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What is metadata and what is it good for?

Metadata (data about data) ensures context, meaning and use of data can be properly determined. It is required for archiving and preservation, and for management, identification, retrieval and understanding of data within a project when value-adding to audio/video and text recordings is done (e.g., through transcription, annotation, translation, indexing, summarisation).

This talk introduces the role and use of metadata, contrasting approaches with standardized categories (e.g., OLAC, IMDI, E-MELD *School of Best Practices*) with broader perspectives (e.g., ELAR at SOAS). We propose a new outlook: ‘meta-documentary linguistics’ for the methods, tools, and theoretical underpinnings for setting up, carrying out and concluding a documentary linguistics research project. We examine and illustrate three approaches: **deductive** (postulation of axioms and theorems), **inductive** (examining current/past documentations to analyse practices and identify principles/lacunae); and **comparative** (how other relevant fields have approached meta-documentation to see what is or is not applicable to language documentation).