

The Cambridge Handbook of Endangered Languages

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Speakers and language documentation

Lise M. Dobrin and Josh Berson

10.1 Introduction

The observation that guides this chapter is that the place of speakers in language documentation is being transformed by linguists' understanding of language endangerment not just as a problem of diminishing data for the science of language, but as a problem of social justice and human flourishing that calls upon linguistic expertise for its amelioration. As a result, work in language documentation has become increasingly applied, cognizant of its context, and committed to the social good. Indeed, contemporary documentary linguistics can usefully be thought of as a kind of social movement, one that has brought academic linguists out of their offices and libraries and into a shared space with communities of speakers, researchers working in other disciplines and non-academic institutions, and the public at large. No longer fully covered by the cloak of scholarship, linguists have found themselves revisiting some of the most fundamental political and ethical assumptions that underlie linguistic research. How should the study of language be conceived? What are its aims, who does it benefit, and what is the linguist's proper role in carrying it out?

Grappling with these and related questions has been eye-opening and even liberating for many linguists steeped in the structural linguistic tradition, where it is the explanatory constraints afforded by abstract linguistic patterns that have generally been accorded value, rather than their creative use by speaker-hearers as a means for social action. But because the endangered language movement was initially driven by

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scholars trained and professionalized in this same disciplinary tradition, the intellectual resources documentary linguists have relied upon in conceptualizing what they are trying to do have been unfortunately limited (at times amounting to little more than their own culture-bound intuitions) and disconnected from the substantial literatures that exist on language as a sociocultural phenomenon, on the complex dynamics of fieldwork, and on the moral issues raised by the prospect of representing cultural others.

In what follows we critically address some of the main issues surrounding the role of speakers that we see emerging in documentary linguistics, bringing to bear examples both from linguistics and from neighbouring disciplines. The perspective we take falls within the broad rubric of science studies: treating linguistic research not as a value-neutral apprehension of intrinsic facts about human symbolic life, but rather as a historically contingent social activity through which linguistics constitutes itself as a discipline (Latour 2005). From this perspective, as a number of critics have recently pointed out, the focus in documentary linguistics on the collection of specific genres of data and the generation of certain categories of products reflects a disciplinary consensus as to the nature of language as an object of study (Makoni and Pennycook 2006, Moore *et al.* 2010, Silverstein 1998b). And it does seem clear that documentary linguists have been on relatively comfortable ground in thinking about the PRODUCTS of their research: conceptually distinguishing an annotated corpus or documentation of a language from a higher order description of its patterning (Himmelmann 1998, Woodbury, Chapter 9), reasserting the intellectual value of vocabulary (through the production of dictionaries, see Mosel, Chapter 17) and oral discourse (as represented in texts) alongside grammar, extending the range of documentary outputs to include items like primers and orthographies that are targeted directly at non-academic audiences (Lüpke, Chapter 16). They have also enriched the inventory of digital data models, formats and software tools to facilitate documentary research and enable the preservation and dissemination of its results (see Bender *et al.* 2004, Bird and Simons 2003, Boynton *et al.* 2006, Good, Chapter 11, Nathan, Chapter 13).

This is not to say that there is full agreement about any of these products, how our investments in them should be prioritized, or even what they properly consist of (see Woodbury, Chapter 9). Doubts have been voiced, for example, about such fundamental issues as the role of elicited data in language documentation, the marginal value of transcribed texts, and the practical viability of maintaining a documentation/description boundary (on which see Dixon 2007, Newman 2009a, and Austin and Grenoble 2007, respectively). Nevertheless, given the OBJECT-ORIENTATION (see Agha 2007b) that linguists have historically brought to bear in their dominant epistemological project – the notion, tracing back to Saussure, that the languages we study (and that now stand to be

lost) are internally structured, autonomous symbol systems and hence in principle distinguishable, nameable, countable codes (Silverstein 1996, Lewis 2009) – these moves toward expanding the range of documentary linguistic products have been experienced more as stimulating challenges and advances than as serious disruptions.

But linguists have also begun devoting attention to the SOCIAL PROCESSES set in motion by their research, from the conceptualization of fieldwork to the dissemination of its products. This is a new development, so new, in fact, that even as recently as the late 1990s the editors of a volume exploring the practical and methodological issues raised by linguistic fieldwork (Newman and Ratliff 2001a) found themselves hard pressed to find a publisher (Newman 2009a). It is here that the discussions about language documentation taking place today are most exploratory and driven by tension. There is little doubt that this new awareness of social process has grown out of the revival of fieldwork as a core disciplinary activity for linguistics (Ahlers and Wertheim 2009, Himmelmann 2008). Many of the issues that documentary linguists now seem to be thinking about most actively follow from the recognition that there is a power imbalance in the documentary encounter that is at odds with the motivations for conducting the research in the first place.

These motivations, which involve fundamental (and often remarkably explicit) assumptions about the nature of the past, the significance of place and the way these are linked through present-day speakers, are discussed below in Section 10.2. Linguists' recognition of endangered language speakers as persons, as opposed to mere sources of data, has also created tensions in the conduct of documentary research. Some of the ways linguists are attempting to resolve these, both in their discourse and in practical implementation, are discussed in Section 10.3. Here we note the increasing attention being devoted to research ethics and quasi-legal matters such as the negotiation of intellectual property, copyrights, and moral rights. Finally, in Section 10.4, we briefly consider some of the ways the field of documentary linguistics stands to mature as we move into the disciplinary space created by the endangered languages movement: recognizing the culturally and historically contingent nature of the values that shape our interlocutors' aims, and constructing for ourselves a professional genealogy that can help guide our thinking beyond the product-oriented mode of Boasian salvage.

10.2 Preserving a more perfect past

Stripped down to its essentials, preservation involves something that is accessed in the present and represented in a way that we anticipate will be useful in the future, but valued above all for its association with the past. To that extent, the documentary practices that are called upon

to preserve endangered languages are motivated and constrained by linguists' understandings of what it is that the past holds and how its traces are carried through the vehicle of present-day speakers (Errington 2003, Moore 2006). Much has been written about the keying of small languages to inhabitants of specific locales that are similarly under threat. Language loss is sometimes characterized as being like the 'coal miner's canary' (see, e.g. Nettle and Romaine (2000: 14, 79); Grenoble and Whaley (2005: 974)), an index of the deterioration of local environments and cultures under the pressures of globalization (Cameron 2007, Edwards 2007a). The flip side of this linkage between language, people, and place is that documenting (especially the lexical repertoires of) endangered languages should give us a way of accessing what is (or was) inside the mines: it gives us a privileged glimpse into a segment of the world's past biodiversity and how local people's knowledge of it has been elaborated culturally (Harrison 2005, Maffi 2001). Capitalizing on a theme already well developed in public discourse by biodiversity conservationists, appealing to the localness of endangered and minority languages has done much to make the problem of language shift comprehensible to first-world audiences.

This view that endangered and indigenous languages are quintessentially local also has practical implications for language documentation, leading to the conclusion that research on such languages should be carried out in particular ways that are similarly keyed to place.¹ This is not only important for documenting ethnobiological knowledge (see, e.g., Haviland (2006: 137); also Diamond (1991), who offers a fascinating discussion of the problems associated with different techniques for eliciting local terms for species of birds in New Guinea). As Harrison (2005) nicely illustrates with the examples of directional verbs and mimetic hunting vocabulary in Tuvan, there can be aspects of a language, even down to its phonology, as Harrison shows, that are themselves so locally specific that they can only be profitably documented in situ. The pragmatics of deixis also call for an extended physical presence in the speaker community if they are to be adequately understood. As Hanks (2009: 19) points out, the use of deictic elements is exquisitely sensitive to so many contextual factors that it is nearly impossible to get an adequate picture of language use without simultaneous access to the speaker's own placement in the physical and social world: '[a]fter audio recording more than one hundred hours of talk over a year's fieldwork, I only made sense of usage around the home by setting the tape recorder aside, mapping the homestead into its kin and gender based spheres, and tracking speakers' and addressees' social relations to the objects they talked about'. Haviland (2005) shows how the use of verbal and proxemic-gestural shifters by a speaker of Zinacantan is structured by reference to a locally specific mental map that is couched in absolute geographic terms. So from this perspective, text collection and elicitation of grammatical patterns in

town, in the office, or on the verandah, are at best only partial research methods, even if they are also in many ways expedient and revealing. Unfortunately, given the frequent dislocation of speakers from their homelands, the transformation of traditional lifeways, and the limitations of elderly speakers with reduced mobility, fieldwork under truly local field conditions is often unachievable (though see Dobrin *et al.* (2009: 46) for examples of how technology can be used creatively in some such cases as a work-around).

But there are also ways in which this view of minority and endangered languages as profoundly local may compromise our ability to apprehend the messy 'dynamics of language contact and change that we know to have been central to virtually every documented case of language shift and replacement' (see Moore *et al.* (2010: 2), from which we draw liberally here; see also Silverstein 1998b). The association of primordial natural settings with logically discrete communities of fully fluent (even monolingual) speakers is evident in the idiom of counting that is ubiquitous in endangered language discourse: 'n languages are spoken in Village X', or 'Language Y has n speakers', when it is often the case that the better one knows a given region, the more qualifications one feels compelled to append to such formulations (see, e.g., Hymes (2004 [1981]: 80 fn.3) for but one especially fitting illustration; Rigsby and Sutton 1980 is a classic study of this problem). What is at issue is not simply the fact that we are trafficking in idealizations (as scientists always are), but rather that the idealizations in question lead to a hierarchization of speakers measured with respect to a 'pre-contact' form of linguistic competence: complete mastery of a pure ANCESTRAL CODE (see Woodbury 2005 for sensitive discussion). Not only are individuals with such competence vanishingly rare in the present day, but in many cases there is no basis for assuming that they must have been typical at some point in the past.

Certainly, there are challenges here for documentary linguists seeking to assess linguistic vitality and identify promising language consultants. As Evans (2001) has pointed out, people's assertions about their own speakerhood may respond to a host of political and interactional factors that complicate the notion that 'knowing the language' involves a native ability to produce a delimited range of sounds and structures, revealing how 'being a speaker' can be as much about performance as it is about knowledge (see also Hill 1983, Moore 1988). Even when speakers are willing and able to speak a particular language, they may not always monitor the boundary between it and other languages in their repertoire, meaning that decisions must be made about how and to what extent the documentary products linguists create will distill the embedded code (see Vaux *et al.* 2007; O'Shannessy, Chapter 5). These issues can be illustrated by opening just about any of the notebooks from Dobrin's fieldwork on Arapesh languages (spoken in the Sepik coastal region of Papua New Guinea) at random and looking at the ratio of Arapesh to

Tok Pisin (the national lingua franca) found there. The following is an excerpt from a friendly discussion among a small group of uniformly fluent, knowledgeable speakers of Cemaun Arapesh. It is taken from an oral survey of village clan landholdings that one of the participants asked Dobrin to help him coordinate and record. It was not a contentious meeting: the structural authority and superior local knowledge of the main speaker was fully accepted by everyone present; one or two of the participants were taking notes. There was nothing about either the setting or substance of the conversation that directed speakers away from using the vernacular. Use of Tok Pisin was not directed at the researcher, who was construed less as a listener or even an overhearer in the situation than as a service provider; she was also absent much of the time, moving in and out of the room trying to monitor and manage the background noise. Bold in the text indicates Tok Pisin. Unmarked elements are Cemaun Arapesh.

[r2.50-53: CH 24-29]

CH: Numioduokəm-Kərapehem ecec-i-g.
clan.name cl8pl.pro-poss-cl3.sg
That land belongs to Numioduokəm-Kərapehem clan.

AW: Em long Bəragom.
3sg prep place.name
You mean at Bəragom.

CH: Bəragom.
place.name
Yes, at Bəragom.

Orait, narapela sait long Kocimanit,
alright, other side prep named.section.of.river

c-a-wər ənən n-ə-nak-i,
cl8pl-realis-cross.against.grain cl7sg.pro cl7sg-realis-go-
toward.speaker

And then on the other side of Kocimanit, where theirs meets his
[the owner of previously identified lands],

orait ətidə coku-t-i barit
alright this:cl11sg small-cl11sg-attrib ditch

t-a-wər omom h-ə-nak,
cl11sg-realis-cross.against.grain cl7pl.pro cl7pl-realis-go
theirs goes until this little ditch that crosses

opudə yərɪkitep [inaudible]...
this:cl9sg small.area.of.forest [inaudible]...
it's this small area of forest [?].

Kocimanit, Wərikanip munop əno-p
place.name, place.name named.section.of.land some-cl9sg

nopudək.

that.near.hearer:cl9sg

Kocimanit, Wərikanip is that piece of land.

Na, dou, gandə yowɪnə-b=əm,
and now there place.below-cl1.sg=relative
And then the place downriver from there,

Məruwəgetehir bai ihat long bai p-i-su
place.name future be-hard prep future 2pl-irr-hold

munop inogat,
named.section.of.land not,

Məruwəgetehir, it would be hard to say who owns what particular pieces,

c-a-rib məhiməhima,
cl8pl-realis-clear.land.for.garden in.little.bits
they cut it up so much,

na i-hat long bai p-i-ni
and be-hard prep future 2pl-irrealis-be.together.with

Numioduwokum-Kərapwehem [inaudible] wantaim
clan.name [inaudible] together
and it's hard because your clan and Numioduwokum-Kərapwehem
[hold it?] jointly

AW: Munəs.
named.section.of.land:pl
You mean the sections.

JG: Yep.
yes
Yep.

CH: Omia c-o-h*ar, əh, wanem - [inaudible] bihain
which cl8pl-realis-call, əh, what [inaudible] later

urukum m-u-r, gutpela.
heart cl5sg-irrealis-be.inside, good

What do they call, um - [??] if I remember later then OK.

And so it continues. The speech recorded at this meeting is about as pure a form of the vernacular as Cemaun Arapesh speakers ever spontaneously produce, but it is ubiquitously multilingual, with constant switching to Tok Pisin from the matrix vernacular, as is 'the rule rather than the exception in the case of endangered languages' (Schultze-Berndt

2006: 231). In developing a markup schema for the set of Arapesh texts from which this was drawn for purposes of archiving, glossing, and association with a lexicon (Dobrin and Pitti 2009), it became clear that there was no way to create a coherent, self-standing documentary product without acknowledging this fact. The schema now embeds what is essentially a basic Tok Pisin lexicon within it, an inefficiency that cannot be avoided if the real complexity of this community's speech practices is to be accurately expressed. In other words, there can be something of a methodological gap between the desiderata of creating 'a lasting, multi-purpose record of a language' construed as an ancestral code and collecting 'specimens of observable linguistic behaviour, i.e. examples of how the people actually communicate with each other' (Himmelmann 2006a: 1, 7).

There can also be a moral gap. Taking the lodestar of documentation to be '[f]luent monolingual speech, preferably employing 'classical' grammatical features and talking about 'traditional' topics (Moore *et al.* 2010: 16) can pose challenges for speakers, whose own partial abilities may be cast into sharp relief by understandings of exemplary speech, even under the presumably supportive conditions of language documentation work. Once again, Dobrin's fieldwork provides a concrete illustration. In returning to her field recordings now for purposes of analysis, one feature of the recorded interactions with speakers stands out painfully clearly: the researcher's regular urging to narrators who had reflexively switched to Tok Pisin to revert to the vernacular (see, e.g. www.arapesh.org/sample_texts_bethlehem.php). In a sense, of course, this was only natural: the ancestral code was, after all, what she was in the community to study. Speakers were always cheerful in accommodating these requests; they even came to anticipate them, at times catching themselves (or one another) and self-correcting as they shifted into Tok Pisin. But in fostering this kind of metalinguistic consciousness, the linguist was asking speakers to adjust their approach to deploying linguistic resources to culturally foreign ideas about the proper use of languages-as-codes (see Foley 2005: 168 on the 'valorisation of foreign elements in effective language' for a sense of what is informing these Melanesian speakers' behaviour). This is the same relationship of moral encompassment that has characterized Arapesh relations with Europeans in one form or another since the days of first contact, a pattern which current development activities often replicate, if in subtler and less intentional ways (see Dobrin 2008). Samuels (2006: 12) provides a poignant example of the way would-be speakers' ideas about the nature of linguistic competence can be affected by formal interventions with the local-language-as-code in his reflections on San Carlos Apache speaker Phillip Goode, who had worked first as a Bible translator with SIL and later with Samuels as his language teacher. Through his engagement in these activities Goode came to be seen as so capable and authoritative a speaker of Apache that

when he passed away, many members of the reservation community had to be convinced (by Samuels, of all people) that the language itself had not died with him.

The complex forms of social agency implicated in speakerhood are also apparent when we contemplate the relationship between fluency and age under conditions of language shift. In many cases it is older speakers who are the obvious candidates for language consultants in documentary fieldwork because, unlike their children and grandchildren, they acquired the language in their youth and so speak it fluently. An aging population of speakers is often used as an index of decreased language vitality (see Krauss 2007, Ostler 1998: 12). Indeed, the experience of personal loss as one's elderly consultants and friends pass away over the course of one's career is a common tragic theme in conversations among linguists who do research on endangered languages.² But as fieldworkers also well know, there are many different kinds of knowledge holders. Individual speakers differ in their special linguistic abilities, some being engaging storytellers, others being insightful analysts, still others having expertise in particular cultural practices and hence lexical domains, and so on (see, e.g., Newman and Ratliff 2001b: 3). Needless to say, this differentiation also cuts across age. Maddieson (2001: 217–18) offers some of the physiological reasons why linguists should be wary of taking older people's speech as canonical in situations of phonetic fieldwork. Less obvious, perhaps, is the importance of grasping speakers' own ideas about the significance of generational difference for understanding linguistic competence. This topic is thoughtfully explored by Suslak (2009: 206; see also Reynolds 2009), who shows how indigenous Mixe youth in Oaxaca are reconciling their indigenous and modern identities by becoming 'some of the fiercest Mixe language purists', strategically reenregistering old forms in their code-switched speech. In this case, recognizing that age plays a role as not just an independent sociolinguistic variable (to be used as a reference point in assessing a language's 'degree of endangerment' or to be worked around in fieldwork), but as an identity category in its own right, is critical to understanding how the retained ancestral code is actually being used by speakers today. The Mixe youth Suslak studied may be using their traditional language, but they are doing so in decidedly non-traditional ways, employing it as a marker of sophistication and modern self-control.

As the previous example shows, a view of speakerhood that emphasizes a strain of speech that has been handed down 'naturally' (reflexively, locally and without interruption over time) runs the risk of under-theorizing the important role of mobility, diffusion and mixing in shaping endangered vernaculars, and in some cases sustaining their speakers (Dorian 1994, Pietikäinen 2008). Taking for granted that the motor of normal language formation is divergence both springs from and lends support to an intuition that the mixing of linguistically

distinct groups of people is aberrant and linguistically unstable. But this intuition is not necessarily grounded in the observable facts of how people acquire and deploy the structural and pragmatic resources at their disposal (Matras and Bakker 2003, Mufwene 2001, 2008). For linguistic communities today, the most highly valued variety may in fact be a mixed, diasporic, or otherwise non-local register that is intentionally developed to serve as an emblem of authentic difference (Errington 2003: 730–1, Grinevald 2005, LePage and Tabouret-Keller 1985). Consider, for example, the case of Monacan, an indigenous language of the Virginia Piedmont, USA, that has not been spoken for several generations and no record of which remains. Many members of the current Monacan community experience their linguistic heritage as a painful absence, a 'language ghost' which prevents them from fully realizing their spiritual connection to their ancestral lands (Wood 2009). Yet although they express deep feelings about their language and lands, there is also a movement in the Monacan community to revive the use of a genetically related Siouan language, Tutelo, even though it has not been spoken in Virginia for over a century (the descendent community now resides in Canada). Other Monacans identify with still more distant Plains Siouan cultural traditions, some even studying Lakota and offering prayers in that language at Monacan tribal gatherings. In short, even a point of linguistic contact that is many miles distant and thousands of years old can provide people with meaningful forms of social practice that they consider authentically their own. Bespeaking a similar conclusion is the fact that popular claims celebrating a twentieth-century Hebrew 'revival' still abound, although careful cultural and philological studies show that tracing Modern Israeli Hebrew's genealogical origin to the Biblical language is linguistically unjustified (see Harshav 1993, Zuckermann 2006).

As we have tried to illustrate, endangered language documentation requires sensitivity to speakers' understandings, conscious or otherwise, of what their languages are and what using them implies about themselves. The extent to which these correspond to those of western linguistic science is an empirical matter that is best approached ethnographically (see also Eira and Stebbins 2008). Because situated language use will both reflect and reconfirm these understandings, they must be taken into account as documentary products are conceived and the process of fieldwork unfolds (i.e. in determining who to record, whether a particular utterance counts as data, and so on). At the same time, linguists' conceptions of an endangered language's status, constituent elements and position in a family tree become part of the wider context that shapes the way speakers respond to its decline. This is especially true where the documentation linguists produce feeds directly back into the community, as is now so often the case (see England 2003 for one example). The following pair of case studies, both drawn from fieldwork

in western North America, illustrates how dramatically incommensurate understandings of the processes involved in language shift and language documentation can be.

Moore (1988) discusses the use and loss of Wasco-Wishram, a Chinookan language spoken on the Warm Springs Reservation in the Columbia River basin of central Oregon, USA. During elicitation sessions, elder Wasco speakers were able to use the language's rich morpho-syntactic resources to produce a number of structurally complex verbs that younger semi-speakers treated as lexicalized formations and hence either subjected them to further, historically unnecessary inflection, or else incorporated them innovatively into periphrastic constructions. But even as the changes Moore documented in Wasco could be analysed linguistically as following from younger speakers' lack of facility with the language's morphological resources, elder Wasco speakers understood language loss rather differently. For them, loss consisted in the lamentably shrinking repertoire (a 'forgetting') of lexical verb stems as evident in the 'broken' speech of younger generations. Taking up the notion of diminishing linguistic wealth implicit in this interpretation of language loss, younger speakers ascribed value to Wasco words as cultural property of an almost sacred kind, on the model of compositionally opaque personal names, which were traditionally bestowed ceremonially and uttered only under highly specified social circumstances in formal acts of display. As a result of this logic, speakers understood linguistic elicitation sessions as an occasion for the display of cultural wealth, and so as a potential source of moral hazard: Moore found that speakers were hesitant to produce noun and verb forms in elicitation interviews. When they did produce them, they would do so by 'citing' them, embedding them in the direct speech of an appropriate (deceased) relative, rather than speaking them under their own authority. For one younger speaker, producing any Wasco utterance longer than an isolated word was tantamount to myth recitation, a highly valued category of cultural display that was restricted to take place only during the winter season lest it bring about bad weather or even snow. But, as do many linguists, Moore was conducting fieldwork during his summers. So here the process of language documentation as a social activity was itself putting speakers in a cultural bind.

Muehlmann (2008) describes how a project originally intended to document the ecological terminology of Cucapá, a language traditionally spoken in the settlement of El Mayor, along the Mexico-California border, turned into an ethically complicated study of swearwords when she found that it was only the latter category of vocabulary that remained in active use in the community. In diverse areas of their lives, people in El Mayor find themselves under pressure to provide linguistic evidence of their indigeneity to the outsiders with whom they have contact. For development consultants, missionaries, and soldiers patrolling

the border, the ability to speak Cucapá, a language which no outsider expects to be able to understand, is the signal indicator of Indian status. But because of this, the advanced state of language shift from Cucapá to Spanish leaves the community's younger people in a difficult position. As one young woman put it: '[i]t's embarrassing not to be able to speak Cucapá because everyone who comes to El Mayor says: "tell me how to say this in Cucapá" or "tell me how to say that". They think that we *have* to speak Cucapá because we are Indians' (Muehlmann 2008: 40). Resenting this humiliating linkage of their political and cultural identity to a language they cannot speak, younger members of the El Mayor community defy outsiders' demands to perform their indigeneity by responding to them with Cucapá obscenities, a move which never fails to satisfy their unwitting interrogators (see also Graham 2002). In fact, throughout the community, it is not fluent use of Cucapá but rather command of the language's vulgar lexicon that has become an emblem of political defiance and cultural resilience. Muehlmann's ability to achieve rapport with El Mayor residents followed from her learning how to curse in Cucapá. But understanding the community's ideas about their linguistic identity has also limited Muehlmann's ability to disseminate what she has learned. When the researcher began presenting her findings to her professional colleagues, she found them resistant to the notion that the language's vulgar register was truly indigenous in origin, revealing a professional ideology of local vernaculars as solemn vehicles of prestige. Even more seriously, Muehlmann determined that it would be unethical to publish vernacular forms and glosses for Cucapá swearwords (precisely that aspect of the language that remains most vital in the community) because to do so would betray the trust of speakers and compromise their ability to define themselves on their own terms, as opposed to the terms set by others.

As these cases suggest, linguists and speakers may bring dramatically different assumptions to the documentary encounter. In light of this, we must think carefully before deciding to 'help' speakers 'recognize' language endangerment as a problem and work to arouse their concern when we find that they do not (Bird 2009; Kroskrity 2009; Wurm 1998; see Cameron 1998 for a sobering lesson on how efforts to empower speakers by reforming their attitudes about language use can backfire). Such well-intended consciousness-raising does not represent something unambiguously beneficial for speakers. The motives for language shift cannot be reduced to a colonization of consciousness in which socially marginalized communities come to see their own speech practices as inferior. This much is clear from cases where avoidance registers play a role in accelerating lexical change. And where shift is *experienced by speakers* as voluntary, regardless of whether we analyse it that way social-structurally (see Bobaljik 1998, Nettle and

Romaine 2000), speaker agency is always implicated. Sometimes people express a desire to give up their language in order to better integrate into dominant economic and social spheres, and in such cases it can be less than obvious whether or how linguists should intervene. Ladefoged (1992) has been taken as the classic statement of this problem, but the stark, neo-liberal quality of his formulation makes it too easy to either embrace or dismiss, whereas speakers' attitudes are most often ambivalent and culturally inflected. García (2004, 2005) provides a fascinating discussion of indigenous Peruvian highlanders' attraction to, but ultimate rejection of, the Quechua vernacular education being promoted both as a matter of state policy and by linguistic and cultural activists (including indigenous intellectuals) working in the provincial capital, Cuzco. One Quechua parent explained his preference for monolingual Spanish schooling this way: '[y]ou [anthropologists] care about our culture. We too care. We [may] never be able to be [deindigenized] mestizos ... but by learning how to read and write [in Spanish], our children can defend themselves in the mestizo's world' (García 2005: 94).

Finally, and most importantly for any critical discussion of language documentation, the very imperative to preserve cultural form must be recognized as a culturally particular phenomenon, one that is manifest in a community in particular domains to varying degrees, or perhaps not at all. Linguists, anthropologists, and archaeologists bring to the work of preservation their own values regarding the disposition of cultural form, and these too are neither universal nor natural. One way that scholars have talked about the values implicated in the western 'will to preserve' is in terms of a particular HERITAGE IDEOLOGY (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2006). This heritage ideology is most explicit in initiatives like the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage,³ or the World Intellectual Property Organization's Creative Heritage Project,⁴ which extends UNESCO's World Heritage scheme to the realm of non-material artefacts. Central to these projects is an idea of TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE of just the sort that we have seen used in the construction of endangered languages: an intellectual repertoire handed down from generation to generation in more or less inviolate form, the preservation of which is deemed crucial both for humanity and for the continuing existence of the originating community. UNESCO's designation of specific individuals as human vessels for the transmission of traditional knowledge instantiates the same kind of heritage ideology that underlies the publicly mourned 'last speakers' of endangered languages (Heller-Roazen 2005: 57ff., Grinevald and Bert, Chapter 3). But as legal scholar Sunder (2007) has observed, many efforts to protect traditional knowledge founder precisely on the incompatibility of this ideology, according

to which it is sensible to create registries of intellectual artefacts (e.g. to issue listings of endangered languages such as the *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger of Disappearing*⁵), or to establish individual practitioners of communally held, authorless oral traditions as 'living archives' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2006), with the need to maintain traditions of knowledge-making, the preservation of which demands ongoing innovation. The great challenge for scholars concerned about the consequences of cultural change for speakers is not just to find better ways to isolate and capture the past, but to find ways to preserve ongoing innovation (Amery 2009). This is what makes language documentation such a stimulating potential field for collaborative methods in which linguists and speakers are co-engaged.

There are even situations in which the preservation of cultural form is alien (or inimical) to the ideological complex by which the cultural life of a community is constituted. An example from archaeology will help make this point clear. Karlström (2002) discusses the tensions involved in preserving Theravada Buddhist temple architecture in Laos. In keeping with the Buddhist ideal of non-attachment to material wealth, that embodied above all in temple compounds, Laotian Theravada communities subscribe to a tradition of periodically destroying and rebuilding their local temples. This tradition flies in the face of UNESCO's determination to designate certain built environments, including local temple sites, exemplars of World Heritage since this presupposes a desire to make them permanent. Heritage ideology provides the political, academic and social motives for cultural preservation wherever it occurs. Yet, ironically, it also threatens to undermine the integrity and continuity of the very social practices which make the temples culturally significant in the first place. In this case, western observers were able to come to terms with the contradiction between their own heritage ideology and local ideas about the nature of change only by documenting Lao cultural processes at work, incorporating video artefacts of temple destruction into the archival record.

To bring the discussion back to language and conclude this section, as Makoni and Pennycook (2006: 32) remind us, the creation of any linguistic product 'implies an intervention into people's lives', where the terms governing the interaction may be multiple and sometimes contradictory. This is not to say that we should not encourage speakers to participate in activities that reflect scientific understandings of language and cultural preservation. But we also must be careful not to dismiss the sometimes surprising patterns and theories of language use we encounter as irrational, unscientific, or self-defeating, lest the interventions that flow from western ideas about language and the will-to-preserve have 'unexpected adverse effects on exactly those same people whose interests we think we are promoting or safeguarding' (Makoni and Pennycook 2006: 32).

10.3 Indigenous rights and the crisis of documentation

The inspiration documentary linguistics derived from the endangered languages movement of the early 1990s has been discussed in detail elsewhere (Craig 1992a; Himmelmann 2008; Grinevald and Bert, Chapter 3). However, the place of speakers in language documentation cannot be understood without reference to the political wave which carried the problem of language endangerment to the forefront of the disciplinary conscience. Over the past several decades, the 'three hundred million original peoples worldwide who maintain attachments to "timeless" original traditions' (Niezen 2003: 120) have created a new political reality, an international indigenist movement 'originating in the terminology of international law' which found new venues for effectively asserting 'rights aimed at preserving cultural, religious, and linguistic identity' (Niezen (2003: 129); see also Muehlbach 2001). In the late 1980s and early 1990s, intense public attention was drawn to the issue of minority and indigenous rights by a number of international and grassroots organizations protesting the 500th anniversary of Columbus's arrival in the Americas. The high profile of indigenous issues during this period was reflected in important political achievements such as the passing of the Native American Languages Act of 1990, the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Mayan rights activist Rigoberta Menchu Tum in 1992, and the establishment of the first International Year of Indigenous Peoples in 1993.⁶ In this climate, speakers of minority languages became increasingly visible, to those linguists who were bothering to look (and some were looking quite intently), as something more than sources of data. They were now also members of 'endangered language communities' engaged in an urgent political struggle to achieve 'a position of strength and dignity for their linguistic and cultural wealth' (Hale *et al.* 1992: 2). This recognition of speakers not only as repositories of information but also as members of political groups asserting their rights to self-determination in relation to existing powers brought new meaning to the process of language documentation. By valuing the speakers of endangered languages for what their encompassing states so often did not, linguists began to see the work of language documentation and preservation as contributing to a political cause, a way of supporting the struggles of indigenous people through activities carried out within their own professional sphere.⁷

In Australia, ethnographers had been predicting the imminent extinction of its indigenous peoples since the 1830s, yet the remoteness of so much of the continent inhibited the development of documentary salvage projects along the lines of those fostered in the early twentieth century by Franz Boas, Alfred Kroeber, and Edward Sapir in western North America. When descriptive linguistics finally did gain momentum in the

study of Australian Aboriginal languages around 1960, it was driven by a sense of pressing need to solve the longstanding problem of the genetic status of the continent's languages. But here, too, this took place against a political background: indigenous people's demands for citizenship, land return and recognition of their cultural, linguistic and territorial sovereignty (on language sovereignty in Australia, see Simpson 2006). Indigenous Australians' struggles for political rights have met with equivocal success (Ginsburg and Myers 2006). In 2007, the then Federal government marked the fortieth anniversary of the constitutional referendum that granted citizenship to the country's indigenous inhabitants by disparaging the educational role of local languages in indigenous communities (Gibson 2007, O'Shannessy 2007). But this is not for lack of critical engagement on the part of Australian linguists. On the contrary; in the current atmosphere of both professional linguistic and public fascination with language endangerment, Australia has emerged as an emblematic case, a place where all but a handful of the local languages will go out of use in the next generation, yet where linguists have risen to confront the impending loss by documenting and archiving material on the indigenous languages, participating in land claims cases (Morphy 2006, Sansom 2007, Sutton 2003), and facilitating linguistically oriented social programmes (McKay 2007). It is no accident that two figures at the centre of the early documentary revolution in Australia, Stephen Wurm and Ken Hale, both went on to play central roles in mobilizing the endangered languages agenda on the international linguistics scene (or that so many Australian linguists, or others who have carried out fieldwork there, are involved in contemporary research and discussions about endangered languages and their documentation and support).

It is useful to review such elements of political history here because they are at the root of a paradox that profoundly influences the place of speakers in current documentary linguistic discourse and practice: to the extent that the problem of preserving threatened linguistic diversity is tied, morally and politically, to the rights of speakers to determine their own futures and maintain control over their cultural heritage, linguists' scientific authority to document that heritage has become ethically problematic. This is because it takes for granted one group's power, derived from its association with the high-status western institution of the academy, to cast its gaze upon cultural others through the research process, and to represent them according to its own, externally imposed analytic categories in the resulting scholarly products. In other words, the act of creating documentary and descriptive linguistic objects as traditionally understood (grammar, lexicon and corpus of texts) reproduces the suspect power hierarchy that linguistics-in-recognition-of-indigenous-rights is intended to dismantle. This CRISIS OF DOCUMENTATION (to adapt the now widely used term for anthropology's great movement of self-reflection, the 'crisis of representation'⁸) is a problem which other

disciplines that study human cultural production by means of fieldwork, such as anthropology, archaeology, and folklore, have been grappling with for decades as they have sought to eschew their historical relationship with colonialism and resituate themselves on a more morally justifiable epistemological footing. But it is really only now, with the development of a disciplinary conversation about the nature of linguistic fieldwork following from the endangered languages movement, that linguistics is confronting the politics of research and representation in its own domain.

This new political awareness is being played out in language documentation in a number of significant ways. One is through discussion about, and openness to, establishing more equitable social arrangements in the conduct of linguistic research. This is by no means the first time linguists have made overtures toward non-canonical research relations as a mode of scientific possibility and social responsibility. One early example is Ken Hale's argument for the cultivation of 'native speaker linguists' in his contribution to *Reinventing Anthropology* (Hymes 1972; see also Hale 1965), Dell Hymes's historic call for the humanistic field sciences to make themselves relevant to the people being studied. Another example is Cameron *et al.*'s (1992, 1993a) influential 'prepositional' model of the kinds of relationships obtaining between language researchers and the people they study. This model arranges research ON, FOR and WITH speakers according to a hierarchy of value, with collaborative research, research WITH, prominently at the apex (Grinevald and Bert, Chapter 3). But the thematicization of collaboration that we find emerging as a central methodological issue in documentary research today knows no precedent in the discipline.⁹ Language documentation is now conceived by many in the field to be an activity that not only can but *should* be equally responsive to both the technical questions posed by linguists and the more immediate practical interests of speakers. Issues of rights and power are no longer mere afterthoughts, or even cause for hand-wringing. They are taken to be fundamental matters for negotiation between researchers and speakers, mandatorily addressed in research agreements and funding proposals, and threaded through documentation projects from their very conception (as Bowern, Chapter 23 emphasizes).

The new collaborative ideal is articulated clearly by Czaykowska-Higgins (2009).¹⁰ Rejecting a LINGUIST-FOCUSED approach to documentary research on the grounds that 'there is no inherent reason why all the priorities and assumptions of linguists should always be privileged over those of the language-users' (Czaykowska-Higgins (2009: 25)), she elaborates a COMMUNITY-BASED model (where research is carried out BY the language-users) in which research is broadened to encompass not only traditional intellectual production, but also the improvement of local social conditions and the achievement of social justice through

the redistribution of power. In this model, researchers train community members to conduct research on their own languages with 'the aim of making redundant the presence in the community of [outsider] academic linguists' (Czaykowska-Higgins 2009: 25). At the same time, community members train researchers about 'issues related to language, linguistics, and culture, as well as about how to conduct research and themselves appropriately within the community' (Czaykowska-Higgins 2009: 25). In this way, all parties involved in the research process can be engaged on equal footing in a mutual exchange of knowledge. We will offer some further thoughts on this approach in the concluding section below.

Also taking place is an unprecedented disciplinary conversation about the ethics of linguistic research. In addition to calling for more equitable relationships with speaker communities as just noted, linguists have begun avidly discussing a whole range of issues regarding rights and obligations that arise out of the documentary endeavour (see Rice 2006 for an overview).¹¹ Scholars have proposed guiding principles for ethical fieldwork (Austin 2010b, Dwyer 2006) and made efforts to identify ethical problem areas (Musgrave and Thieberger 2006, O'Meara and Good 2010). Whose consent is required to proceed with a project? Who owns the resulting materials? Who is to curate and distribute those materials, and in what form? How can we anticipate the harms that may follow when legacy materials are later accessed? How can we simultaneously respect the multiple cultural protocols that different stakeholders bring to a given project when they fail to converge?¹² Linguists continue to be stunned when, just as a dictionary or other project representing years of linguist-community engagement is reaching some long-awaited level of completion, new groups suddenly materialize and challenge the linguist's right to proceed. Often these disputes play out in an idiom of intellectual property (K. Hill 2002, Hinton and Weigel 2002: 168ff.), an area where those engaged in documentation of language and culture have found themselves having to exercise new levels of creativity. In the grammar of one Pacific language that is often held up as a model, the copyrights for the linguistic examples are explicitly assigned to the individual speakers who contributed them (Thieberger 2006). In the cultural archive developed for an Aboriginal Australian community, access to archived material is regulated by digitally encoded traditional cultural protocols (Christen 2008, 2009). A Pueblo community of the American Southwest has managed to develop and maintain a dictionary despite the potential threat such a written document poses for the control of their linguistic knowledge, which they hold to be sacred and proprietary, communally monitoring the dictionary's example sentences to make sure they are not inappropriately revealing (Debenport 2010). In the case of one Native American linguistic salvage project, community leaders have 'archived' their digitized materials in a salt mine to prevent them from becoming the object of unwelcome scrutiny (Lindstrom 2009: 103).

The aesthetic packaging of documentary products is yet another arena where the crisis of documentation has had visible effects. While linguists often acknowledge the need for documentation to serve different constituencies, creating a truly multifunctional record of a language requires an enormous amount of forethought, especially when members of the language community are among the intended users (see Rehg 2009, Rice and Saxon 2002). Moreover, documentary products may end up being used by speaker communities not only as resources for local language development as linguists imagine, but in other ways that have less foreseeable (and less obviously positive) outcomes: as legal evidence (Henderson and Nash 2002), as indicators of relative social standing vis à vis surrounding communities (Terrill 2002), or as moves in local power politics (Errington 2001), among other things. But regardless of how they end up being used by members of the source community, it is all but certain nowadays that they will be *seen* by them. Following from this, and from the collaborative ideal discussed above, Lindstrom (2009: 100) has observed a trend toward what he calls the 'personalization of grammar', a 'celebration of co-authorship' through the prominent inclusion of photographs of individuals closely tied to the research¹³, and through the presentation of local narratives that directly reflect the community's interests. One recent grammar (Aikhenvald 2008) goes so far as to place a colourful group photograph of the language's speakers on the cover.

Finally, we can note a new willingness to ask hard questions about the wider disciplinary configuration within which language documentation is taking place. The endangered languages movement originated with a call for linguistics to revalue language description and community engagement as central professional endeavours (Krauss 1992: 10–11; see also Linguistic Society of America 1994):

Universities and professional societies have crucial influence in determining research and educational priorities. To what extent are endangered languages a priority in modern linguistics? Which languages of the world receive the most attention? Are graduate students encouraged to document moribund or endangered languages for their dissertations? How much encouragement is there to compile a dictionary of one? How many academic departments encourage applied linguistics in communities for the support of endangered languages? How many departments provide appropriate training for speakers of these languages who are most ideally suited to do the most needed work?

Heeding this call has had ripple effects. If academic researchers are to be able to invest the time and effort necessary for primary documentation, this has to be acknowledged and rewarded as a form of intellectual work. One such development is the Linguistic Society of America's resolution supporting the recognition of electronic databases as academic

publications (Linguistic Society of America 2005). We also find new institutions like the Ken Hale Chair, an endowed professorship to support the teaching of field methods at Linguistic Society of America Summer Institutes, and the development of a range of postgraduate programmes, training courses and summer schools (see also Jukes, Chapter 21). If they are to work directly with speakers, linguists obviously need training in how to do this, raising questions about whether and how field methods courses can be more thoroughly integrated into linguistics curricula (Newman 2009b). But in order to make lasting shifts in postgraduate linguistics curricula, departmental hiring and employment priorities must change.

Linguists have also begun calling for dialogue about the discipline's close collaboration with the well-funded missionary organization SIL International, the other major institution with which it shares the language documentation terrain (Dobrin and Good 2009). For decades academic linguists have enjoyed the technical infrastructure and 'mountains of data' SIL provides as a by-product of its work translating the Christian Bible into vernacular languages (Svelmoe 2009: 635). Not least of these helpful resources is an authoritative listing of the world's languages, the *Ethnologue*; due to recent developments in international standards, SIL now maintains the registry of international language codes (ISO-639) in an official capacity. The placement of academic linguistics in a passive 'consumer role' in relation to so many SIL resources raises questions about why this is so and whether the arrangement is ideal. In many areas of the world it is SIL that has been the primary outside agent assisting with language development in under-resourced communities, raising further questions about the social responsibilities of the academy. In the near term, SIL's support for minority and indigenous languages through the production of written materials and the cultivation of vernacular literacy skills seems consistent with the aims of secular endangered language activism. However, these activities are necessarily shaped by SIL's millenarian worldview, which has led the organization to focus its efforts on languages with greater rather than smaller speaker populations and selectively promote certain kinds of cultural change (Epps and Ladley 2009: 644). Linguistics has come a long way in renouncing the treatment of speakers as means to scientific ends. It remains to be seen where the discipline will come to stand on the treatment of speakers as means to metaphysical ends.

10.4 Recontextualizing the documentary encounter, rehumanizing linguistics

Joseph (2004: 226) points to the danger of abstracting away from speakers in the study of language:

If people's use of language is reduced analytically to how meaning is formed and represented in sound, or communicated from one person to another, or even the conjunction of the two, something vital has been abstracted away: the people themselves, who, prior to such abstraction, are always present in what they say ... A full account of linguistic communication would have to start with, not a message, but again the speakers themselves, and their interpretation of each other that determines, interactively, their interpretation of what is said.

Because the languages prioritized for documentation are often deeply significant for their speakers as emblems of identity, the movement to study endangered languages has had the salutary effect of rehumanizing linguistics, making it all but impossible to abstract the speakers away regardless of what science might seem to require. In attempting to navigate this newly enlivened disciplinary terrain whose character is so thoroughly shaped by human striving and interpretations of social difference, documentary linguists have gone to great lengths to establish more equitable power relations with speakers through use of participatory, community-based research protocols. But overcoming differences of power is only part of the challenge of ethical documentation. '[B]reaking down the boundaries between researchers and language-users' (Czaykowska-Higgins 2009: 25) is hard because those boundaries are real, embodying in microcosm speakers' understandings of themselves as bearers of culture in relation to others (Bashkow 2004). They are the very understandings that are the driving force behind language shift. The particular ideas and feelings that inform speakers' attitudes toward the use, transmission, and development of their languages are not always consciously communicable or negotiable; as with grammar, much of culture is implicit. Respecting the interests of speakers therefore demands a willingness not only to build relationships across difference, but to approach those relationships analytically.

All research has its social context. For documentary linguistics, that context is especially complex: linguistic insight emerges slowly over time through open-ended interactions with people in uncontrolled conditions (i.e. wherever or whatever 'the field' is). Researchers and speakers cannot take for granted that they are operating on the basis of a shared set of cultural assumptions.¹⁴ Documentation frequently takes place against the backdrop of evolving community leadership structures and rapidly shifting (and therefore significantly heterogenous) linguistic and cultural norms. Learning to analyse how the research encounter itself is shaped by historical, cultural, and personal factors has not generally been treated as a proper part of linguistic field methods. But we are convinced that it must be if linguists are to 'put their money where their mouth is' and take language endangerment seriously as the crucial context for current documentary work. In short, we suggest, linguists need to work toward an ethnographic understanding of their research

encounters. Ethnography 'remains our best tool for capturing rapid and confusing social change and its correlates: phenomena that do not fit clear-cut patterns or categories but represent moments of change, conflict, and movement in social systems' (Blommaert 2009: 438). It is hard to imagine a more apt description of the setting for most language documentation projects today.

The motives animating the other main party to the language documentation process also warrant critical reflection. Documentary linguists rightly celebrate the continuities that exist between their present goals and those pursued by the Boasian anthropologists of the early twentieth century: the moral imperative 'to save what can yet be saved' of native cultures (Cole 1983: 50), the collection of texts as a valuable form of data, and the cultivation of native-speaker researchers (see Woodbury, Chapter 9). Yet while these parallels have served as useful rallying points for the documentary movement, there are certain limits to such PRESENTIST uses of history, which look to the past to justify disciplinary practices we wish to promote today (Stocking 1968). The context of linguistic research has changed radically since Boas's time. We are no longer trying to discredit the notion that languages are ranked along an evolutionary scale of complexity, or to disentangle language from culture and race, as were our Boasian predecessors. Most importantly, the role of native speakers in the documentary enterprise is rather different now than it was in the early Americanist period. To be sure, Boas treated highly motivated, culturally astute speakers as collaborators in the documentation process. But this was more a practical than an ethical move; training them to produce texts in their languages was an efficient means for getting at the native point of view (Berman 1996). Rarely were trained speakers accorded status as equals worthy of authorship or ownership of their scholarly output (Darnell 2001: 18–19). There was certainly nothing corresponding to the present push to empower native speakers to address their own concerns. Moreover, as Briggs (2002) argues, language was of special interest to Boas because of its automatic and unconscious nature, which he believed provided a vehicle for studying human social life that would be free from 'secondary explanations' (people's post hoc rationalizations for why they do what they do) that 'so plague the study of culture' (Briggs 2002: 484). The tidied-up view of language this engendered, 'neatly separated from that which is nonlinguistic, supposedly including culture and society', lives on in the artefactual ideology that continues to dissuade us from viewing languages 'as loci of heterogeneity, agency, and creativity', as media for human action and self-expression (Briggs 2002: 493).

Taking a cue from our speaker-collaborators we should draw upon all the intellectual resources at our disposal, past and present. There are many models that may be profitable to learn from if we are willing to look farther afield, including beyond the boundaries of linguistics to

neighbouring disciplines. Consider, for example, the decade-long Fox project undertaken in the Meskwaki community by anthropologist Sol Tax and his students in the 1940s and 1950s under the rubric of ACTION ANTHROPOLOGY (Daubenmier 2008, Gearing *et al.* 1960, Tax 1952). Action anthropology was conceived as a way of making anthropology useful at the same time that it produces new knowledge. Action anthropologists would assist community members and provide them with information to help inform their decision making, but refrain from exercising any power over them. Ethnobotany offers another example. Ethnobotanists were among the first ethnographic field scientists to adopt a code of ethics that recognized the intellectual property issues at stake in their work with politically marginalized communities. This was the Declaration of Belém, orchestrated by American ethnobotanist Darrell Posey in 1988, four years before the Convention on Biological Diversity made 'access and benefits sharing' a metonym for ethical research practice (Posey 2004; Hayden 2003). Or, consider the approach to conservation taken by many current NGOs that have been analysed as exercises in CONSERVATION-AS-DEVELOPMENT (e.g. West 2006). Conservation-as-development schemes assume that the means for local people to take control of their lives will flow naturally from projects aimed at protecting their natural resources (see also Harbert, Chapter 20). Such examples could be multiplied; this is just a sample with which to begin. The point is not to try to advance any one of these as a new historical precedent to be followed uncritically; all have their ambiguities and limitations as well as their strengths. But by looking at the trajectories and outcomes of other intercultural collaborations meant to further the ideals of self-determination, conservation, and the protection of property rights, documentary linguists may be able to think in fresh ways about the challenge presented by the well-known inadequacy of good intentions to produce good outcomes. As we move forward in developing documentary linguistics as an ethical field, we need to take the broadest possible view of the past of our endeavour. We should remember that we ourselves, like the speakers of the languages we study, need not seek in the past a model to simply reproduce, but resources with which to creatively improvise the future.

Notes

- 1 As opposed to 'taking the main informants out of the noisy environment of their homes and villages and working with them in a guest house, trailer, or hotel nearby' (Himmelman 2008: 341).
- 2 Although exploring the researchers' sense of loss has been recognized as epistemologically productive in some genres of anthropological writing (Behar 1996, Rosaldo 1993), this pervasive feature of the contemporary salvage linguist's experience has unfortunately

not yet found much expression in linguists' writing on endangered languages. One exception is Bower's (2008) fieldwork manual. As Bower writes (2008: 166): '[i]t's depressing to build up strong and extremely close relationships with elderly people who then pass away. You have complicated links to your consultants, who will become your friends as well as your collaborators and teachers. You may feel guilty that you might have done a better job or recorded more of the language, and it's too late now. This is a commonly reported feeling amongst linguists who work on highly endangered languages.'

3 portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=34325andURL_DO=DO_TOPICandURL_SECTION=201.html (accessed 28 February, 2010).

4 www.wipo.int/tk/en/folklore/culturalheritage (accessed 28 February, 2010).

5 www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00139 (accessed 28 February 2010).

6 Thanks are due to Guy Lopez for helpful discussion of these events.

7 Charity (2008) surveys some of the other ways linguists have brought their professional skills to bear in supporting progressive social causes.

8 Beginning in the 1960s, anthropologists began asking themselves how they could avoid perpetuating the injustices of colonialism that had constructed certain kinds of people as fit objects of study in the first place. Was it structurally possible to conduct fieldwork without subordinating one's interlocutors? Was documenting cultural difference ineluctably defined by a nostalgic longing to see our own complement in the primitive other (Fabian 2002)? How is the hierarchy of authoritative subject and disempowered object reproduced through the conventions of ethnographic writing, premised as they are on the anthropologist's right to portray cultural others in their texts (Clifford and Marcus 1986, Marcus and Fischer 1986)? Concepts which had been taken for granted ('culture', 'the field') became the objects of intense questioning (Clifford 1988, Gupta and Ferguson 1997). In recent years, anthropologists seem to be making their peace with the basic parameters of their project, learning about others through the experience of 'being there' with them (Borneman and Hammoudi 2009). Yet the outcome of this generation-long *crise de coeur* has been a new sensitivity to how field researchers inevitably become implicated in the events they have gone to the field to describe, along with a willingness to take seriously the problem of 'research[ing] research itself' (Elyachar 2006).

9 In line with this, the theme of the splendidly received First International Conference on Language Documentation and Conservation that took place at the University of Hawai'i in March, 2009 was 'supporting small languages together'.

10 It is no coincidence that Czaykowska-Higgins is a scholar of Native American languages working in Canada. While a live issue elsewhere (especially Australia, another powerful Anglo settler nation), the new emphasis on the politics of fieldwork has been driven predominantly by Americanist concerns. Hence, those few scholars who have approached the politicization of linguistic research more critically base their arguments on experience in other parts of the world (Childs and Koroma 2008, Dobrin 2008, Ladefoged 1992, Newman 2003).

11 Ethical awareness has been integral to the endangered languages movement from its inception; see Craig (1992a: 33).

12 This concern with research ethics has spilled over into the discipline of linguistics at large. In 2006, at the urging of the Committee on Endangered Languages and their Preservation, the Linguistic Society of America (LSA) formed an ad hoc Ethics Committee with the goal of drafting an ethics statement on the Society's behalf. The committee membership consisted of linguists working in a number of subfields, not only documentary linguistics, but also sociolinguistics, experimental speech research and anthropological linguistics. In 2009 the Ethics Committee was made a standing committee of the LSA, and the Society adopted its first ever Statement of Ethics (www.lsadc.org/info/lsa-res.cfm). While other linguistic associations have issued formal ethical guidelines, codes, or statements (see Wilkins 1992 for reflections on the early efforts to codify ethics in the Australian linguistics community), the LSA's recent embrace of ethics as a matter for systematic professional development illustrates the great strides the endangered language movement has made in demanding that linguistics make itself responsive to human needs.

13 Actual co-authorship is of course known from Australia, dating back to the 1980s when publications of texts and dictionaries appeared under the names of the speakers who supplied the materials and the linguist(s) who codified them (see also Woodbury, Chapter 9, on native speaker linguist authorship dating back to the time of Boas in North America).

14 The effects of this problem can be seen in even more controlled research settings, such as interviews; see Briggs 1986 for a thoughtful analysis.