Example of the use of methods advocated in this chapter

Scenario 2

As soon as the sun comes up, my consultant drives over to my cabin in his pickup truck, knocks the snow off his boots, and comes in to sit by the heater and enjoy a cup of coffee and share the latest gossip before getting down to work. We have determined that my cabin is the best place to work, as it is warm, quiet, and free from distractions like the telephone and the television.

Today we are working on transcribing a legacy recording from the 1980s that has been digitized but never transcribed. On my desk are my laptop computer, a pair of speakers, a set of headphones, my notebook and pen, and my digital recorder. I play the entire legacy recording once through, then turn on my recorder to capture the transcription session and play the old narrative sentence by sentence from the ELAN software installed on my laptop. I have already started using ELAN to chunk the recording into intonation units, but as we work today, I use my laptop only for playback, and not for transcription. My consultant repeats the sentences back to me slowly and then provides translations, all of which I quickly scribble in my notebook. We work for a few hours until my consultant tires.

After another cup of coffee, he leaves, and my data management tasks begin. I copy the audio recording I made of the morning's work session onto my laptop, record a bit of post hoc verbal metadata about the session, and then join the two in an audio editor. I give the file an appropriate name, record the metadata in my digital catalogue, prepare a copy for sending to the archive, and back everything up on to external hard drives. I also jot down the relevant metadata on notebook pages containing my transcription. If my catalogue is ever lost, the pages can be rematched to their associated recordings.

Later that afternoon I use the handwritten notes in conjunction with the recording of the morning session to digitally transcribe the legacy text in ELAN. I then export it to Fieldworks, where I simultaneously create consistent multi-tier IGT and populate my growing lexical database. Once IGT is complete, I export the data back to ELAN to create the final time-aligned transcription. The transcript and the Fieldworks database are also prepared for archiving, entered into my metadata catalogue, and backed up locally. I scan my notebook pages monthly, and also mail DVDs of all my archival data to the overseas archive I am working with.

4.3.6 Lexical databases

Creating a lexical database, rather than writing a dictionary in a word processor, will allow you to build dictionaries of various kinds, including topical lists, reversals or finderlists, simple wordlists or a more fully featured dictionary. All of this will be derived from a single set of lexical data, and this set can also be built from the texts that you interlinearize, with each word in the texts being cross-checked against the lexical database. This is the work that can be done using software like Toolbox or Fieldworks. In the lexical database you can keep track of items associated with the headword, like images, sounds, or videos, and the link to these items can later be developed for whatever delivery mechanism you need to use. For example, you may want to have all headwords in the dictionary spoken and available as media in a web browser. To do this, you would first have prepared a list of headwords that would be read and recorded by a speaker of the language. The same list can then be time-aligned with the media which will give you a citable media reference for each word. These word-by-word references can then be sorted and joined to your lexicon, and the form of the link (e.g. an HTML hyperlink) can be made as needed, using the headword as the key that links the sound and the lexical entry in the database.