Text Collections
What are they good for?
How are They made?

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Preface

This memo is a joint project of the Linguistic and Ethnology Departments. It contains materials from a variety of sources, though the editors are responsible for much of the material. We are convinced that *working on authentic texts is the single most effective and most efficient way to study the language and culture of a people*. Immersing yourself in texts will have immediate pay-off for you in language and culture learning, linguistic analysis, ethnography and translation. And publishing our text collections is one of the most valuable and practical contributions that we can make to the ethnic minorities, the Philippine community, and the academic world.

This memo tries to pull together the why's and how's of doing a text collection. It is also an attempt to standardize the way we do text collections; this will make it easier for us to read each other's work as well as for others to read our work. If you are now working on text material, please read carefully section 5 on typing texts in linear format. The conventions we have suggested are not necessarily the final word, so we welcome your suggestions for improvements as you try them out on your texts. Please understand that we are not suggesting that everything done in the past is obsolete, or that you should go back and change all the texts you have already done. Standardization can't be done retroactively. Rather out intent is that our work from now on can be guided by this set of standard conventions. This particularly applies to new teams who have not yet established work habits.

We are also looking forward to publishing many of our text collections in a new series called Philippine Ethnographic texts (see section 7). We value your text collections and the work you have put into them; now for the first time we are able to offer a viable publications outlet for them. We can thank the Computer Services Department for providing the technical tools necessary to make printing large text collections practical.

We believe that the time has arrived for the Philippine Branch to put a high value on doing text collections. We hope that this memo will provide some of the basic tools you need to do a text collection for your language group.

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1. Why should I do a Text Collection?

Texts are windows into both the language and the culture. (that is, texts that have not been contrived by us.) Texts make more use of higher level connections than do shorter chunks of speech. They are also great for mimicry. Do total mimicry using your eyes, ears, mouth, and gestures. Immerse yourself in texts. *This is the best all round basis for language learning that there is*. Listen to a text, mimic it, read it, memorize it.

Human beings do not live in the objective world alone. Where they live, how they interact with their townmates, and even how they think is very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. Conversely then, language can never be culturally neutral. Any text, whether a folktale, ballad, riddle, folk history, narrative, or procedure should never by typed, morphologically analyzed, or diagrammed without regard for the fact that it is a tale told by one human being to another. Texts are "folk" stories and represent a people's image of themselves. They reveal general patterns of culture and are socially sanctioned outlets for cultural pressure points and individual anxieties (Dundes). By recording and analyzing locally authored stories and expositions, we have access to what people feel and think about themselves.

Other people besides ourselves value text collections. Friends of SIL, including those in academic circles, have made the point that text collections and dictionaries are generally

appreciated much more than highly technical linguistic studies. When we collect texts, we need to have our priorities straight as to who we are collecting them for:
1. For ourselves for language and culture learning
2. For the native speakers, so their oral literature and cultural background will be recorded and preserved.
3. For potential learners of the language, such as government officials and missionaries.
4. For anthropologist, linguists and other scientists.

The collection should not be written up so technically as to only be of use to this group. If it is intelligible to the layman and consistent, the scientist can also make use of it. You can't answer all of the technical questions anyway in a text collection.

2. What kinds of texts should I collect?
The ideal text collection will include a variety of kinds of texts, such as
- narratives, both factual and fictional (oral literature)
- procedures
- exhortations
- descriptions
- expositions
- special genres such as riddles and parables
- songs, poetry, prayers, letters

Don't spend your efforts collecting only folktales. The New Testament contains many discourse types, but no folktales. Try to collect natural examples of as many discourse types (speech acts) as you can to serve as receptor language models. You should record culturally relevant notes on your texts. For example, a text on "How to plant rice" probably will make reference to:
- social standing   who plants and who hires
- alliance group   who helps to plant and how does the person reciprocate
- ideology   what the old people say will happen if certain activities are omitted
- taboo structure   what should and should not be done, etc.

Other ethnographic topics for texts include:
- values   what makes a good person
- folk heroes   the wisest/ strongest man to live in the village or any of the Lazy John stories
- folk history   How Bolinao got its name
- life cycles   how a woman gives birth
- rituals   why we put garlic juice on our babies' noses
- beliefs   why we should not go outside after dark
- folktales, mythology How the turtle got its shell.

A careful study of ethnographic texts can help you to do a culturally sensitive translation.

3. How do I go about collecting texts?
There are a number of crucial elements in eliciting good text:
1. Your relationship to the speaker. The mutual trust, understanding, and rapport you have developed with the speaker determines, in part, the extent to which the speaker will feel free to perform certain speech acts in your presence and for the record.
2. The skill and motivation of the speaker to perform the desired speech acts. Some people are skilled raconteurs, others are skilled debators, still others are skilled exhorters; skill in one area in no way guarantees skill in another. Make every effort to collect your texts from individuals recognized as being skilled story- tellers, expositors, exhorters, etc.
3. Your skill, tact and stimulation in creating a natural setting for the desired speech act. For example, "Did you ever have an experience where you almost lost your life?" etc.

4. If the speech act is simulated rather than real, the ability of the speaker to act. The speaker should be able to vividly imagine the appropriate setting and interact realistically with the imagined situation.

Keep a record of just how you elicited each text, the social setting in which the text was given, and what the speaker/ writer was trying to achieve. For each text a TEXT DATA FORM (available from the *Technical Notes* author…. Particular care should be given in answering the questions on the bottom of the form which attempt to outline the cultural setting of the text.

Annotate your texts by footnoting any background information about persons, places, events, customs, etc. that is necessary to fully interpret the texts. These notes serve as a reservoir of cultural observations from which you can draw data for a future ethnographic description. The notes are easy to do and do not require any special formatting, organization or writing skills. This is the place to record all those special cultural tidbits that clothe the text in its authentic setting.

Texts for which you were the only members of the audience need to be checked against texts for which native speakers composed at least part of the audience. Try to recall audience responses that accompanied delivery of oral texts as some index to effectiveness of the presentation. Oral texts will probably require editing. One method that has been used is to et the speaker to repeat his story several times in successions until it settles into a fixed form (generally around the fourth repetition.) For more details, see the article by Thomas Branks in Notes on Translation 59.

narrative discourse is usually fairly easy to collect. It's purpose is to inform or entertain. Watch out for differences in the telling of traditional stories/ legends and the telling of contemporary events. These can differ widely. Also watch for differences in relation to whom the story is told.

procedural discourses give instructions as to handling various situations – either how to do something or how it is done. These also fall into two types – traditional and contemporary – and may be quite different

There may be a reticence about telling about traditional ceremonies. This may be overcome by encouraging the informant to move from a particular occurrence of this ceremony to a "customary" recounting, such as "When babies are born, we/they cut the cord ..." (but this may turn out to be an expository rather than procedural discourse). The person orientation may indicate the teller's attitude to the ceremony. Contemporary events are not usually hard to elicit. Someone will usually tell you how they build a house, hunt pigs, make fences, etc.

hortatory material, where the purpose is to influence the behavior of people, is not always easy to obtain. Buy up every natural situation. A beautiful example was obtained when a man thought he was dying and exhorted his son to behave, to care or the rest of the family, etc. Another example was a tape made by an informant at a workshop to her relatives, following the news of the sudden death of a close relative. This long tape was a beautiful series of warnings and exhortations to one person after another in the village. It was valuable i the context of the exhortations, how the hearers were addressed, and their kinship relation to the speaker.

In setting up a situation, you could ask such things as: How/ what would you advise a bride? What would you tell a young man going away to work for the first time?

This discourse type also includes such things as sermons and prayers. But first make sure it is acceptable to the speaker first to record and then to use this "real life" material.

In setting up such a situation make sure that you are actually getting the informant giving advice to someone, and not just explaining how they would advise that person or what he should do. It may be helpful to get the informant to have someone there to whom he can actually give the advice. If the informant tells you how he would advise someone this would then be explanatory or expository discourse.

explanatory or expository discourse can involve all sorts of descriptive material and includes essays and articles. Its purpose is to explain or describe. This can include items/ events within the culture. It can also include experiences such as an informant relating his impressions from a workshop, or his first sight of the sea. Watch that you do not confuse explanatory material of this nature with narrative, which would probably be in the first

person (of course both types are valuable). Narrative would be something like, "When I went to the city...", whereas an explanatory discourse would be more like "When a man first goes to the city, he ... ".

another type of discourse could be described as <u>argumentative</u>. In this type there is an effort to seek to prove something to the hearer. (This type may be included within expository). Usually there are two opposing themes and time is not in focus. This type of discourse could include why something is/ was done as opposed to why not. It could include such things as an attempt to prove the worth of new methods of agriculture versus the old, the changing culture/ religion versus old. It could include spontaneous things such as "Why children shouldn't climb trees" after someone has just fallen and broken a leg! Or the value of medical help. Don't forget the older people might have some good arguments for sticking to the old ways.

Most important for all types of discourse collection: Be prepared. If one thing doesn't work, be ready with another idea. Develop your imagination and the possibilities are unlimited. Follow up your helper's strong points and encourage him in these, while training him and developing him in his weaker areas.

More information on eliciting, tape recording, and processing texts can be found in: <u>Language Learner's Field Guide</u> by Alan Healey, p. 422- 425 and in <u>Field Linguistics</u> by William J. Samarin, p. 55-68, 75-84, and 102-105. (meh - note there are also some more recent, good works).

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4. What layout should a text have?

The overall layout of a text volume should include:
- foreword by an eminent citizen
- introduction in the form of a brief sketch describing the major features of the culture and language of the ethnic group (meh has an excellent example one from <u>An African Tree of Life</u>, one page - says everything)
- the texts themselves in the standard format with interlinear gloss and free translation
- footnotes to the texts that explain significant or unfamiliar cultural practices, values, artifacts, and linguistic oddities
- glossary (computer assisted) of highly recurring morphemes
- appendices of ethnographic and linguistic information: kinship systems, religious terms, social organization, charts of phonemes, pronouns, verb affixes, etc.

About authorship. Whose name do you put on the volume? A text collection can hardly be considered an original production. Here are some wording suggestions:
- "oral literature as told by ..."
- "Procedures as explained by ..."
- "Manobo texts by ..."
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If some of the local citizens helped to edit and compile the texts, be sure to include their names on the volume. Your name can be placed in a phrase like "Collection compiled and edited by ..."

Stop here and eliminate outdated information on how to format inter-linear text for language learning
and other information