p. 38 It is nice to get a close-up of the speakers who participated in a recording (which can be used for stills too) and a record of who else was present.[31] But ideally this would be separate from the filming of the linguistic data. To do this one can add a segment at the end of a recording that includes a slow zoom onto the speaker and a slow pan across all the people present.

Active zooming and panning may have a place in the documentation of events and activities where people are moving around and it is hard to capture everything. But even here less is more. A better option is proper editing post recording to create good cuts between scenes. If the budget allows it, a second (possibly lower-grade) camera is useful on such occasions. If two cameras are filming aspects of the same event, the first can do a continuous overview of the scene while the second does close-ups. The two can later be edited together. This is no small undertaking, however.

(iii) Lighting and positioning

This topic is related to composition, but here the emphasis is on achieving optimal exposure and therefore clarity of all the data that the video contains. It is helpful to understand some of the characteristics of camera systems in dealing with the variability of light intensity across an image, and therefore how exposure settings are arrived at and what their limitations are. Knowing this one can then make intelligent choices both with the setup of the scene (discussed here) and with the exposure controls on the camera (discussed below in §1.3.1.3(ii)). We will discuss three points of interest here.

First, it is easier to compensate for too much light in a scene (by using a smaller iris setting and/or a faster shutter speed) than for too little, which can only be done at the cost of a 'noisy' image. So, if possible provide plenty of light.

Second, it is important to realize that any automatic exposure mechanism makes assumptions about the quantity of light in an image. The default setting is to assume that the sum of all the lights and darks makes a neutral grey. For many images this is a reasonable approximation, but it is also commonly inappropriate for typical fieldwork setups. If, for example, there is a large area of bright sky/sand/snow in the scene, the net effect may be considerably brighter than a neutral grey. The camera's auto-exposure assumption would then be wrong, with the result that all tones will be rendered darker than they should be, and this may well mean a loss of detail in the human face. Most cameras offer various pre-programmed modes ('backlight', 'portraiture', 'beach', etc.) which attempt to do better than the default setting in certain conditions, but their success depends on the operator understanding and remembering to use them. It is safer to learn how to set the exposure manually such that the main point of interest is correctly exposed, and then to always do this.

p. 39 Third, the problem of incorrect exposure would not be so serious if it were not for the limitations in exposure range of the camera sensor, i.e. the fact that tonal detail is not well captured at the extremes—light and dark—of an image. This means that without efforts to limit the overall tonal range (i.e. contrast) in a scene—usually by brightening the darker areas with artificial lights or reflectors, and perhaps darkening the light areas with screens—some visual information will be lost, and it is not possible to recover this information in post processing.[32]

Since the use of auxiliary lights and other props is probably neither a possible nor desirable option for most fieldworkers, attaining the control of professional film-makers is not a realistic goal: unintentional lens flare, burnt-out highlights, and featureless shadows can all be expected from time to time. But it is possible to minimize, or avoid altogether, such defects impinging on the essential features of a video document by paying attention to the orientation of the scene, as well as to the exposure setting on the camera.

Filming against the light or a bright background—for example the speaker sitting indoors in front of a window—should, but often cannot, be avoided. In this situation, manual exposure on the face or using a