

Today's topics:

- **Ethics in scientific research**
- **The concept of “native speaker” in linguistics**

Background preparation — Excerpts from:

- *Abrahamsson & Hyltenstam (2009)*
- *Birkeland et al. (2024)*

0. Today's objectives

After today's class, you should be able to:

- Identify broad categories of ethical concerns in scientific research, generally
- Relate general concerns about scientific ethics to the context of linguistics research
- Compare and contrast approaches to the concept of “nativeness” / “native speaker” in linguistics with respect to scientific validity and scientific ethics

0. Course information

- Any questions about SC HW #3?
 - Note: Deciding *how* concepts from our phonological model are relevant and can be insightfully applied is *part* of the assignment itself
 - Hint: Consider what matters for the discussion, argument, or proposal that you are presenting
 - Particular segments or segment classes?
 - Environments where something happens?
 - How segments are associated to syllables?
 - Syllable-structure options?
- See revised σ diagram in [slides from 03.04](#)

1. Ethics in science: General concerns

Discussion

- What are some kinds of ethical issues that can come up in scientific research?

1. Ethics in science: General concerns

- Some ethical issues in science include
 - Honesty in data reporting
 - Fair and humane treatment of animals and humans being studied
 - Environmental impact of the study
 - Avoiding influence of lobbyists and interest groups in planning, reporting research
 - Avoiding bias in the research questions chosen for study or the prior works cited in a paper

2. Ethics in linguistics research

Discussion

- Can these issues arise in linguistics research?
 - Honesty in data reporting
 - Fair and humane treatment of animals and humans being studied
 - Environmental impact of the study
 - Avoiding influence of lobbyists and interest groups in planning, reporting research
 - Avoiding bias in the research questions chosen for study or the prior works cited in a paper

2. Ethics in linguistics research

- Can these issues arise in linguistics research?
 - Honesty in data reporting
 - Notorious example: [[Language Log](#)] [[Wikipedia](#)]
 - Fair and humane treatment
 - Language consultants and language communities
 - Bias in what/who to study
 - Bias in who to cite
- Which of these issues came up in today's readings?
- See also the Linguistic Society of America (LSA) website on [ethics in linguistics](#)

2. Ethics in linguistics research

- Examples of ethical issues that can come up in linguistics research specifically
 - Relationship between linguists, communities
 - [Rice \(2006\)](#) on history, **best practices** in fieldwork with indigenous communities
 - [LSA ethics committee](#) on how language research and documentation can **differ** from typical “human subjects research”
 - Where/who linguistic data comes from
 - One aspect: “native speaker”??

3. The concept of “native speaker” in linguistics

Group discussion

- What **definition(s)** have you learned for the term “native speaker” in previous linguistics courses?
- In what ways have you seen the concept of “native speaker” treated as **important** in linguistics?

3. The concept of “native speaker” in linguistics

Debriefing

- Some ways in which the term “native speaker” has likely come up in previous courses
 - L1 speaker — learned the language in a state where no previous language had been learned
 - Learned the language naturalistically, from exposure to language data in the community
 - Consider: Does a “native speaker” have to be a monolingual?

3. The concept of “native speaker” in linguistics

Debriefing

- In what ways have you seen the concept of “native speaker” treated as **important** in linguistics?

Two important categories

- To determine which language data should be included in a description, analysis, or experiment
- To study (the outcome of) child language acquisition in the context of human cognition — “Universal Grammar”

4. Perspectives on “native speaker”

Discussion

- How do Abrahamsson & Hyltenstam (2009) define “native speaker of Swedish” for inclusion in their experiment? Why do they include “native speaker” in their study design?
- How do Birkeland et al. (2024) view the term “native speaker/signer”?
- Discuss these two perspectives together — Are they incompatible? Can they be reconciled?

4. Perspectives on “native speaker”

- Consider Abrahamsson & Hyltenstam (2009: 287), Table 10
 - What comparison is this table designed to communicate?
 - How can we read this table?
 - How is “nativelikeness” defined in this study? Why is this concept important for these researchers?

4. Perspectives on “native speaker”

- Consider the list of bullet points in the middle of the page, Birkeland et al. (2024: e180)
 - How might Abrahamsson & Hyltenstam (2009) respond to these questions?
 - Are there domains of linguistics research where we need to distinguish between “native” and “non-native” speakers? If so, can we more specifically control for “factors such as language experience, community belonging, or language use” instead?

4. Perspectives on “native speaker”

Final points for thought

- Is it ever necessary to distinguish between what have been called “native” and “non-native” speakers in linguistics research?
- Is it possible to do this in a way that minimizes problems of bias, exclusion, and other harms?
- Are there scientific reasons to extend linguistic research and linguistic theorizing beyond the study of “native speakers”?