CHAPTER

7   Including Music and the Temporal Arts in Language Documentation 🔓

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Abstract

This article enumerates the importance of music and the temporal arts in documenting a language. It is intended for linguistic researchers preparing to undertake fieldwork, probably documenting one of the world's many small or endangered languages. Recognizing that linguists have their own priorities and methodologies in language documentation and description, this article advances reasons for including in the corpus the song and/or instrumental music that it is almost certain to be encountered in the course of fieldwork carried out. This article begins by providing an overview of current thinking about the nature and significance of human musical capacities and the commonly encountered types, context, and significance of music, especially in relation to language. It comments on the technical and practical requirements for a good musical documentation and how these might differ from language documentation, and also provide some suggestions on a workflow for field production of musical recordings for community use. Examples taken from fieldwork previously carried out are intended to provide food for thought, and not to imply that music and dance traditions in other societies are necessarily structured in comparable ways. Since musical behaviour is so widespread, so dear to human hearts, and so closely allied to language and other communicative codes, linguistic fieldworkers are urged to take advantage of opportunities to work with their community collaborators to record and document music and dance when feasible.

Keywords: language documentation, musical documentation, instrumental music, musical recording, communicative codes

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