Linguistic Fieldwork as a Scientific Enterprise

Paul Newman

[ pnxxpn@indiana.edu ]

PART I: The Endangered Languages Movement

A. Positives

B. Critique

1. “Working on an E-L is better than working on a non E-L”
2. “Working on an undescribed language is better than working on an already described one”
3. “The E-L tragedy compels a sense of urgency and panic”

PART II: The Language Documentation Program

A. Positives

B. Critique

1. Objectives absurdly demanding
2. Objectives not demanding enough
3. The missing “how-to”
4. Trivializing linguists and informants
5. Who’s supposed to do this?
6. Where’s the linguistics?

PART III: The Traditional/Orthodox Approach to Linguistic Fieldwork

A. Positives

B. Critique

1. What is fieldwork?
2. Why do fieldwork?
3. The whole language fallacy
4. The GTD (grammar-text-dictionary) imperative
5. The “[expletive deleted]” method
6. tEknØl≥gee ñin dø f i≤ldØ