Participatory research in linguistics
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1. Introduction
In 1988, I started an experiment of group participatory research in Ngiti, an unresearched Central-Sudanic language of Zaire. The population had requested help in writing the language. They had put quite a bit of thought to devising their alphabet and had printed a hymn book, hoping to move on into Bible translation after that. However, the alphabet they had designed themselves had appeared overly difficult to read. Hence their request for help.

My aim then was to develop an adequate alphabet with as much local participation as possible, training the people in their own environment so that they would be able to produce good-quality work and carry the main responsibility of the translation project themselves.

I first concentrated on phonology and tone so as to ensure a consistent orthography. However, because of people’s interest and fascination with their language, we continued researching the grammar together as well. The group of speakers of the language participating in this research consisted of ten to fifteen volunteers. Sessions varying in duration from one to two weeks were held about three times a year. At first we had several headmasters and school directors, together with a number of local pastors and curious older people. Everyone was welcome and participated. Gradually, more and more highly educated people started taking an interest and participated in the sessions. They are now the ones carrying forward the language development and Bible translation project.

The main emphasis in this paper lies on the methodology developed for working out the phonological analysis in such a way as to raise the awareness of the native speakers for the sound and tone system of their language. However, the general principles of this participatory research can be applied to all other domains—grammar research, semantics and discourse analysis, and so forth.

I have seen “traditional” language projects headed up by an expatriate team where their aim has been to get through the “preparation phase,” namely the linguistic analysis—phonology statement, orthography statement, basic grammar statement, discourse analysis, and so forth—in order to start what they consider to be “the real work,” namely translation. The emphasis of the linguistic analysis was on completing required “write-ups,” rather than facilitating native speakers—the insiders—becoming part of the process.

I have also seen “national” projects move into translation at a very early stage before solid analysis had been completed so as not to make the people “wait” unnecessarily long for the Bible portions in their own language. Sometimes outsiders are sent in to help do some of the analysis, often at a very late stage, again with the aim of getting the analysis on paper, not necessarily so that the insiders (the speakers of the language) can own the contents and benefit from them.

This paper is a plea for giving linguistics a more prominent place as an important part of a language development program, and to do it in such a way that the real “owners” of the language participate to the full, getting trained to the highest of their potential and excited about the development of the language. This, in turn, creates an interest on the
part of others to read in their language and to use the written material in their mother tongue once it is available.

2. Participatory research
The following are some background thoughts giving the rationale for maximum involvement of groups of native speakers by letting them participate actively in the research, thus giving them informal training.

1. In most language groups there are people who have had some amount of schooling. A field linguist can work with them, proceeding along a path of discovery in the development of their language, raising their awareness of linguistic features of their language in phonology, orthography, grammar, developing a good style of writing, and so forth.

2. In participatory research, the aim is to involve several speakers of the language simultaneously in group research. Most people in preliterate societies love discussing their language and working in groups—it is a social event. Elderly people are of particular benefit when they participate in this activity. They are walking dictionaries which may soon be gone. They are highly respected, and if they see how the task belongs to all of them, they may accept the project from its very early stages.

3. When working on different aspects of a language with a group of native speakers, one principle is to share with them at any time what one is doing and why one is doing a particular thing. When people are involved and participate, they understand what the goal of the activities is. They will make remarks and give their input and insights. This will not only speed up the analysis but also contribute to its quality. Their remarks may confirm certain hypotheses, disprove others, or supply additional data to extend and refine observations and hypotheses.

3. Data gathering
This section contains practical remarks on how one can gather data for a sound and solid analysis of the basic phonology by involving a group of native speakers of the language and doing participatory research with them. The suggestions are based on the experience gained in working with the Ngiti people and could be repeated in different ways in different situations.

Our first exercise was to gather enough data for a solid analysis of the sound system—a good corpus of lexical items. The initial group of people I worked with consisted of a cross-section of people—some highly educated and some minimally educated, young and old, all with a desire to develop a readable alphabet for their language for the sake of a Bible translation.

Though we are accustomed to having the outside trained linguist doing initial transcription of the data in the language to be studied, I began by asking the speakers of the language to write the words of their language on slips of paper. In retrospect, having seen how much people participated actively, it seems to communicate to them two positive messages which are of great importance for the ownership of their translation project:
1. We affirm that the language is theirs.
2. We affirm that they are capable of working on the written development of the language themselves.

The rationale behind this practice is the following: articulatory phonetics and transcription is somewhat subjective. None of us can perfectly transcribe the phonetics of the language being studied. We tend to hear a new language through the grid of our own mother tongue and may miss subtle distinctions. Therefore, when writing down data in a new language we make many mistakes. These mistakes are often unsystematic. However, when native speakers try to write their language, they will often do it against the grid of the language in which they have learned to read and write in school. However, since the phonological system of the language they learned to read in school and their own mother tongue do not completely overlap, they may not be aware of all the sound distinctions at this early stage. They will likely underrepresent certain sounds, but often in a systematic way, which is an advantage for the next stage, namely working out the basic phonological analysis.

In the Ngiti experiment, I divided the group of 16 people in two smaller groups of eight people each. The older people appointed a younger person among them as “scribe.” He wrote the items down and the others supplied the words, enjoying the social event of discussing their language.

Experience has taught me that a phonology cannot normally be worked out on the basis of 200, 300, or even 600 words. I normally recommend a minimum of 1,000 lexical items in order not to miss sounds, contrasts, or instances of complementary distribution. The first task of the two groups of Ngiti speakers was, therefore, to collect at least 1,000 lexical items—nouns and verbs. These were written by hand on slips of paper—the task of the “scribes.” These scribes wrote down the items in whichever way they were able, based on their knowledge of the language of wider communication. An assignment like this can easily be completed in two or three days when the people themselves collect the data in two groups as we did.

Here are some ideas I gave to the participants for data collection in groups:

“Write down all the names of different fishes you know.” When they exhausted their ideas on that topic, they continued with the names of trees, all the different grasses they could come up with, different types of insects, birds, household utensils, crops, and so forth. It would be helpful to write nouns in singular and plural forms from the start, or with their gender marking if applicable. At this point, the glosses do not need to be as precise as one would want to see them later—“type of fish” would be sufficient, since the main objective at this stage is to have data in the language to work out the phonology in close collaboration with a group of speakers of the language.

Collecting verbs is usually more difficult than nouns. First of all, one wants to discover if there is an infinitive form which can be used consistently. Talking about infinitives in the language of wider communication or a national language might help them to find the appropriate form in their language. If an infinitive cannot readily be found, an imperative form could be chosen, or else the morphologically least complex form which could be cited consistently. Word lists may provide ideas for eliciting verbs, but at the same time one can let people know that they do not need to translate every verb
they meet in a list. Rather, if any verb sparks off their thoughts to another verb, semantically, phonologically, or tonologically related, one would also write those down.

It is a good practice to keep nouns and verbs separate, and then to weed out any words which look like compounds or in any other way morphologically complex, since the first phase of the phonology needs to be worked out on the basis of monomorphemic forms, or roots within words which may have obligatory prefixes or suffixes. The aim is to not get involved in morphophonology while doing the basic phonology. Other word classes can be taken into consideration at a later stage to see if they fit within the overall pattern of the sound system established, or if any special sounds or syllable patterns appear.

Not only will the collection of lexical items serve as basis for the analysis of the phonology, but at the same time it forms the beginning of a lexicon, later to be developed into a more extensive dictionary, which will serve as the reference point for a language development project.

### 4. Phonological analysis

#### 4.1. Principles and procedures

Before presenting the methodology of how we checked the vowels, consonants, and tones, here are some background thoughts and principles: defining what it is we want to know, what should be compared with what, and how to look at word and root structures. If we define what it is we want to know, we will be able to devise an approach to reach our goal. On the whole, we want to know which sounds are contrastive and which ones are in complementary distribution.

Complementary distribution, in general, applies to the following types of cases:

1. The co-occurrences and co-occurrence restrictions between consonants and vowels.
2. Mutual exclusive distribution of certain sounds in certain positions in the syllable, root, or word structure.

Therefore, the phonotactics of the language, and not a small set of minimal pairs, are the more important element in phonological research. Minimal pairs are just a perfect and special example of certain contrasts. When reading through phonology descriptions, one often finds that minimal pairs contain a mixture of nouns, verbs, words from closed classes like pronouns, ideophones, inflected verb forms, and other forms which are not really comparable because of their word class or their morphological structure. Lists of minimal pairs fail to show the complete CV distribution and the distribution of each phoneme in different positions in the word/root structure, which is the more important element in trying to discover contrast and complementary distribution.

In some phonological descriptions, distribution charts are supplied containing ticks or crosses to show the CV distribution. But in light of the fact that, in many cases, no morphologically consistent or comparable forms have been used in the minimal pairs, the ticks or crosses may mark CV combinations in noncomparable environments. Those charts may not highlight the particular distributional restrictions that one would like to see. We would want to see lists of words ("analogous pairs") demonstrating all CV combinations and for all separate positions in the root morpheme. In this way, any
systematic or accidental gaps in CV-distribution or any gaps of certain sounds in certain positions in the root or word will immediately hit the eye. These gaps will show themselves to be systematic when it concerns a particular subset of sounds—a natural class. Cases of complementary distribution will jump out quite obviously.

It is very important to compare those items which are comparable! Sounds should be compared in similar positions in the root structure. For the purpose of determining contrasts and complementary distribution, sounds which are the result of morphophonological processes should not be compared with sounds in a root. An initial prefix consonant should not be compared with an initial root consonant, even if both are word initial. A root-initial consonant following a prefix should not be compared with a root-medial consonant, even if both occur word medially.

The first question, therefore, is (looking at basic nouns and verbs only): what are the syllable structure(s), the root structure(s), and the (noncompound) word structure(s) (which may or may not contain obligatory affixes).

\[
\begin{align*}
CV, & \text{ CVC, CVV, CVVC} \\
CV, & \text{ CVC/CVVC, CVCV/CVVCV}
\end{align*}
\]

By way of example:

- Ngiti has only open syllables with short vowels, that is, V and CV. The basic word structure is VCV, though a considerable amount of borrowed words from a neighbouring Bantu language exist with a (px)CVCV structure.
- Lendu, the neighbouring and most closely related language, similarly has only open syllables with short vowels. Its basic word structure is CV for the majority of the nouns and for all verbs. There is no obligatory affixation.
- Many Bantu languages have a basic noun structure pxCVCV (interlacustrine Bantu languages have long vowels, pxCVVVCV, in addition) containing disyllabic roots. Verb infinitives are pxCV(V)C-a and consist, therefore, of monosyllabic roots -CV(V)C-. Every noun or verb has an obligatory prefix; verb infinitives have an obligatory verb-final vowel, mostly -a.

Working through the procedure in a regular way, I normally start checking through the vowel system, then work on consonants, and finally work on tones and tone patterns on words in isolation.

The steps in the analysis depend on the syllable, root, and word structure. Every subsequent step depends to a certain extent on the outcome of the previous step. The example given here is how we did it in Ngiti. Adaptations need to be made according to the syllable, root, and word structure of the language being researched. I always proceed from easy to difficult.

### 4.2. Vowels

In our Ngiti experience, the people had written their data with five vowels: a, e, i, o, u, following the Swahili alphabet. I expected that there would be more vowels—seven or nine.
We worked out this puzzle together with the people who had written the lexical items in such a way that they became fully aware of the vowel system of their language, realized it was different from Swahili and that it contained nine vowels. Going through this discovery process themselves made them not only willing but wanting to write nine vowels in their alphabet! In language programs where the outside linguist does analysis and devises an orthography without extensive native speaker involvement, there is often a resistance to using symbols that are not part of the language of wider communication or national language.

For any step in the process, I explained fully to the people what we were going to do and why, so that they could actively participate. I tried to get them to concentrate on listening to the particular feature we were trying to check, and not to get sidetracked into explanations of meanings at this point nor into trying to pay attention to any other sounds or tones that may stand out. The only thing we were aiming for at this point was to try to come to a consensus on whether all sounds in the particular stack of words to be checked (written the same so far) were indeed the same, that is, separating different from same. The result is a first observation and hypothesis as to how many vowel qualities this language has.

In Ngiti, we sorted the VCV nouns and listened first of all to those in which V1 = V2: aCa, then iCi, and so forth, according to the way the people had written them, realizing very well that they had most likely underrepresented certain vocalic contrasts.

In other similar situations I always start with the vowel a (or a-a in disyllabic words), because it has the function of getting people into a rhythm for the remainder of the task—checking through the more difficult sounds. Following that, I would go through the stack with iCi and uCu. In general, any contrasts in the high vowels are easier to perceive than mid vowel contrasts.

In Ngiti it appeared that there was an ATR (Advanced Tongue Root) contrast in the high vowels as well as in the mid vowels. Having learned to read in Swahili, the people had written their nine-vowel system against the grid of the Swahili five-vowel system in such a way that the [–ATR] and its [+ATR] counterpart were systematically represented by the same symbol.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Swahili vowels (orthography)</th>
<th>Ngiti vowels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>i</td>
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<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>u</td>
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<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>[–ATR]</td>
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<td>o</td>
<td>[–ATR]</td>
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<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>[+ATR]</td>
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<td>e</td>
<td>[–ATR]</td>
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<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Native speaker reaction was very helpful at this point, since for outsiders’ ears it was quite difficult to hear the difference between a [–ATR] high vowel [i], and a [+ATR] mid vowel [ε]. For native speakers this generally does not present a problem. They, however, lump together the [–ATR] and [+ATR] counterparts [i] and [i], [ε] and [ε], and so forth. This meant that when we checked the words written with i Ci, two groups emerged—those with the “real” [+ATR] [i], and those with the [–ATR] [i]. Similarly, this was the case for all the other vowels. When listening to long lists of words only containing these two sounds (so far underdifferentiated by native speakers), the contrast between the two
closely related vowel qualities soon became clearly audible both to me and to the native speakers.

The next step was to check the vowels in combinations in which \( V_1 \neq V_2 \), again, according to the transcription of the people: aCi, aCu, aCe, aCo, iCe, iCa, and so forth. We divided them into groups with all the same combinations, and then checked them systematically for consistency within each group. Here, too, they had underrepresented in the same way as had been noticed before—the group aCi produced two groups: aCi and aCt, and so forth. All the vowels previously discovered also surfaced in this second stage.

One element of the phonotactics of a language consists in discovering the \( V_1—V_2 \) co-occurrences and co-occurrence restrictions within roots. This second step of working on the combinations in which \( V_1 \neq V_2 \) immediately showed these combinations. In this language with ATR vowel harmony, it also showed the systematic gaps, namely the impossibility of combinations of vowels of different ATR values within a root.

When finished with the basic nouns, we followed the same checking procedure for verbs. In most languages, we expect this step to yield the same number of vowel contrasts as were found in the nominal system; occasionally one might find a different vowel inventory in the verb system. However, more often the permitted \( V_1—V_2 \) combinations may not be the same in verbs as they are in nouns of the same segmental structure. This appeared indeed to be the case in Ngiti.

The following are some brief remarks for languages with different structures.

If a language has CVC syllables, one can follow the same procedure but one should also subsort and check each vowel according to the final consonant which may not have been checked yet, since vowel quality may be affected by the final consonant.

Length may or may not have been written. It may be ignored at first if no one has written it. If it has been written it may not be consistent, therefore we would place a stack of (px)CaaCa slips below all the (px)CaCa slips, and so forth.

If the language seems to have contrastive length, that could be sorted out after checking the different vowel qualities, determining in which position in the root long vowels may occur contrastively. Once a stack is consistent for vowel quality, one can go through it once again separating long vowels from short vowels.

Creative approaches to deal with leftover problems can be devised, but it is always important to study and check the items in the context of a number of instances of the same type. It is not helpful to study isolated instances because their place in the whole phonological system will not immediately be obvious.

Finally, one should study carefully each individual case which may constitute an exception.

### 4.3. Consonants

The aim for phonological analysis involving consonants is to check all consonants in all positions in the syllable, root, or word. The Ngiti case was relatively straightforward in that there were no syllable-final or root-final consonants, nor did the language have root-medial consonants. (The VCV structure may be interpreted as a nonfunctional prefix, followed by a CV root).

In other languages, one would start by making separate consonant charts for the different positions in the syllable/root/word. This will highlight any generalizations about consonants in different positions in the syllable/root/word, which, in turn, will show the
real cases of contrast, cases of limited distribution, and cases of complementary distribution.

For languages with open syllables only, the syllable-initial consonants may or may not need to be divided in the root-initial and root-medial consonants. In many languages, the root-medial consonants form a small subset of the root-initial consonants. A well-known case of complementary distribution is a root-medial -r- as an allophone of /d/. For this reason, it is best to pursue this distinction until it is clear whether it is important.

Languages with open and closed syllables present a much more complex case and need careful examination, even more so if they have obligatory affixation. First, one needs to check (root-)initial consonants and (root-) final consonants. The medial consonants need to be differentiated according to “medial between two vowels,” “medial between V—C,” and “medial between C—V.” In each case, different types of morphological concatenations need to be separated. It may be necessary to collect paradigms of different morphological constructions and study and compare these in order to posit the underlying form of the morphemes and to get at the underlying phonemes in any particular position.

By way of example: in Ngiti, people had written a “b” in certain words and “bh” in others, which most likely represents a perceived difference between an egressive “b” and an implosive “ɓ.” It is possible that the different people who had written down the data had not been consistent, or that some had been aware of the difference and others not. We put them together in one pile and tried to tune our hearing to two different bs, splitting the data into two piles according to the type of b. After another check for consistency within each of these piles, the awareness of the local people had been raised into recognizing this particular contrast in their language.

We checked all consonants following this procedure. If two consonants were phonetically close, we would put the data for these two consonants together and see if, together, we could all hear the contrast and agree on every single word. All other consonants would be checked in their particular position in the word.

All the time we would keep complete track of the vowels that could combine with each consonant, and of the position in the root/word of the particular consonant. Through studying the phonotactics of the language in this way, any gaps in the distribution would stand out, highlighting possible cases of complementary distribution.

4.4. Tone

This section contains a few generalized remarks on tone analysis gained from experience in Ngiti and other languages.

First, it is best to assume that an African language is tonal until one can prove the contrary! Raising people’s awareness of tone in their mother tongue may well be easier than raising their awareness of certain vowel or consonant contrasts. Since children mimic the tones of their language often before they can properly pronounce certain segmental contrasts, many adult speakers of African languages are highly aware of certain tonal distinctions in their languages.

Before tackling the tone system of a language, one would want to read the literature on related languages and know about the tone systems of languages in the area and come up with a basic hypothesis, for example, Bantu languages generally have a two-tone system; Central-Sudanic languages have a three-tone system, and so forth.
The data needs to be sorted strictly in comparable syllable/root/word structures. Even short and long vowels should not be mixed since the tones (or tone combinations) on these structures may vary—long vowels may be considered as two tone-bearing units.

Whistling is a helpful way to hear different levels of pitch since it isolates the pitch from the segmentals. After getting into a rhythm of saying and whistling, native speakers can separate the items into different stacks according to the tone or tone melody whistled. The next step is to check through each stack for consistency. This method will also work with monosyllables!

We did not set up tone frames because previous experience in other languages had shown me that both the inserted item and the tone frame may present tonal changes from the underlying form. When working with a group of native speakers in this sort of participatory research, work with words in isolation, that is, a “zero” frame, even in a monosyllabic language, can serve just as effectively.

As with the segmentals, nouns and verbs should be treated separately since the tones or tonal melodies are not necessarily the same for these two word classes. In our Ngiti experience, we found that there were five possible tone patterns on VCV nouns: L.L, M.M, M.H, H.L, L.LM, whereas verb infinitives only displayed three tone patterns: M.L, M.M, and M.H.

On the basis of our findings with nouns and verbs, we first established the number of level tones in the language, the presence or absence of falling and rising tones, and we made lists of tone minimal pairs. The latter especially sparked people’s thoughts, and they would come with more and more lexical items which were minimally distinctive for tone. The study of tonal changes caused by the tonal environment (tonal sandhi processes) and the study of how tone functions in the grammar, especially the verb system, would be pursued at a later stage. Trying to get involved in analyzing grammatical tone in the verb before having established the basic tonal system and the tone patterns on verb roots, can cause difficulty for disentangling the various aspects of tone in the verb.

5. Further linguistic research
Participatory research does not need to stop once a phonological analysis has been worked out. People generally love to discuss their language and enjoy discovering patterns in grammar, perhaps even more than in phonology and tone. Since a certain amount of work on morphology is often necessary for determining morpheme boundaries, in the Ngiti experiment we naturally moved on into morphology and other grammatical topics: nominal morphology, the intricacies of the pronominal system, verbal inflection and derivation, aspects of discourse, semantics, special S-V and V-O collocations, and idioms.

Never would we reach complete understanding on any one topic in one session. The research in many topics would stretch out over several sessions. The first time we approached a topic like verbal derivation, we would gain a certain amount of basic understanding of the topic; in the next research period, months later, we would repeat what we had found so far, and people would come with more examples, ideas, counterexamples, and so forth. It seemed that because their awareness had grown, in a next session they would be able to “dig deeper.” This meant in our case of Ngiti research, sharing with the research group what I thought I saw in terms of patterns in the language,
getting their feedback as well as extra examples, confirming or disproving a hypothesis, or yielding additional detail on the topic being studied. It entailed training them to do more and more of the work semiindependently. It is very satisfying to see them participate, become aware, contribute to the analysis, and become partners in the work. Not only does the analysis benefit in quality, but the people have a stronger sense of ownership which will have its positive repercussions for other aspects of the language development program. Such participatory research may also be helpful for identifying those with the potential and interest for further formal linguistics study.

6. Orthography
A practical aim of phonological analysis is a readable orthography—one which marks all relevant distinctions, which responds to native speaker intuition, and which is acceptable in the eyes of the native speakers.

Rather than working out the orthography in isolation in my office, we discussed the various options with the speakers of the language in our research group as we went along with the analysis. As their awareness of certain sound contrasts was raised, people would want to mark these distinctions in their orthography. Certain orthographic possibilities were discussed and tested out at a very early stage. Since the people had been using their Swahili-like “orthography” when writing down the nouns and verbs, we used a “tentative orthography” from the start—accepting cases which were straightforward, like writing ny for n, ch for a palatal affricate (in a Swahiliphone environment), and some others in that category. As other more problematic sounds were checked, the possible graphemes would be discussed immediately. This method helped the speakers to gradually get used to them and to respond positively or negatively early on. This approach would also make it obvious if they made systematic mistakes.

A “Western” way of handling the decision-making process for an orthography might be to present a neatly worked-out proposal, to explain the reasons behind the choices, discuss, reason, and come to a conclusion as to what would be the best solution. However, things are more likely to turn out positively if the people concerned have “experienced” the written language development over a period of time, if their awareness has been raised and they have been fully involved in the discovery process. This can be done in such sessions of participatory research.

One aspect of psycholinguistic intuition is based on what people have learned in a language of wider communication or a national language. Their perceived ideas of correspondences between the two languages are very important. Even if the language to be studied has more distinctions than the language of wider communication, it is very important to let them “match” the graphemes of the language of wider communication with the ones they feel are “the same” in their language, then suggesting other graphemes for the “extra” vowels or consonants. This way, transferability is as natural as possible. This consideration outweighs by far criteria like frequency, redundancy, or practical typewriter considerations.

If people have not “felt” their phonological system, they often resist writing more distinctions than they have learned in a language of wider communication, which would lead to underrepresentation and inconsistency in the use of certain letters.
7. Conclusion
Right from the start when a language project is planted in a community it needs to start growing roots in that community. The seeds are sown by raising the awareness of linguistic features of the language with the community of speakers.

In what follows, I list some reasons why we as expatriate linguists should train in this way as much as possible:

1. The language is not ours, it belongs to the people who speak it. We should try to look at all its aspects the way the insider looks at them and not from the outsider’s perspective.
2. The analysis will go faster and be of a better quality because of the feedback from the insiders.
3. The speakers of the language will benefit to the extent that they can take it in—that is, they will be trained on-the-job to the highest of their potential.
4. The project will belong much more to the speakers of the language and hence grow deeper roots in the community, especially if done with a group of people in the area where the language is spoken.
5. More than anything else, language is close to people’s hearts. It forms an important part of people’s identity. People get excited seeing the richness in vocabulary and/or the patterning: singular/pluractional distinctions in verbs, logophoric pronouns, diminutives, augmentatives, and so forth. They may have had the idea that the national language and language of wider communication are real languages, but theirs is only a “dialect” because it does not have a dictionary, grammar, or alphabet. Discovering these things about their language, devising and using an orthography, and the beginning work on a dictionary, shows them that theirs is also a “language.” It affirms their identity.

For further related ideas on this approach in phonology, tone and grammar, see the series of articles by Ursula Wiesemann in Notes on Linguistics 41, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, and 51.