

1 Best practices in language documentation

1.1 Ideals

- **The minimum:**
 - A notebook and a pencil
- **The ideal:**
 - A notebook and a pencil
 - A way to make audio recordings
- **The deluxe ideal:**
 - A notebook and a pencil
 - A way to make audio recordings
 - A way to make video recordings
- **Working with what you have:** *it's not necessary to have all of the latest recording gadgets or the most expensive equipment or the most complicated software!*
 - Notebooks and pencils never break down
 - If your equipment is reliable and makes decent recordings, then this is what you need

1.2 Elicitation plan

- If using the elicitation method, it's best to have all of your questions entered into your field notebook in advance of the session – this is actually a part of planning your elicitation!
- If using the observation method, you should make a record of the topic(s) (if you know them in advance) and any other details of the setting

1.3 Audio recording

- **The minimum:**
 - A device that reliably records audio: a laptop, smartphone, personal audio recorder, iPad, tape recorder, etc.
- **The ideal:**
 - A device that makes high quality digital recordings (a laptop, most smartphones, iPad/Phone)
 - An quality microphone (in order of ideal: headset, lapel, desktop mic on a stand, internal device mic)
 - A quiet, controlled environment

- **The deluxe ideal:**
 - A device dedicated to making high quality digital recordings (laptop, digital recorder, DAT)
 - A headset mic
- Understanding how your recorder works
 - Do you know how to start and stop the recording?
 - Do you know where the files are on your computer/smartphone/iPad/Phone?
 - Do you know how to rename them?
 - Do you know how to copy or move them?
- Goals
 - Are you recording stories for a collection or for the language consultant's personal use?
 - Are you recording word lists for a talking dictionary or for a pronunciation guide?
 - Are you gathering photos, audio and teachable language for use in your class?

2 Media and teachable language in the classroom

- Technology is not just a nice thing to use or add to a lesson, **today's students expect it**
- Photos, video, audio, graphics (i.e. drawings), games, apps, social media, and animation are effective tools for engaging a student, **but there must always be teachable language!**

3 A Direct Elicitation session

- Basic setup:
 - Recording device ideally on a stand (to prevent any knocking or vibrations in the table)
 - Check for sufficient memory (minimum two hours)
 - Test levels: the golden rule for digital audio recording: *never go in the red!*
 - The mic (if internal) should be pointed towards the speaker at a distance of around 3 feet (but this can vary)
- Make sure you and your language consultant is comfortable and has water
- Direct Elicitation using two methods: basic word lists – ideal if you know very little about the language

3.1 Direct Elicitation Method 1: *Through recording*

- The basic principles of *through recording*:
 - The entire session is recorded, breaks, starts, stops, and all resulting in one file for the session
 - Advantages: no details are missed – potentially interesting and spontaneous discussions, elaborations and speaker reflections are captured (also real-time corrections)
 - Possible disadvantages: recording memory intensive, and it can be hard to locate specific things later
- 1. Start recorder: introduce yourself, your language consultant, the date and time, and location
- 2. Record this same information in your field notes
- 3. Basic questions: *How do you say X?* or *What do you call (a) Y?*

3.2 Direct Elicitation Method 2: *Rehearsed recording*

- The basic principles of *rehearsed recording*:
 - The session is broken up into parts which are first practiced and then recorded
 - Advantages: organization, which makes for efficient memory use, retrieval, cataloging, and editing
 - Possible disadvantages: effects of rehearsed speech (it can sound clear, but unnatural)
- 1. Start recorder: introduce yourself, your language consultant, the date and time, and location
- 2. Record this same information in your field notes
- 3. Stop recorder and work through the following steps:
 - a. Take three or four words or sentences
 - b. Elicit these from the speaker and transcribe them
 - c. Give the speaker a chance to practice them
 - d. Restart the recorder and ask the speaker each of the words, pronouncing each one **three times** (the magic number in direct elicitation)
 - e. Stop the recorder and repeat

4 Post-session

- Always review your recordings for quality or and malfunctions **as soon as possible** (i.e. the same day)

- Check your transcriptions and make the appropriate corrections and clarifications
- Fill in the timestamps for easy retrieval
- Identify questions for your next elicitation session