Research Methods in Linguistics
1302740

Lecture (1)
Ethics in (Linguistic) Research
What are ethics?

When should ethical issues be considered?

What are common ethical issues that seem to surface in research?
WHAT ARE ETHICS?

- Societal norms adopted by a group
  - A conception of conduct that is right or wrong
- Deal with fundamental human relationships
- Are a universal human trait
Guides to moral behaviour
  - *Good*: honesty, keeping promises, helping others, respective rights of others
  - *Bad*: lying, stealing, deceiving, harming others

Universality of ethical principles: should apply in the same manner in all countries, cultures, communities

Relativity of ethical principles: vary from country to country, community to community
**ETHICAL RELATIVISM**

- Defined by
  - Various periods of time in history
  - A society’s traditions
  - The special circumstances of the moment
  - Personal opinion

- Meaning given to ethics are **relative** to time, place, circumstance, and the person involved
**ETHICAL RELATIVISM**

- *Ethics* as principles for guiding decision making and reconciling conflicting values:
  - People may disagree on ‘ethics’ because it is based on people's personal value systems.
  - What one person considers to be good or right may be considered bad or wrong by another person.
Deontological Approach

This approach states that we should identify and use a universal code when making ethical decisions. An action is either ethical or not ethical, without exception.
Ethical skepticism

- This is the relativist viewpoint, stating that ethical standards are not universal but are relative to one's particular culture and time.
Utilitarianism

This is a very practical viewpoint, stating that decisions about the ethics of a study should depend on the balance of the consequences and benefits for the research participants and the larger society.
MAJOR APPROACHES TO ETHICS

- Utilitarianism …

  - The utilitarian approach is used by most people in academia (such as Institutional Review Boards).

  - "Do the potential benefits outweigh the risks associated with this research?"
In the past – not given attention

Changed with Nuremberg trial findings
  ◦ Nuremberg Code (1948)

Tuskegee Syphilis Study (1932-1972)

Declaration of Helsinki (1964)
The Nuremberg Code was followed by the 1948 U.N. Declaration of Human Rights and the 1964 Helsinki accord.

In 1971 (and revised in 1981), the U.S. government initiated guidelines for all federally funded research. Most federal agencies followed the lead of HEW (now HHS) because this list of rules could be applied generically to both medical and nonmedical research. The HEW GUIDELINES were:

- Subjects should be given a fair explanation of the purpose and procedures of the research
- Subjects should be given a description of any reasonable risks or discomforts expected
- Subjects should be told of any possible benefits to be obtained by participating
- Researchers should disclose any alternative procedures that might be advantageous to the subject
- Researchers should offer to answer any questions subjects may have during the research
- Subjects should be told they are free to withdraw and discontinue participation at any time
CASE: TUSKEGEE SYPHILIS STUDY

- was conducted from 1932 to 1974 and involved the withholding of penicillin from black male sharecroppers so the government could find out the long term effects of syphilis.
- Similar experiments went on with the U.S. military involving nerve gas and nuclear radiation. The CIA also performed bizarre mind control experiments involving LSD, ESP, hypnosis, and surgery.
- The moral of all this is not to conduct secret testing on unsuspecting subjects.
CASE: TUSKEGEE SYPHILIS STUDY

- Conducted by the US Dept. of Health Services
- Undertaken with good motives but in the Context of racism
- Observational study 400 AA males in Alabama with known syphilis

- Belief was that men would not stop dangerous sexual behavior and had different form of disease

- Ethical concerns
  - Available treatments in 1932 were poor but not given
  - Withheld an approved therapy when it became available in 1940’s
  - Controlled subjects access to penicillin - deception
  - Prevented enlistment in the Army because the disease would have been treated
MORAL JUSTIFICATIONS FOR TUSKEGEE

- Knowledge worth sacrifice of few
- No point losing knowledge by stopping study
- Subjects were going to get syphilis anyway
- No effective cures
- Subjects gave consent
RESPONSE TO TUSKEGEE

- Public and professional outrage led to
  - The Tuskegee Advisory Panel in 1973
  - Recommended termination of the study
  - Determined government policies for reviewing scientific procedures and consent practices in federally funded research were inadequate

- A Federal Advisory Board (1974-78)
  - “National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects in Biomedical and Behavioral Research”
  - Result was the “Belmont Report of the National Commission” in 1979
  - New ethical principles central to the research enterprise
World Medical Association – 1964

- Codes existed for delivery of health care but not for research
- Identified research as that involving human subjects including research on identifiable human material or identifiable data
- Interest to the wellbeing of the subject far outweighs the benefit to society

- **Special populations**
  - Economically and medically disadvantaged
  - Those unable to give consent
  - Those who may be subject to giving consent under duress
  - Those who will not benefit from the research
  - Where research is combined with medical care
to protect rights and welfare of research participants and
to protect the wider society or community within which the research is being conducted
ETHICS IN RESEARCH – WHY?

- It is a reflection of respect for those who ‘take part’ in research
- It ensures no unreasonable, unsafe or thoughtless demands are made by researchers
- It ensures sufficient knowledge is shared by all concerned
- It imposes a common standard in all the above respects
ETHICS IN RESEARCH – WHY?

- It has become the norm as an expectation for research activity
- … a professional requirement for practitioners in some disciplines e.g. psychology
- … a requirement for access to participants in others e.g. health
- … and a requirement to comply with external funding bodies to obtain funding e.g. ESRC
WHAT PROJECTS NEED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

- Human participants
- Use of the ‘products’ of human participants
- Animal participants
- Work that potentially impacts on human participants

Where ethical approval is deemed unnecessary a disclaimer may be signed by researcher (and supervisor)
KEY ETHICAL ISSUES

- Informed Consent - special consideration for minors
- Deception
- Need for debriefing
- Voluntary participation\Right to withdraw
- Confidentiality
- Beneficence – doing good for others and preventing harm
- Safety and risk
- Mutual respect and trust (prolonged interaction)
- Respect for social and cultural contexts
- Anonymity
1. Human Dignity
2. Consent
3. Vulnerable Persons
4. Privacy & Confidentiality
5. Harms and Benefits
6. Justice and Inclusiveness
7. Non-malfeasance
8. Beneficence
1. Human Dignity

- Basis of ethical obligations

  *The end doesn’t justify the mean*

- Two essential components
  - The selection and achievement of morally acceptable ends
  - The morally acceptable means to those ends

Protect the multiple and interdependent interests of the person (bodily, psychological, cultural integrity)
Providing false information to the participant about the nature and/or purpose of the study. It is discouraged, but not disallowed in all cases. Sometimes deception is required in order to conduct a valid research study. The researcher must justify the use of deception.
1. Human Dignity…deception

- If deception is used the following are very important:
  - **Debriefing** is an interview with the research participant providing an opportunity for the experimenter to reveal deceptive aspects of the study and for the participant to have any questions about the study answered.
  - **Dehoaxing**: informing the participant about deceptive aspects of the research study.
  - **Desensitizing**: eliminating any stress or other undesirable feelings the study may have created.
ETHICAL PRINCIPLES GUIDING RESEARCH

2. Consent

- Presumption that individuals have capacity and right to make **free and informed decisions**
- In research = dialogue, process, rights, duties, requirements for free and informed consent by the research subject

*Your research cannot proceed without consent*

- Consent must be maintained throughout
2. Consent...

- This is the process of providing the research participants with information enables them to make an informed decision as to whether they want to participate in the research study.

- State the purpose of the research and describe the procedures to be followed.

- Describe any potential risks or discomforts the participant may encounter.

- Describe any potential benefits from participation.
ETHICAL PRINCIPLES GUIDING RESEARCH

2. Consent...

- Describe extant to which results will be kept confidential.

- Give a list of names the participants may contact with any questions they have.

- State that participant is voluntary and that they are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

- Consent must be obtained from parents or guardians.

- Assent must also be obtained from minors who are old enough or have enough intellectual capacity to say they are willing to participate.
OK EVERYBODY, GATHER AROUND FOR A PICTURE!

NOT SO FAST! FIRST YOU HAVE TO SIGN THIS AGREEMENT STATING THAT YOU WILL NOT, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES, PUBLISH THIS PHOTO ON THE INTERNET...

INCLUDING ALL BLOGS, FACEBOOK, MYSPACE, OR FLICKR WITHOUT MY WRITTEN CONSENT.
Sometimes Consent is not Possible...

- Fake an assault in the street to gauge reaction of bystanders – e.g. who will intervene and who will do nothing.

- Element of surprise is essential.

- Problem with the preceding:
  - witnessing such an attack may be very disturbing to some.
  - Those who do not intervene may be upset and suffer feelings of low worth.
  - Those who do intervene may be injured.

- Debriefing is mandatory.
2. Consent...

- **Special Populations and Coercion**

  Difficult for some to give true voluntary informed consent

  They might lack necessary competency
  --children
  --mentally retarded
ETHICAL PRINCIPLES GUIDING RESEARCH

2. Consent...

- Others May be Indirectly Coerced—This is WRONG
  Students
  Prison Inmates
  Employees
  Military Personnel
  The Homeless
  Welfare Recipients
3. Vulnerable Persons

- Ethical obligations towards vulnerable persons
  - Diminished competence
  - Diminished decision-making capacity
- Entitled to special protection, special procedures to protect their interests
- Entitlement (based on grounds of human dignity, caring, solidarity, fairness) to special protection against abuse, exploitation, discrimination
ETHICAL PRINCIPLES GUIDING RESEARCH

4. Privacy & Confidentiality

- Fundamental to human dignity
- Standards protect the access, control, dissemination of personal information
- Helps to protect mental, psychological integrity
5. Harms and Benefits

- Balance critical to ethics of human research
- Foreseeable harms should not outweigh anticipated benefits
- Harms-benefits analysis affects welfare and rights of subjects
ETHICAL PRINCIPLES GUIDING RESEARCH

6. Justice and Inclusiveness

- i.e., fairness and equity
- Procedural justice
  - Application process
- Distributive justice
  - Harms and benefits
Participants must be informed that they are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you have a power relationship with the participants you must be extra careful to make sure that they really do feel free to withdraw.
EThical principles guiding research

7. Non-malfeasance

- Duty to avoid, prevent or minimize harm
- No unnecessary risk of harm
- Participation must be essential to achieving scientifically and societally important aims that cannot be realized without the participation of human subjects
- Minimizing harm requires smallest number of human subjects that will ensure valid data
7. **Non-malfeasance... Protection from Mental and Physical Harm**

- This is the most fundamental ethical issue confronting the researcher.

- Research in humanities generally poses minimal risk to participants.
8. Beneficence

- The duty to benefit others
- The duty to maximize net benefits
- Produce benefits for subjects themselves or to other individuals
- Produce benefits for society as a whole and for the advancement of knowledge (usually the primary benefit)
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

IRB

THE NIT-PICKING IRB

[Cartoon of a meeting with people picking nits and papers scattered on the floor]
One of the outcomes of the HEW (the Department of Health, Education and Welfare) guidelines was the establishment of INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARDS (IRBs) at colleges and universities across America.

At first, IRBs were seen as a hindrance on academic freedom by faculty researchers, but they came to be accepted, especially after 1981 when the revised HHS (United States Department of Health & Human Services) guidelines exempted most social science and criminal justice research from full review by creating a category of "expedited" review.
This is a board consisting of professionals and lay people who review research proposals to insure that the researcher will adhere to ethical standards in the conduct of the research.

- Researchers must submit a Research Protocol to the IRB for review

- Much educational research falls in the exempt category: being exempt from certain requirements and full committee review because the study involves no or minimal risk

- Studies with children, prisoners, and fetal participants are never exempt

- Even if your study ultimately falls in the exempt category, it is still essential that you follow the ethical guidelines
THREE WAYS TO ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION ETHICALLY

- **Anonymity**: Promise and keep your promises of anonymity. After identifying your sampling frame, try to forget about taking names or any other unique identifiers. Reassure people that you won't go to the media. Fill them in on what journal outlet you have planned.

- **Confidentiality**: This is what you should promise if you can't keep anonymity. In other words, use confidentiality if you can't guarantee anonymity. It requires that you guarantee that no one will be individually identifiable in any way by you, that all your tables, reports, and publications will only discuss findings in the aggregate.

- **Informed Consent**: Be honest and fair with your subjects. Tell them everything they want to know about your research. Be aware of any hidden power differentials that might be pressuring them to participate.
CASE STUDY: ZIMBARDO'S PRISON SIMULATION
was a study by psychologist Philip Zimbardo in 1972 that took Stanford University undergrads and made some of them guards and some of them prisoners in a mock underground dungeon for a planned two week stay.

The experiment had to be cancelled after six days because by then, the student-guards became quite sadistic, really getting into their roles. The prisoners were also becoming quite mental.

The experiment tells a story about psychological harm and informed consent, since the subjects did not know what they were getting into.
1) After a field study of deviant behavior during a riot, law enforcement officials demand that the researcher identify those people who were observed looting. Rather than risk arrest as an accomplice after the fact, the researcher complies.

- Ethical issues?
2) A research questionnaire is circulated among students as part of their university registration packet. Although students are not told they must complete the questionnaire, the hope is that they will believe they must – thus ensuring a higher completion rate.

- Ethical Issues?