



Field methods training in Australia

RNLD Symposium:
“Strengthening language maintenance through cooperative
training strategies”
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Outline

- 2004 survey
- Obstacles
- Tasks
- Workflow
- Results
- Question



Survey of field linguistics higher degree training in Australasian universities

- conducted November 2004

Steven Bird, Cathy Bow, Nick Evans

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Findings (1)

7 / 21 institutions surveyed offer Field Methods units

- advanced level
- usually only every second year
- enrolments range from 2 - 25 students
- native speaker involved from 2 to 7 hours/week

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How many offer it now, and how often?

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Findings (2) Postgraduate

- 14 /21 institutions surveyed offer financial and/or supervisory help for fieldwork, and actively encourage grammatical description for doctoral theses.
- 8 also encourage primary documentation as a large part of the thesis.
- no separate postgraduate units in Field Methods
 - From 2006 Monash University postgraduate coursework programs in Language Endangerment Studies.

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Tasks in Field Methods class

- Background on language
- Establishing relations with the consultant(s)
 - discussion on ethics
- Elicitation
 - what, who, how
- Workflow for documentation
 - Recording (media and metadata)
 - Analysis (transcription, translation, annotation)
 - Archiving (creating bundles of archival objects with linked metadata, including access and usage rights)
- Distribution

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Students' background

- Must have some senior units in phonetics and syntax
- Pressure to have more sociolinguistic and applied linguistics courses means less training in language analysis

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Where do consultants come from?

- international linguistics PhD students
(*Adang, Balinese, Bima, Sinhala*)
- international graduate students (law:
Muna, public health: *Karo Batak, Banjar*)
- language with simple sound system,
- *time, availability, ability to put up with questioning from students, students learning what they can and can't ask*

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What students do now

- 1 semester long course (before, used to be year-long)
- 1 hour group elicitation and language learning per week for around 10 weeks
- ½ hour elicitation in pairs
- 1-2 hours discussion of field methods tasks, analysis of data, training on documentation tools

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Student tasks

- description of phonology, discussion of orthography
- choose a semantic domain and
 - create some dictionary entries for that domain
 - record, transcribe and annotate a short text in that domain
- essay on some aspect of the language

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Workflow (thanks Aidan Wilson and PARADISEC!)

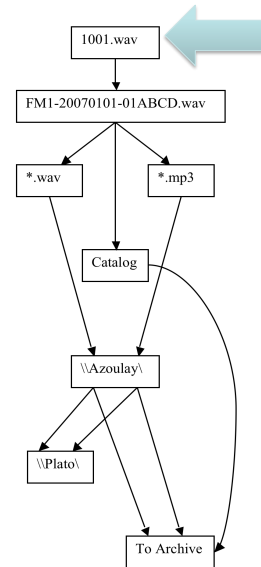
1. Recording

Each group will have a designated flash memory card for recording their sessions.

2. After the last recording session for the day, someone takes the flash memory cards to PARADISEC for ingestion and cataloguing.

3. Ingest

Files are loaded onto the Mac



4. Rename

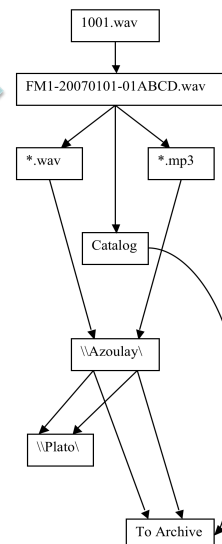
All files are renamed as per the naming convention.

5. Create mp3

Use Audacity to create an mp3 file for each recording.

6. Catalogue

Create a catalogue entry for the day's item. One catalogue entry will cover all the day's recordings and will be utterly necessary for archive.



4. Rename

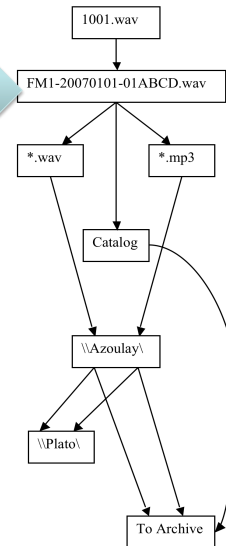
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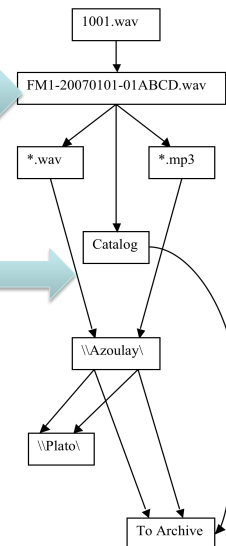
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Last

7. Stage on server

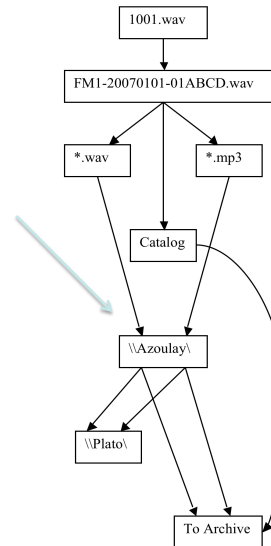
Upload all files, .wav and .mp3 files, onto PARADISEC server.

8. Access Website

Copy all files across to public website for students to access.

9. Archive

Aidan will then archive the files from PARADISEC server.



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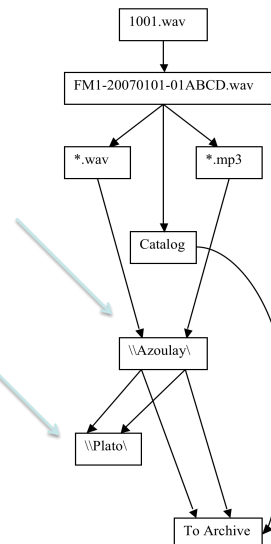
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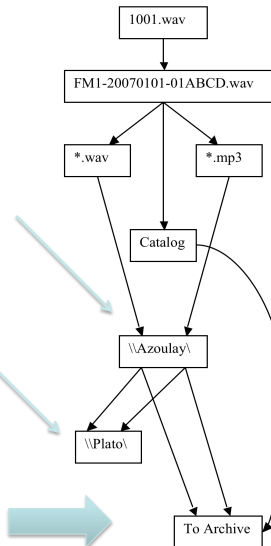
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Results

- Students had good training in workflow of documentation
- Students had ready access to properly catalogued sound files of reasonable size that they could download.
- **Cost:** a lot of PARADISEC staff time
 - in training students
 - in archiving material of variable quality.

all in 39 hours

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Discussion

Field methods training is expensive:

cost of consultant

cost of workflow

needs low student enrolments.

Most linguistics departments are small and face pressure to teach large classes only.

Result: students do not have much opportunity for fieldwork training.

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Future

- more special purpose courses at shared institutes
- online courses for tools training?
- shared video conferencing for work with consultant