Collaboration with Language Centers: An Option for Fieldwork and Research

Cassandra Pace
Rice University
cassandra.pace@gmail.com
1st ICDLC March 12-14 2009
Overview

- Challenges to doing fieldwork
- Resources available at language centers
- Negotiating a project
- Identifying your background
- Caveats

Specific examples are drawn from my experience at Wangka Maya Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre
Common Practical Barriers to Fieldwork

- finding accommodations
- figuring out who to talk to and how to contact them
- paying consultants
- choosing a field site to begin with
- apprehension about going to a new place
Resources of Language Centers

- Introductions to speakers
- Advice regarding cultural norms and community relationships
- On-site materials
- Funding
- Housing and transportation
- Colleagues
Negotiating Ahead of Time

- Ideology of a language center
- Clarification of goals and expectations
  - Products
  - Access to resources
  - Hours
- Working as a volunteer or as a contract linguist
- Copyright concerns
Navigating Perspectives

- Passive and active approaches
- Reconciliation of academic and community interests
  - Expectations
  - Introductory projects
- Multi-tasking
  - Interruptions to work
Things to Keep in Mind

- Introductions versus appointments
- Changing staff
- Policies and guidelines in flux
  - Giving feedback
- Expectations of consultants
- Responsibilities if you leave the umbrella
  - Concluding projects
  - Communicating changed affiliations