(iv) Mono vs. stereo microphones

We already mentioned that stereo recording is not particularly relevant for many linguistic field recordings. However, there are clearly applications, such as musical events, where it is desirable. A good solution would be to use the inbuilt microphones of a modern solid-state recorder on such occasions. These often have paired microphone sets crossing over in a so-called 'X/Y' arrangement such that both are on the same axis, avoiding time lag between channels. In some cases there are two sets (i.e. four microphones) with forward- and rear-facing configurations. It is the post-processing of all four channels which can achieve a kind of surround sound. Sometimes the angle between the paired phones can be altered to suit different conditions (e.g. narrower angle for smaller music ensembles). Such microphones provide a point-and-shoot option for producing accurate stereo.

Another workable scenario is to string up a couple of omnidirectional radio microphones in a rough 'stereo' configuration (or, for video, to employ one 'local' radio microphone plus a camera-mounted microphone
p. 32 feeding into separate channels). The result will be more stereo than mono, and might be sufficient to ↳ capture the ambience of an event, as well as giving some insurance against disaster in case one of the microphones fails to provide an adequate record.[22]

1.2.2.3 Headphones

Headphones are an essential part of a field equipment kit. They are necessary for checking the audio levels before, during, and after recording and for transcription of the data. Earphones, i.e. phones which are plugged into the ear (rather than covering it), are handy because they are small, light, and discreet. They can however be very uncomfortable if they are used for any length of time, and this can become a problem for transcribing. We have good experience with foldable headphones which are quite small, compact, and inexpensive, and more comfortable than earphones in the long run. A kit could contain both: headphones for transcription and earphones for checking audio quality during recording. If you are recording in situations where there is a lot of background noise, consider high-quality headphones which cut out much of the external sound and enable you to focus on what is actually being recorded.

A splitter plug which connects two pairs of headphones and therefore allows two people to listen to a recording is essential when working on a transcription together with a speaker. The alternative is to use loudspeakers, but they consume more power and create a more public work situation. Such a splitter plug may look the same as the microphone splitter but they are not interchangeable.[23]

1.3 Video recordings

We advocate video recordings as the basic recording method for a number of reasons. Video provides information which is important for certain kinds of linguistic analyses such as gestures and facial expressions but also information about who is speaking, who else is present, orientation and seating arrangement of speakers, recording location, and time of day. In short, video helps greatly to establish the context of a speech event. Only some of this context can be captured by metadata, and that only if such
p. 33 metadata is meticulously recorded and ↳ preserved. Also, remembering that in the long run linguists are not the only group interested in the data, it is clear that audio/video is generally superior to audio-only recordings for the documentation of cultural setting and interaction.

The choice of video over audio as the basic recording technique should not, however, be at the expense of the audio quality, and so a good-quality camera is essential.[24] Cameras in the professional range have professional audio inputs, circuits, and controls; cameras in the consumer and prosumer ranges do not. Whatever other bells and whistles they provide (inbuilt GPS, YouTube upload feature, 5.1 surround sound,

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