

## Study of a speech community: Data and Methodology

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Several practices exist within linguistics for studying a language. What constitutes data depends largely on the objectives of one's enquiry. The methodology is guided by one's definition of data and partly by one's theoretical orientation. Even though there is agreement on producing empirically verifiable accounts of language, the methodology of data collection, the nature and the quantum of the data collected vary vastly across different practices. The best practices are those that draw their data from a variety of speakers across the community, include methods of observing language use in a variety of contexts, record good quality conversational data, innovate and include experimental and other techniques of illustrating specific data and finally strategies of verifying data. In the end, each methodology would have to be tailored by the fieldworker to suit the needs of one's project keeping in mind one's relationship with the speech community and so on.

The Workshop focuses on how to study a language within its own community by focusing on methods of observing and documenting language in use. The workshop draws heavily from the methodology developed by the sociolinguists Labov and Milroy, and the anthropological linguist Gumperz. The methodology can be meaningfully adopted by anyone interested in building a comprehensive language corpus. The workshop will cover the following issues, with special emphasis on (4):

1. Individual and society
2. Understanding speech community: verbal repertoire, social structure, history of the community, people and language.
3. Entering the speech community
4. Methods of observing and documenting language use:
  - Sociolinguistic interviews:
    - How to make people talk?
    - What interests people?
    - Preparing appropriate modules
    - How to ask a question and how not to ask a question
  - Anonymous observations
  - Experiments for specific purposes
5. Making good quality recordings
6. Converting recorded materials into usable data corpus for language analysis