

Creating Language Support Materials in the Undergraduate Classroom

This talk addresses how the creation of materials to support the use of endangered languages can be incorporated into undergraduate-level curriculum, providing both pedagogical value for students and practical value for speakers. I present as a case study a course taught by the author in Spring 2016 on the structure of Wamesa, an endangered Austronesian language. This course explored various aspects of Wamesa's grammar and its cultural context, based on data from the author's fieldwork. The class discussed the ways they as scholars had directly benefitted from the time and effort contributed by speakers towards the documentation of their language. Students were then asked to consider ways in which they could give back to the community and implement one of those ideas for their final project. The resulting projects ranged from scholarly (a polished transcription and translation of a story) to the lighthearted (a translated recording of *My Heart Will Go On*, a popular karaoke pick), focused on supporting speakers of this group in particular (a labeled photo book of natural and cultural items) or towards raising the profile of the language for a broader audience (a Wikipedia page). These projects were returned to the Wamesa community this summer. Two students also accompanied the author to the field this summer to document related languages; they are building online talking dictionaries and a learner's website.

For students, these projects comprised an opportunity to engage critically with the human aspect of linguistic work and be accountable in a way that many of them, having taken only more theoretical classes, had never done before. Creating these projects required students to reach back across the gap between speaker and data consumer to make a positive impact themselves, a process that many students reported to be eye-opening and empowering. For the speakers, the payoff is more varied. A Wikipedia page won't singlehandedly save a language, but seeing it used for the first time online can inspire pride; an audio dictionary can be genuinely useful to a learner; and just the existence of such items can have symbolic value. The speaker who received these projects to bring back to the community wrote a letter to the class, saying that she was excited to know that students in America were studying her language, and that the items themselves served as a concrete reminder of that relationship - worthwhile in itself.