown, Claire. 2008. *Linguistic fieldwork: a practical guide*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rice, Keren. 2006. Ethical issues in linguistic fieldwork: An overview. *Journal of Academic Ethics* 4:123–155.