Contribution of women to linguistic vitality in northwestern Nigeria

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Goal: Awareness

- How do we validate women in the work of language documentation?
- Can we develop new expectations for the contribution of women in language development?
- Will we enlist women more readily in the tasks of language documentation and maintenance?
Field context
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- Multiple visits (2005-2007) and a subsequent visit in September 2013
- Primarily spent time with Ut-Ma’in speakers
- Similarities of culture, traditional religion, agricultural practices and lifestyle among these three groups.
Three lessons learned

1. Knowledge of language contributed to the corpus
2. Crucial role in intergenerational transmission of the language
3. Non-mixed gender environments allow women a voice
Contribution to the corpus

- Wordlist collection in 2006/7
  - 1700 African Comparative Wordlist
  - Wordlist from five men, appointed by community leaders to assist me
  - A wife’s contribution, a bystander
- Pear Stories, personal narratives, folk narratives and wordlists in 2013
  - Six women
  - Six men
Contribution to the next generation

- Multilingualism – local languages, Hausa, English (schools, government)

- Intermarriage is very common
  - 2 male Ut-Ma’in speaking consultants are married to C’Lela women
  - Children speak C’Lela, Hausa, English
Mixed gender vs. non-mixed gender

- 2005 involvement of one woman while husband in same room
- 2013
  - Involvement of first (of six women) while male relatives in same room
  - Split into two groups, men with my husband and woman with me
Outcomes: Mixed gender

- Women remain silent.
- Women hesitant to share, even when asked directly.
- If they speak, it is only to affirm or agree with a man who has just spoken.
Outcomes: Non-mixed gender

- Women more relaxed.
- Women eager to share, eager to speak.
- One-on-one: Researcher and consultant

- Example: Wordlist elicitation
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References
