

## **Wondering about Ethics and the Observer's Paradox: The Sociolinguist in the Field**

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**Abstract:** *The main purpose of sociolinguistics is to account for language variation and change and the factors that contribute to these processes. However, nothing of this sort can be accomplished without entering a community to collect empirical data that will help the sociolinguist to provide answers. This study highlights the steps that have to be followed in order to conduct a successful and ethical research project in a community. The main issue that a sociolinguist might encounter in the field when collecting data is known as the Observer's Paradox. Possible ways of overcoming the Observer's Paradox are presented together with the ethical guidelines that have to be followed. The slippery concept of 'speech community' is also tackled, together with that of 'community of practice'. The heart of this study, and also of field research, is the section dedicated to the sociolinguistic interview, which delves into the protocols for designing such an interview, random sampling and eliciting different speech styles.*

**Keywords:** *speech community, sociolinguistics, Observer's Paradox, sociolinguistic interview, ethics, fieldwork*