

## Methodological challenges of documenting sociolinguistic variation in indigenous communities

John Mansfield  
The University of Melbourne

Documenting sociolinguistic variation in indigenous communities presents formidable challenges, but offers rich intellectual rewards. In this paper I articulate some of the methodological challenges both for fieldwork and data analysis in indigenous sociolinguistics. I review the reasons why indigenous languages are crucial to the further advancement of sociolinguistic theory (Stanford, forthcoming; Stanford & Preston, 2009), arguing that the value of the research justifies the methodological difficulties. But further, I argue that work in indigenous communities leads us to modulate standard sociolinguistic methods in ways that are themselves valuable, both for the researcher and for “cultural insiders” who become active participants in the research.