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Title: An ethnographic analysis of the collaborative design of community-based language archives

Abstract: In recent years, language archiving in the field of language documentation has undergone considerable changes in its format. The creation of digitized databases has explored some of the advantages of digital methods, such as the possibility of indexing large textual collections for user-friendly searches (Enge et al., 2015). Moreover, social changes have required us to redefine established recommended practices. Traditional boundaries and roles between the participants of documentary linguistics projects have been challenged through the empowerment of Indigenous communities in the documentation and revitalization of their languages (Henke and Berez-Kroeker, 2016), as well as in the creation of newly developed methods of participatory models and community-language research (Czaykowska-Higgins, 2009).

These conditions have also impacted the design choices of language archives. Recent literature has emphasized the need of tailoring their design and functionalities for their speech communities (Wasson et al., 2016). This is especially relevant when language archives are conceived not only as a tool for language documentation, but also as a key element to support language revitalization (Perez Báez et al., 2019). While the traditional lexico-grammar approach to language documentation has been criticized in favor of corpus-centered language documentation (Himmelmann, 2006), many of the existing digitized language resources focus on the former approach.

This presentation employs ethnographic observation to analyse the design choices of a community-based corpus-centered archive for Tsuut'ina (ISO 639-3: srs, Glottocode: sars1236), which has been developed using a co-design methodology in collaboration with language workers of Tsuut'ina Nation. Through an ethnographic analysis of the iterative development, this presentation aims to understand the interaction between recommended practices proposed within academia and the interests of the communities. By drawing a comparison between academia and the community, this work enables an in-depth analysis of underlying viewpoints on fundamental issues around language archiving such as the availability of materials, accessibility and expected users. Deepening the understanding on such matters aims to facilitate the alignment of the interests and expectations of academic research with the documentation and revitalization goals of the communities, therefore promoting sustainable collaboration between speech communities and members of academia.

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