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Editor's Preface and List of Contributors (LDD 2)

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Editor's Preface

Peter K. Austin

This volume arises from two one-day workshops held at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London: one on 22nd November 2003 entitled "Archiving Language Materials" and one on 7th February 2004 entitled "Training and Capacity Building for Endangered Languages Communities". A companion to this volume is a CD-ROM called "The Disappearing Sounds of the World's Languages" that contains multimedia materials presented as a public lecture by Professor Peter Ladefoged of the University of California, Los Angeles on 6th February 2004.

The papers for this volume are written up versions of the workshop presentations; plus two invited papers (by Thieberger, presented as a Departmental Seminar at SOAS, and Nathan and Austin, originally presented at the Australian Linguistic Society Annual Conference, University of Sydney, July 2004). I am extremely grateful to the authors for preparing their papers in a timely manner for publication. All the papers have been reviewed by an editorial committee associated with the SOAS Endangered Languages Academic Programme and Endangered Languages Archive; I am especially grateful to Emmon Bach, Gail Coelho, Birgitt Hellwig, Friederike Lüpke, Robert Munro, David Nathan, and Justin Watkins for their detailed and helpful comments on all the papers that have resulted in improvements in both content and presentation. I am grateful to Candide Simard for sub-editing and formatting assistance that made the editorial task so much easier. Thanks also to Zara Pybus for her highly efficient administrative and organisational support.

Language documentation is a relatively new research area and these papers make significant new contributions to the theory and practice of this emerging field, especially in the areas of training and capacity building, archiving, and development of multimedia for endangered languages. The papers are organised thematically according to these three topics, and in a geographical sweep that goes from the Asia-Pacific region, to Siberia, to Africa and finally Latin America, before returning to the Pacific and Australia for the archiving and multimedia contributions.

The collection begins with Margaret Florey's contribution on training workshops run in the Netherlands among the Mollucan community to sensitise them to their heritage languages, originally and now to a decreasing degree, spoken in Maluku, Indonesia. The workshops were run for language workers and dealt with a range of issues. The linguists who were involved in convening them found that linguistic purism on the part of the Mollucans was a major contributor to the cycle of language loss that has historically

impacted on the heritage languages in the Netherlands. Florey discusses how the workshops confronted purism head-on as a topic during the workshops and training programme.

William Foley discusses the highly complex language situation in Papua New Guinea in terms of some of the challenges it presents for understanding language shift, language documentation, and training and capacity development. Drawing on his first-had work with native speakers of Iatmul and Yimas, he shows how collaboration with native speakers can result in positive results for all concerned.

Ulrike Mosel's contribution deals with dictionary making for endangered languages and presents a overview of some of the major issues involved, such as selection of the variety to be included, orthography choice, inclusion of grammatical information, and research methods. She recommends adopting a thematic approach and shows how, even with limited resources, useful outcomes can be produced. She exemplifies this based on her experience with lexicographic work on Samoan and Teop, a Papua New Guinea language.

In E. Annamalai's paper the focus shifts to South Asia and the work of the Central Institute of Indian Languages which has a history of training native speakers to record and analyse their own languages. Tjeerd de Graaf and Hidetoshi Shiraishi discuss several research projects they have carried out in Russia, digitising old 'legacy' recordings and making new records of endangered languages, especially in Siberia. They show, using examples from languages like Nivkh spoken on Sakhalin Island, how local capacity for language documentation and and language education can be developed by bridging the gap between old recordings and modern speakers' knowledge.

Africa is the topic of the following two papers: Gerrit Dimmendaal surveys issues of training and capacity development across a broad sweep of African countries, giving detailed and contrastive discussion of two case studies from Ethiopia and Sudan. He argues persuasively for the development of direct links between first world institutions and African organisations in order to maximise opportunities to develop capacity for language documentation, description and support by African colleagues themselves. Friederike Lüpke demonstrates that language development work in Africa has often ignored existing local traditions, such as literacy and writing of African languages using Arabic-based scripts, typically learnt in Koranic schools and adapted by writers to their own languages, by concentrating on the ability to use official languages and scripts. She proposes that language support, in West Africa in particular, should be based on a thorough assessment of existing capacities that are properly incorporated into training and educational contexts.

Latin America is the focus of the next two papers. Yolanda Lastra discusses the language situation in Mexico, which has a large number of poorly described languages

that, until recently, were ignored by official policy developers. Recent Mexican legislation however now recognises the indigenous languages of the country and provides some support for them. While some indigenous linguists have been trained in Mexico, the challenges faced by both local educators and the language communities are brought out very clearly by a case study from Misión de Chichimecas. Anthony Woodbury and Nora England present a detailed account of developments at the University of Texas, Austin, which have seen the establishment of a Centre for Indigenous Languages of Latin America where increasing numbers of native speakers of Latin American languages are now being trained. They show one of the ways that institutions in the US and elsewhere can develop programmes of postgraduate training that are directly relevant to the needs of speakers of endangered languages (with positive spin-offs for the university and the academic discipline), without compromising on long-established standards of quality.

Heidi Johnson, also of the University of Texas, Austin, next presents a discussion of archiving within the context of language documentation. She shows how archiving must be an essential component of any documentation project, and gives a series of recommendations about how to procede with the archival work. Her paper will be of particular value to researchers who are new to language documentation, and includes a wealth of suggestions and links to useful resources.

David Nathan's contribution deals with the development of multimedia products for endangered languages by what he calls 'mobilisation' of language materials, one of three primary goals for endangered languages work (the others being documentation and archiving). Drawing on his experience with a number of projects, including production of a CD-ROM with the Paakantyi of eastern Australia, he presents suggestions for good practice in developing multimedia, emphasing the team-work involved and the crucial role of the local community members.

Nicholas Thieberger's paper deals with methods for linking media recorded during documentation with transcriptions and linguistic analysis, paying close attention to the need to properly archive the data and make it available in a form that can be preserved and distributed to others. He has developed a software tool called *Audiamus* which he used in writing his PhD thesis description of an endangered language of Vanuatu. Thieberger's model demonstrates clearly the value of innovative use of information and communication technologies to language documentation and description.

The volume concludes with Nathan and Austin's paper which argues that current discourse in language documentation has seen the concept of 'metadata' presented in a narrowly understood way as related primarily to cataloguing and resource discovery. They argue that this 'thin' metadata conception potentially has negative consequences for the development of language documentation by directing attention away from the 'thick'

metadata that ordinary working linguists create as part of their rich representations of knowledge about the languages they study (as exemplified by Thieberger's work, for instance). They suggest that there is a 'metadata gap' that has emerged and that it needs to be addressed in order for the full potential of information and communications technology for language documentation, archiving and mobilisation to be realised.

We welcome comments and feedback on the papers collected here, directed to the address in the inside front cover.

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