Finding consultants

- The right people to work with are young men.
  - There are social problems with one-on-one encounters with women. Stay away.
  - There are challenges with older speakers, too
    - The judgment task requires analytical reasoning; not familiar
    - The judgment task requires serious effort; hard to ask for this
    - The judgment task requires a willingness to say no; often difficult
    - The elicitation work requires compensation; easier with younger people
  - Generally: men around ages 25-30 have a solid command of the local language.
    - Beneath this age range, and especially with women, Indonesian becomes much more dominant, and you have to seriously screen your speakers.
    - Whenever you can, gather information about language usage immediately

- The right personality type
  - People can be imperfect consultants for many different reasons:
    - Wrong language background; wrong language ideology
    - Don't think hard enough about judgments; don't follow explanations
    - Uninterested in the work and motivated by other things, like social gain
  - The right people will:
    - Be willing and able to sit down and devote time to the work
    - Think seriously about judgments; understand high-level patterns
    - Have some ideological commitment to the work; understand its value

- The way to meet people
  - Start with university clubs; places where interesting young people might gather
    - Explain your goal and make yourself available. People will approach you.
    - Be generous; work with everyone. Gradually you'll learn who's right.
    - Establish regular meeting schedules. Once a week is generally good.
    - Start talking about compensation around the fourth meeting, one month in
  - Build out from existing networks
    - Once you've built a good relationship with someone, ask about friends.
    - Let the consultant set the terms of how you engage with their network
      - Ask who is a good fit for this work
      - Ask him about the sorts of things that are appropriate to ask about
      - Ask him what to say about payment. If there's any apprehension at all about this, don't raise it with anyone else that you meet.
Engaging with consultants

- Let consultants know about the purpose of the research
  - Tell them that the goal is to understand the structure of the language
    - This is different from learning to speak it, or hearing their thoughts on it.
    - It's a goal that only makes sense in a theoretical paradigm, so you'll need to explain the notions of "linguistic structure" and "linguistic theory"
  - Tell them where the data will go
    - There will be presentations and publications that come from the work
    - Important people in America will be interested in the things that they say;
    - Remember: elicitation is opaque in its goals, its methods, and its results.

- Show them the results of the research
  - When you write things, share them and show where your consultants’ names are
  - When you give conference talks: if there's a zoom option, see if they can come

- Engage with them as human beings
  - Structure time to talk about interpersonal things
    - Ask them about their own lives; let them ask about your own
    - If you meet in coffee shops with their friends, participate in conversations and occasionally, strategically, let the session get derailed for a little bit.
  - Ask them directly what they think about the work
    - Whether the judgments are easy or hard
    - How they feel about the way the elicitation goes
    - Whether or not they think certain things should be done differently
  - Generally: make time to reflect on your relationship together
    - Both you and the consultant will spend a lot of time thinking about your relationship, but it's hard to strike up a conversation about it, because there are social unknowns, language barriers, and emotional barriers.
  - However awkward you feel, remember that they’ll cut you some slack:
    - Speaking Indonesian is hard. You may feel pressure to be perfect, but you won't always be able to express yourself the way that you want. They'll forgive you, and they usually get what you mean, too.
    - Understanding the patterns is hard, and there will be times where you get them wrong or misinterpret data or explanations. When you get confused, it's helpful to just stop and rewind a bit.
    - If you're working on a language that's not Indonesian, you won't get much practice using it, so it will be hard to speak it. That's fine.
Once you’re comfortable, it’s good to talk directly about your relationship

- Tell them about how your relationship is personally meaningful to you
- Point out particular things that they do that are helpful to you
- Ask them how they want to negotiate particular aspects of the relationship (e.g., the register they speak, or the pronouns that they use with you).
- Tell them how you feel, too. You can say things like: “we’ve been working together for a while and I feel like we’re close, so it’s fine with me if we…”

Doing Elicitation

- When you start sessions: tell them exactly what you’re trying to learn about.
  - Giving consultants a list of activities will make it mentally easier to do them.
  - It also helps the consultant know what to focus on when they look at data,
  - And it creates a sense of purpose and progress in each meeting.

- When you’re investigating something, build the theory together.
  - When you start with a topic, elicit a bit of data, introduce the basic questions, and then ask them directly if they think there are any generalizations about the topic.
  - Oftentimes I say: “from these facts, it seems like there might be a pattern like this. [Explain it, then ask:] Do you think that that might be correct?”
  - Generally: the more you can involve the consultant in the task of finding and analyzing patterns, the better and more consistent your results will be.

- When you present examples or theories, give them in pairs.
  - For theories: it’s good to put two options on the table and make it a collaborative task to decide between the two of them. You can say things like: “if this theory is correct, then we expect this… but if that theory is right, then we expect that…”
  - Don’t present one theory and say “I expect X,” because then they may just say X.
  - With examples: it’s always useful to give those in pairs too.
    - It’s hard to judge a single example with no context, because it can be odd for many reasons: semantically, syntactically, pragmatically, lexically
    - Once examples are presented in minimal pairs, it becomes possible for the consultant to see and think about the influence of a single alternation.
    - Once consultants see the basic question, they can often make examples that are better in all other ways than the ones that you came up with.

- Here’s how I ask for judgments:
  - Start with an explanation of the basic task: “Here, I want to focus on topic X.”
  - Present a minimal pair of examples and then explain what is different about them
  - Make sure that the examples are reasonable, or ask for new ones if they’re not.
  - Ask the consultant about their experience: “which of these is heard more often?”
  - Once it’s established that one option is good, ask: “is the second one ever used?”
  - Finally: if the second one is ok, ask “is there a particular context for this one?”
Problems with Paying Consultants

- The work is not recognized as a payable service
  - People do not think about life experience as a payable good
    - The data is not structured or pre-made
    - Local systems do not view the data as valuable
    - Local systems do not view the data as hard to access
  - People do not recognize the labor that goes into judgments
    - The basic task is unfamiliar
    - The goal of the task is unfamiliar
    - Remember: the researcher feels a sense of progress, because they’re building toward a theory, but the consultant might not feel the same.
  - People do not understand the benefits that we draw from it
    - Elicitation is work:
      - It is rigidly structured and has professional goals
      - Different from learning a language as an amateur
      - It’s not relatable to regular people who have never done it
    - Elicitation yields career gains:
      - It helps us move forward within our professional life
      - That’s difficult to understand in a world where everyone speaks the language and it’s often coded as “not useful”
      - It’s important to make the consultant understand that they are directly helping us with our jobs, and that we owe them
- Reciprocity is traditionally established through payment in kind.
  - The traditional social model is gotong-royong
  - The things that people want are often very difficult to give
    - Long-term social engagement with networks
    - Professional assistance with school or business
    - The worst-case scenario: serious monetary support
  - Good will and ideological support are not enough in the long-term
    - There are absolutely benefits to the consultant from this work
    - These are not professionally equal to the value that we draw
    - The consultant really has to be compensated to make up for that
- Payment looks bad; threatens the face of the consultant
  - People may think the foreigner and consultant have no real relationship
  - People might feel protective of the foreigner and villainize the consultant
Strategies for Paying Consultants

● Starting out: Compensate in other ways
  ○ Structure encounters to pay for experiences
    ■ Meet in restaurants; give the consultant a good meal
    ■ Meet up in cafes; pay for drinks; buy cigarettes
    ■ Occasionally: just invite them to fun things that friends do, and then pay for them (like amusement parks, or museums)
  ○ Bring gifts that count as compensation
    ■ People generally appreciate american clothing; it’s socially cool and often physically nicer than the things that exist in the store
    ■ Gadgets are nice: flash drives, bluetooth mice, good headphones
    ■ Occasionally you can ask people: “is there anything you need?”
    ■ Some gifts that people have asked for: nice thermal mugs (like hydroflasks), laser pointers, art supplies, beard-growth cream

● Once things are established, introduce money as a gift.
  ○ Gifts are generally good, because they don’t force compensation
    ■ People can get apprehensive about payment if they feel that they want something from you but can’t ever pay for it. This happened with my main language consultant, who wanted my help with his undergrad thesis and was worried that I would want payment too.
    ■ You can avoid making people feel indebted by giving gifts, which don’t require reciprocity
  ○ Another helpful trick: frame the gifts as coming from your network, not you.
    ● One strategy: pretend that you’ve won a research award from a nameless institution and say that you want to share half of the money with them.
    ● Another strategy: say that you got lucky with your job or something, and then invite them to a personal experience that costs money, or buy a thing

● Long-term: establish an explicit system of payment
  ○ Starting point: show that the payment does not come directly from you
    ■ “The university pays me to do this work, because it’s important”
    ■ “They make a salary for you, too, because you are also working”
    ■ “The salary will go away if you don’t take it; it will not go to me.”
  ○ Next step: frame the research as a product that you make together.
    ■ Remember that the goals of elicitation are very unclear to people
    ■ Showing consultants results helps them see that there’s a product.
      ■ Often sending along handouts is a good reminder that there’s a concrete good that comes out of the meetings
      ■ Sharing papers/ inviting them to presentations is good, too.
  ○ Finally: make sure that it’s clear that you have a relationship beyond the work.