

Australian Languages Workshop 2024

Abstract Booklet



AIATSIS



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Yuma!

Welcome to the Australian Languages Workshop 2024. This year, we are meeting on Ngunnawal country. This event has been co-hosted and co-organised by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and the Australian National University (ANU).

Please send any queries to:
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Copyright: Olivia Beasley, Livi Creations Studio
This image depicts a woman signing COUNTRY, a Blak Auslan word.

ACAL acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on and recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

Blak Auslan/Deadly Deaf Mob

Joanna Agius & Rodney Adams

This abstract focuses on the presentation titled "Blak Auslan/Deadly Deaf Mob", a deep exploration of the integration and intersectionality between Australian Indigenous culture and the Australian Deaf community. The term "Blak Auslan" symbolises the fusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities with Australian sign language, while "Deadly Deaf Mob" refers to an empowerment initiative within the Australian Deaf community, aimed at enhancing understanding, acceptance, and inclusion.

The presentation seeks to elucidate on how Aboriginal Deaf people have significantly contributed to the rich tapestry of Indigenous languages by adapting, influencing and shaping Auslan in unique and distinct ways, in alignment with the geographical and cultural diversities encountered within different Indigenous communities.

Furthermore, this talk will delve deeper into the challenges faced by these individuals, their resilience, and the strength and unity exhibited through their shared experiences—seamlessly captured through visual-spatial languages like Auslan. The presentation reaffirms the importance of culture and identity preservation, non-discriminatory communication, and a collective sense of responsibility towards creating inclusive societies.

Etic and emic approaches to research on Murrinhpatha spatial language

Joe Blythe, Jeremiah Nguvidhirr Tunmuck, Raphael Wurdanmanthupirr Tunmuck & Jake Miller

Etic approaches to language research are those that import the toolkits, methodologies, categories and assumptions associated with a particular research paradigm into new communities, with the expectation that participants will think or behave in certain ways, or that the language will conform—to a lesser or greater degree—to a small set of typological prototypes. While there is value in establishing typological comparability, with etic approaches there is a risk of confirmation bias, where apparently analogous similarities to previously described populations (or their use of linguistic systems) are taken at first glance to be unlike X or similar to Y; meanwhile endogenous linguistic practices and potentially unique aspects of the linguistic system remain under-described and potentially undiscovered. Well-known examples of etic approaches are the so-called ‘director-matcher’ tasks, such as the ‘man-and-tree’ task, which was developed to investigate spatial frames of reference (Levinson et al., 1992; Levinson, 2003; Majid et al., 2004). In man-and-tree, a screen is placed between two participants, so they cannot gaze at each other, nor observe each-other’s gestures. This approach reflects an antiquated view of language as being an inherently unimodal construct (as principally either speech or sign), in which gesture and gaze are construed as extraneous to the linguistic system, and thus as dispensable to a description of the language proper.

Emic approaches, on the other hand, are ‘bottom up’ approaches that seek to describe the workings of a language on its own terms, and to uncover the ethno-methods that underpin the use of the language by community members, preferably when conducting relatively ordinary activities and with minimally intrusive methods (e.g., Gumperz & Hymes, 1972; Heritage, 1984; Moerman, 1988; Floyd, 2021).

In this talk, we discuss joint-research into the language used by Murrinhpatha speakers to refer to places, persons and objects, and into the underlying Murrinhpatha spatial system. We report on a variety of emic

research techniques developed whilst in the field in Wadeye, with input and refinement from members of CIARA (www.ciaraproject.com) and OzSpace research teams (<https://ozspace.org/>). These include a placename avoidance task (Blythe et al., 2016), the 'geospatial' perspective on pointing in face-to-face conversation (Blythe et al., 2024; Possemato et al., 2021), and the Rotating Scene Machine (Blythe et al., 2022). The geospatial method (see Figure 1) presents a big-space satellite view of the interaction that anchors the setting of the conversation within the larger geographical environment. The Rotating Scene Machine presents a small-space table-top view of the interaction that uses authentic models of the local environment and local fauna as props for informal storytelling (see Figure 2). The rotational properties of the machine can also be used as a testbench for formal elicitation, for exploring the semantics of various lexical items or grammatical systems.

By attempting to control how people sit, where they may look, what they can and can't say, and whether or not they may use gestures, etc approaches like man-and-tree ultimately capture a sanitised version of a language that reveals only what participants are capable of saying under laboratory-like conditions. The Murrinhpatha man-and-tree data bears little resemblance to what participants actually talk about when left to their own devices. Participants in social interaction are always talking about places and locations, but never without also speaking about events that have transpired or are likely to transpire in the future, and the persons that are involved in those events (Dingemanse et al., 2017). The emic approaches discussed here reconnect places to the persons, animals and objects that inhabit those places. The big-space and small-space perspectives on Murrinhpatha are beginning to reveal a sociocentric participation-focused spatial system that privileges deixis over spatial frames of reference. In this system, a vertical (up/down) axis intersects the sagittal (forward/backward) axis. These directions are normally expressed intrinsically, as parsed off the current speaker's body (head or chest). Apart from 'ahead' (0°) and 'behind' (180°) all other angular specification in the horizontal plane is expressed via pointing, gaze, or via landmarks. The sagittal (fore/aft) axis can be redirected by moving the head in certain directions, and this axis flips around as

speakership changes. Additionally, the current speaker generally provides the deictic centre for the ubiquitous motion/orientation clitics =gathu ‘hither’ and =wangu ‘thither’. As such, the grammar of space is part-and-parcel of the grammar of participation.



Figure 1: A geospatial perspective on conversational points.



Figure 2: A co-constructed tabletop narrative using the Rotating Scene Machine

Verb excorporation in four Gunwinyguan languages

Geordie Kidd

This study provides the first description of an undescribed morphological property found in four Gunwinyguan languages of northern Australia—Ngalakgan (1), Rembarrnga (2), Jawoyn (3), and Dalabon (4)—where otherwise bound (co)verb roots appear external to and directly preceding the rest of the verbal word. I call this property ‘excorporation’. Constructions of this type (as in 1b) diverge from the prototypical structure of the Gunwinyguan complex verb, in which the bound coverb root occurs verb-internally (as in 1a). Although excorporation has previously been observed in these languages (Baker & Harvey, 2003; Evans et al., 2008; McKay, 1975; Merlan, 1989), it has not been described nor analysed in any depth. Drawing from 135 narrative texts and recordings, I offer a working analysis of the morphological and discourse-semantic features of excorporation. I also argue that these features motivate a Construction Grammar analysis in the Relational Morphology framework (RM; Jackendoff and Audring, 2020).

The external position of verb roots in excorporation constructions corresponds to an additional semantic interpretation relating to temporal immediacy. These constructions are thus semantically non-compositional. The predicates that may enter into excorporation constructions are mostly atomic events, and thus involve a one-step, instantaneous change in state (Caudal, 2005); see (1), (3), and (4). Durative predicates are forced into change of state interpretations (2). Taken together with their distribution in narratives—occurring at points of salience or drama—these constructions align semantically and discursively with ideophone constructions in other northern Australian languages like Wubuy (Heath, 1984) and Yir Yoront (Alpher, 2001), which have very similar distributions and ‘suddenly’ semantics.

Word order in Gunwinyguan languages is syntactically free, however in excorporation constructions the two elements may not be reordered, nor separated by any other material (except in Jawoyn). Moreover, in these languages the word is the only domain in which the strict ordering of morphological elements is enforced, suggesting these constructions are

more word-like. However, coverbs may appear alone at the ends of intonational phrases, and Jawoyn and Rembarrnga employ suppletive forms of finite verbs to ensure the second constituent is a valid word on its own. In this way, these constructions seem phrase-like.

I argue that RM, in virtue of making no ontological distinction between words and phrases, embraces this ambiguity. This would be problematic for most Generative theories where the ontology of linguistic constructions has analytical consequences. I contend also that the machinery of RM is easily able to attribute the non-compositional meaning directly to these constructions as wholes without any trade-off for productivity. In general, these strengths make RM ideal for representing excorporation in the lexicon, extending earlier Constructionist analyses of these languages (e.g., Baker, 2018). Thus, this study not only offers a description of a novel grammatical feature in several Gunwinyguan languages, but provides some new theoretical insights into the structure of their grammars and lexicons.

Examples

(1) Ngalakgan (Baker, n.d)

- a. ɲu-ɲejʔ-mi-ɲ
 1min-get.up-AUX-PP
 'I got up.' [NGA_3-3-95/2]

- b. ɲejʔɲu-mi-ɲ
 get.up 1min-AUX-PP
 'I got up.' [NGA_1-6-96/307]

(2) Rembarrnga (McKay, 1975, p. 215, 165)

- a. jara-jappaʔ-rumʔ-mi-ɲ
 1aug-UA-sleep-AUX-PP
 'We both slept.'

- b. rumʔ jara-jappaʔ-maɲ
 sleep 1aug-UA-WENT
 'We both fell asleep.'

(2) Jawoyn (Merlan, 2016, p. 77, 73)

- a. puɲ-tum-towk-ma-j
 3nsg-eye-burst-AUX-PP
 'Their eyes burst.'
- b. tum-towk puɲ-cu-ɲaj
 eye-burst 3nsg-DO-PC
 'Their eyes burst.'

(4) Dalabon (Evans et al., 2008, p. 96)

- a. ka-ʔ-lɲ-walk-ka-r-iɲ
 3sg-R-SEQ-hide-TAKE-RR-PP
 'Then he hid himself.'
- b. walk ka-ʔ-lɲ-ka-r-iɲ
 hide 3sg-R-SEQ-TAKE-RR-PP
 'Then he hid himself.'

Reanalysing and recategorising Central Maric languages using cultural knowledge

Gari Tudor-Smith & Thomas Watson

Several sketch grammatical and meta-analyses have been done on the Maric languages of eastern Queensland (Beale 1975; Holmer 1983; Terrill 1993, 1998; Barrett 2005). Misidentification of languages in some of these analyses has meant that grammatical patterns were not correctly identified. The advancement in typology of Pama-Nyungan languages over the decades since these theses and publications were made also allows us to approach language records with greater understanding.

Gari Tudor-Smith and Thomas Watson belong to Central Maric language groups and, through their language revitalisation work, have done morphological reanalysis using original source material of Central Maric languages including Gangulu, Wirri, Barada, Barna and Biri. These languages were labelled as “dialects” of one language, which was arbitrarily called “Biri” (Terrill 1993, 1998; Breen 2009; AIATSIS 2016). The distinction between what is considered a “language” and what is considered a “dialect” is linguistically subjective and often has sociopolitical motivations. This misidentification has obscured key differences between languages across the region.

There is not one objective set of criteria that distinguishes between “languages” and “dialects”. Mutual intelligibility of language varieties isn’t a particularly accurate or consistent method of identifying a dialect chain. Multilingualism was usual and expected across most of the continent, because of travel, trade, international diplomacy and kinship. Since we no longer have any first language speakers of Central Maric languages, it is not certain to what extent these languages were mutually intelligible to speakers, or whether cross-linguistic awareness was a result of multilingualism and diplomatic relationships.

The use of shibboleths as language names indicates a level of awareness by speakers of differences between languages in the region, including Gangulu,

Garingbal, Gara-Gara, Barada and Barna of the Maric sub-family, and Gureng Gureng, Wakka Wakka, Wuli Wuli and Kabi Kabi of the Wakka-Kabic sub-family. Kinship law says that we are to “marry outside the lingo” (Abraham Johnson in Tennant-Kelly, part 52, 1934) and “follow your father’s lingo but follow the [maternal] grannie” (Harry Mummins in Tennant-Kelly, part 70, 1934).

As to be expected, there are many similar grammatical elements across Maric languages, such as pronouns, demonstratives and nominal case marking. Some lexical elements are similar across the region, while others differ vastly. The most salient differences between Central Maric languages are the verbal suffixes. Although we don’t have extensive documentation of all languages of the region, we have convincing evidence from Nils Holmer’s unpublished fieldnotes to justify reanalysis of the verbal morphology.

There is still strong oral history in our communities. By going back to the original source material and making inferences from geographical landmarks, family lines of speakers, lexicon and morphology in primary and secondary sources, we are able to recategorise Central Maric languages. We present new morphological findings from our research which aims to further language revitalisation. We propose that Wirri, Eastern Gangulu, Western Gangulu, Barada and Biri are separate languages, rather than a dialect chain, on the basis of morphology, phonology and sociological factors.

Kimberley Language Continuation Project

Rhys Collard

The State of Language Continuation in the Kimberley report was an initiative of the Kimberley Language and Resource Centre (KLRC), to provide practical and actionable recommendations led by the language aspirations of the Kimberley Aboriginal community themselves. In this talk we will share the key learnings of the project, including the community consultation process, the feedback we captured from the community key findings from the report and key takeaways from our staff.

The Kimberley region covers an area more than 423,500 square kilometres and approximately one fifth of Australia's living Indigenous languages. The Kimberley has around 30 remaining Indigenous languages spoken by people from five cultural blocks.

The KLRC is an Aboriginal not for profit organisation, working to revive, maintain and up-lift Aboriginal languages in the Kimberley. It was the first regional language centre established in Australia over 30 years ago. It currently employs 14 Aboriginal people and is based in Halls Creek, WA. The organisation is governed by an all Aboriginal elected board of directors representing the Kimberley's cultural blocks.

A key objective of the project was to ensure the language research and analysis was culturally led and culturally informed by the community. For so long Aboriginal people and languages have been the object of study. This project flipped the traditional approach with language research grounded by community in community. Important to this was the makeup of the field research team to ensure a mix of genders, ages and family groups to ensure they respected local customs and protocols.

The interview questions were formulated by the KLRC board, intentionally avoiding a scientific approach. Instead, favouring informal yarning/ mob-oriented questions to better engage with the target audience. The questions were aimed at gaining views of the participants on their view on the status

of their language and on what they thought had worked in the past and what they wanted to see happen to continue their languages into the future.

With over 100 remote communities, and six towns the field trips required significant preparation and planning. The team had to seek permission from elders to visit communities and ensure the timing of their visit was appropriate, avoiding culturally sensitive periods such as 'sorry time'. Planning had to consider language groups and locations, and access to communities due to wet season road closures. The team visited over 21 communities across the region, conducting a series of approximately 300 on-country interviews with community members.

The project was funded through the WA Department of Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries and the KLRC.

Bringing the RH Mathews papers back to the community

Stephen Morey & Gari Tudor-Smith

The articles and manuscripts of Robert Hamilton Mathews (1841-1918) represent one of the most important sources for information about language and culture for many communities in southern and eastern Australia. This paper is about the work being done to get scans of the manuscripts of Mathews into the Nyingarn platform (<https://nyingarn.net/>), where original documents together with searchable transcriptions can be used by community members.

Robert Hamilton Mathews (1841-1918) was a professional surveyor who undertook anthropological and linguistic research in Aboriginal communities between the 1870s and the early 1900s (Thomas 2007). Although he had little formal training in linguistics and anthropology, Mathews' understanding of grammar and of the sound systems of Aboriginal languages was superior to many of his contemporaries. As a result, his language descriptions, though usually very brief, are crucial both for a better understanding of the linguistic diversity of South and East Australia and also for language reclamation, recovery and revitalisation projects led by community.

He published more than 150 articles, which are scanned and easily accessible online, but in addition there are tens of thousands of pages of manuscript notes and annotations on printed pages held in the National Library of Australia (NLA) as MS 8006. They are divided into 8 series, of which the most important are Series 3: Notebooks, Series 4: Working Notes, Series 5: Drafts, and Series 8: Publications and Reprints. At the time of writing, the NLA has digitized Series 3. The importance of the manuscripts is that some of Mathews' language materials were never published. There are many challenges working with Mathews' materials. We need to access both the published articles and the manuscripts, because of:

- Inconsistency – where data published in the articles differs from or conflicts with the manuscript data found in the notebooks (Series 3) or other parts of the manuscript

- Omission of names of consultants, and other considerable linguistic and cultural information that he collected but judged unnecessary to include in his publications. The manuscripts often contain not just names of consultants, but also their moiety, skin name and totems as well as locations, knowledge scarcely documented elsewhere.
- Generalization and Assumption – sometimes in the publications, Mathews generalizes the information he is presenting as belonging to a range of Aboriginal groups, as well as grounding his publications in assumptions, not always present to the same extent in the manuscripts and notebooks.

We will present the current work in listing the many languages represented in in different parts of the Mathews manuscripts (MS 8006), of which Table 1 and Table 2 are examples. This forms a basis of the move towards getting the Mathews manuscripts included in the Nyingarn database so that community members can have access to these important documents for their language work.

Table 1: Sample of listing of languages in RH Mathews Notebooks (MS 8006, Series 3)

NLA Title	NLA Location information	Box No	Library Permanent identifier for scans	Austlang codes of languages included
Thurga and Jirringan languages. Notebook marked '2'. Includes Jirringagn, Kamilaroi, Kogai, Anewn, Kumbainggerum and other languages	Item 5 – no 2	Box 3 (MS 8006)	09.nla.obj-416712234 - Thurga and Jirringan Notebook marked '2'	S51 Dyirringaŋ; D23 Gamilaraay / Gamilaroi / Kamilaroi; D37 Gunggari (Kogai); D24 Southern Anaiwan; E7 Gumbaynggirr; D31 Budjari / Badjiri; D48 Parrintyi; S60 Gundungurra / Gandangara; S59 Dharawal; L8 Malyangapa; S63 Wonnarua / Wanaruah;

Table 2: Sample of listing of languages and some notes on the annotations and addenda (insertions) in the Publications and Reprints (MS 8006, Series 8)

Number	Full title of printed version (from Susan O'Neill's listing)	Languages with data in manuscript pencil annotations and page numbers	AIATSIS (Austlang) language names for languages mentioned in Manuscript notes
8006/8/2	Aboriginal fisheries at Brewarrina. Reprinted from <i>JPRSNSW</i> , vol. XXXVII, p146-56	Language notations on cover; story of the 'Crow + Crane' on inner cover, naming the Nankeen crane as dhūr'roon; inserted page; p146; p147 Wurrunjerra is given as a name of a place?; minor corrections p149-150; p151-152 annotations in language; p153, minor correction to the English; p154-156 annotations in language including naming the various fish traps mapped on p154, and the word 'müllingga, largest island'	D27 Yuwaalaraay
8006/8/2	Addendum	inserted between inside cover and first page (1) Royal Society of New South Wales monthly meeting notice with story in pencil 'The porcupine – biggibilla', and Ngindy-gin'da-wa is Venus	D27 Yuwaalaraay

Language collections: an overview of LDaCA collaborations

Ben Foley, Beau Williams & Otis Carmichael

Significant collections of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language material are cared for by institutions, in organisational archives, and by individuals across this continent. Many collections require more care, to be sure that the significant knowledges documented in the language materials are appropriately accessible for the future.

The Language Data Commons of Australia (LDaCA) is collaborating with institutions, organisations and individuals, to develop practices and tools to assist with strategic and practical aspects of managing language collections. This work includes developing data management strategies and data governance models, organising language material, preparing collections for long-term access, and developing search and discovery interfaces that respect access requirements.

In some of these collaborations, the project outputs will replace current ageing databases with archive-ready repositories. Other projects are developing prototype tools to assist with multi-lingual searching of collections. Further, the collaborations are informing work with project partner First Languages Australia to update their National First Languages Collections Strategy, with a particular focus on strategies for language centre collection management.

This presentation will describe some of these collaborations, giving an overview of the projects, and the ways the projects contribute to best-practice ways of managing collections. Projects include the Batchelor CALL Collection; the Iltyem-iltyem sign language collection; collaborations on pilot projects with language centres around the continent; reinstating the Living Archive of Aboriginal Language search interface; work with Batchelor Institute and the University of Melbourne on making person-centred collections, with Veronica Dobson as the focus; work with the University of Queensland and State Library of QLD collections; and work with PARADISEC to prepare the collection for decades to come.

'It's out there somewhere, and it's all over the place': Connecting scattered language data

Bridey Lea, Paul Williams & Robert McLellan

The Language Data Commons of Australia (LDA) is an integrated national infrastructure that supports language research. It will enable researchers and communities to access and use nationally significant collections of written, spoken, multi-modal and signed text. Many collections, including collections of Australian Indigenous languages, remain under-used and Indigenous communities struggle to find and access their own language data (Nicholls et al., 2016). This presentation discusses some examples of LDA's community engagement activities which aim to rekindle connections between collections held in archival institutions and Indigenous language custodians. We first discuss preliminary qualitative research conducted in 2024 before integrating this with ongoing metadata enrichment efforts.

Through a series of semi-structured interviews with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language practitioners, we sought to better understand the challenges and successes surrounding finding, accessing, using, and storing Indigenous language materials. Two overarching questions drove this research:

1. How can we support Indigenous communities to find, access, and use their language data in general and through the design of technical infrastructure?
2. How can we build trust with Indigenous communities?

The interviews form a rich tapestry of case studies which build a big picture view of Indigenous language practitioners' frustrations with and aspirations for language data infrastructure.

The findings of this study support previous research and the experiences of Indigenous members of the research team. According to our interview data, Indigenous language practitioners often struggle to find and access

materials held in collecting institutions. Many participants preferred not to engage directly with collecting institutions for a variety of reasons. However, several participants also had positive experiences with training programs run by the GLAM sector, and there was overlap between these two groups.

These interviews yielded a series of recommendations which may be adapted for use by other collections projects and GLAM institutions. An example is discussed through the metadata enrichment work that has been undertaken on both Nils Holmer's fieldnotes and the Caroline Tennant Kelly collection at UQ library. These pilot projects have laid the groundwork for community-based metadata enrichment events, ideally in collaboration with GLAM institutions. This community engagement research will contribute to improved practice in collections and archival management in line with best-practice protocols for Indigenous data stewardship (Walter et al., 2021).

Ngarrwaa: towards Indigenous Data Sovereignty Praxis

Rosales Martinez, G. Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages, VAC

The Yoorrook Justice Commission and the Global Indigenous Data Alliance, assert and I quote:

- Indigenous Data Sovereignty is the right of Indigenous Peoples to own, control, access and possess data that derive from them, and which pertain to their members, knowledge systems, customs, resources or territories (Kukutai & Taylor 2016; Snipp 2016).
- Indigenous Data Governance is the enactment of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and refers to the mechanisms that support Indigenous decision-making on how data are controlled, collected, interpreted, accessed, stored, and used (Walter et al. 2020).
- Indigenous Data refers to information, in any format, that is about Indigenous Peoples, knowledge systems, customs, resources or territories or that impacts Indigenous lives at the collective and/or individual level (Rainie et al. 2019; Lovett et al. 2019).

The conceptualization, development and implementation an online community owned library poses multiple challenges. This Presentation aims to take you into the journey of ngarrwaa to demonstrate and highlight some possibilities for First Nations to engage in Data Sovereignty.

Note: Directors from VACL will also contribute with this talk.

Crafts-based pedagogy in an early childhood language revival program

Hilary Smith, Renee Houldsworth & Rebecca Holland

The Gamilaraay language, an Indigenous Australian language in northern inland New South Wales and nearby Queensland, has faced significant decline as a result of colonisation (Austin, 2008; Smith et al., 2020). To revitalize and preserve the Gamilaraay cultural heritage, creative and engaging teaching methods are essential (Smith et al., 2018; Smith & Pryor, 2022).

Our program is run by five Gamilaraay facilitators in over 60 early childhood centres on Gamilaraay country, using a theme-based curriculum design to encourage the repetition and recycling of target language. A theme-based approach also helps the children learn the structure of the new language, as described by Alptekin, Erçetin and Bayyurt (2007, p. 5):

Learners will be able to call on their schematic knowledge, developed in the L1, to cover the same or similar content material in the L2, thereby learning the relevant systemic features of the target language within relevant discourse contexts.

Each of our themes incorporates storytelling, songs, games, artwork and crafts.

This paper explores the integration of crafts into Gamilaraay early childhood language learning as a multifaceted approach to support language acquisition, cognitive development, and cultural education. For children who identify as Gamilaraay, it also strengthens their cultural identity.

By incorporating traditional and non-traditional crafts, such as weaving, painting, clay, play dough and noodle 'bead work' into language lessons, we find that children can learn vocabulary and phrases in an engaging activity which makes the language more memorable. This is helped by the natural repetition inherent in craft activities (Shiobara & Niboshi, 2022), which

continues at the centre when craft products are displayed, as well as with families when they are taken home (Ilieva et al., 2017).

Crafts serve as a medium for storytelling and cultural expression, enabling children to connect with the rich heritage and traditions of the Gamilaraay people in a culturally responsive pedagogy which aims to 'embrace and build on students' identities and backgrounds as assets for learning' (Morrison et al., 2019, p. 58).

Craft activities provide a unique opportunity to immerse children in language through hands-on learning. For Aboriginal children, this strengthens their culture through providing a direct link from their hands to the earth, which is further strengthened by the social nature of craft work in early childhood. We are particularly interested in the language-culture-people nexus, as described by Rumsey (1993, p. 204):

... in the Aboriginal myths which associate language and land, no account at all is taken of people, or peoples. [...] The links between peoples and languages are secondary links, established through the grounding of both in the landscape.

To our knowledge the topic of craft-based learning has not been previously explored in depth in a language revitalisation context, specifically in early childhood. We will show examples and report on our reflective practice as two program facilitators who have introduced craft materials as part of our Gunagala ('sky') theme, based on significant Gamilaraay cultural knowledge (Fuller et al., 2014). The analysis of this reflection will form the basis for a proposed future study with centre staff, caregivers and community, as a comprehensive investigation of our cultural approach to Gamilaraay language teaching and learning.

Little Kids Learning Languages

Carmel O'Shannessy, Vanessa Davis, Jessie Bartlett, Alice Nelson & Denise Foster

Two of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap targets focus on early childhood and one focuses on language, yet little is documented about young Indigenous children's language development in their home languages. This includes the multilingual, multimodal environments they grow up in and the ways that family interactions support children's language learning.

The Little Kids Learning Languages project, set in central Australia, aims to

- learn more about the language young children hear spoken to them, and the kinds of interactions they engage in with their families
- learn more about the children's language development
- develop a MacArthur Bates Communicative Development Inventory (children's early word list) for assessing vocabulary in languages in Central Australia
- develop information materials that will help health and education professionals to talk with families and assess children's language development.

The research team recorded 22 families interacting with young children, talking about picture books and in free play. Adult caregivers were interviewed about the words they frequently use with young children in their families.

In this talk we will show how the Little Kids' Word List app for assessing vocabulary has been extended to five central Australian languages and English. We will show some examples of how adults and children talk with each other, and the ways that their interactions support the children's language development.

Kajili Warlpirirli pina-mani, ngula kurdu-kurdu kapi readi-mani: Structured phonics, strong Warlpiri texts and teacher training at Nyirripi school

Emma Browne, Fiona Gibson, Verona Jurrah, Michaeline Gallagher & Courtney Lynch

Nyirripi school is a small school in remote Central Australia where instruction is in Warlpiri and English. The school's Warlpiri Phonics and Language program combines structured phonics, traditional vocabulary learning through rich texts and Indigenous teacher training to ensure students are becoming strong Warlpiri learners (Carew et al. forthcoming).

The phonics program includes individualised literacy packs to cater for a range of student levels and abilities and accommodate for student and teacher transience. There is a scope and sequence (Green, Baarda and Macdonald, 2018) showing the order that sounds and syllables should be taught. The structured nature of the whole class or group teaching lessons means students learn the routine for phonics lessons and are able to practice both reading (decoding) and writing (encoding) together which makes for stronger literacy learning.

Through the language program students are able to learn pirrjirdi Warlpiri (strong, traditional Warlpiri) and access older texts, both oral and written, to ensure that language and cultural knowledge is not being lost (Collins, Morris, Jurrah and Lynch, 2023, Browne and Gibson, 2021).

A key element of the program is regular opportunities for teacher training and mentoring, to develop their own literacy, their teaching practices and gain confidence as leaders in the classroom.

In this presentation, Warlpiri educators from Nyirripi school will describe the elements of their program, reflect on the students' growth and share plans for building the program up into the future.

Co-designing a Kriol learner's guide to Miriwoong

Ingrid Ningarmara, Che Kelly, Glennis Galbat-Newry, Sylvia Simon, Henry Leslie-O'Neill, and the MDWg team

Designing accessible learning materials is an important part of language revitalisation efforts. However, this is no easy task. There are countless challenges at every point of the design process, and there are no one-size-fits-all solutions. Our team has been working together at the MDWg language centre in Kununurra for two years designing language learning materials for Miriwoong people.

We are proud to share with you our almost-finished 'Dijan boog bla lernem Miriwoong', a.k.a. the book for learning Miriwoong. This is a book written in Kriol which aims to support Miriwoong adults learning Miriwoong. We have designed it specifically for our local context, where Kriol is the main language for the majority of Miriwoong people. It is – as far as we know – the first learner's guide which teaches a traditional Indigenous language through contact-language instruction.

The book contains over twenty chapters which cover all the language and grammar needed to make simple sentences or have a simple conversation in Miriwoong. It comes in a Kriol version and a Plain English version. We've also developed several trilingual stories to practice with, and we aim to record audiobook versions of the book and make it digitally accessible.

In this session we will share the book with you and discuss aspects of our journey towards this goal, such as: How can concrete materials connect learners with country, community, and ancestors? How can tri-lingual communication lead to a stronger design process? How can we build a strong team across cultural and professional boundaries? How can we draw on our extended networks - between locals, newcomers, country, and ancestors - to co-create meaningful language materials?

We look forward to sharing what we've learnt, and learning from all of you throughout this workshop.

Reviving Language of Country

Talia Hart, Aunty Mary Shuttleworth & Penelope Schmidt

Indigenous Languages are earthbound languages. Language belongs to the land, sky and waters of Country and is uniquely shaped in reflection of and for this Country. The return of Language to Country is an aspiration for many Indigenous Peoples. In this presentation, we would like to discuss our learnings as new Wurru (Wadawurrung Language) Officers, over one year of intensive naming work. In the context of a revitalisation Language, naming work entails in-depth research, but it is equally a cultural process and deep cultural work. There are many issues to be considered. How do we respect Language as a communal entity - the joint heritage and birthright of every Wadawurrung person – and protect Wadawurrung Cultural and Intellectual Property? How do we return Language to Country while Language is still evolving? How do we generate income while working with stakeholders who are often coming from a place of low cultural literacy? From the processes we use, to the possibilities available in the work, to its challenges and potential harms, we think there is much to share and learn about together. Our presentation will include case studies from Wadawurrung Country, including a project for which Wadawurrung Traditional Owners received the 'Excellence in Geographic Place Naming Victoria Award'.

With the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, and government incentives to use Traditional Owner Language, there are increasing opportunities (and pressures) for naming in Language. We hope that our presentation will be useful to other Traditional Owner groups who want to take up these opportunities, and that our learnings will contribute to ideas for how naming work can be carried out in healing and healthy ways.

FloraLang

Alexandra Marley

In this talk, I will present my work on developing FloraLang, a database of names for Australian flora, algae and fungi in Australian Indigenous languages. I will discuss the origins and contents of the database, share some of the interesting patterns emerging from the datasets, and explore potential directions for future inquiry.

Flora present a unique lens through which to examine linguistic correspondences thanks to their salience and ubiquity in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and that they link to physical and mappable entities. Loan rates of biological terms are often higher than other basic vocabulary (Bowerman et al 2014) and comparisons of flora names in Central Australia (Nash 1997) and Arnhem Land (Aung Si 2019, 2020) indicate that an expansive analysis of flora terms may tell the story of linguistic connections between disparate communities.

The FloraLang database draws from published language data and includes words for specific flora and fungi, generic terms for plants, terms for parts of plants, the uses of the flora, and polysemous terms. As there is often no one-to-one relationship between the Linnaean names (i.e. 'scientific' names) and Indigenous names, most of the relationships between the terms are one-to-many and many-to-many, creating a complex network of terminologies and cognates. The current number of relationships (i.e. where a unique Linnaean term is linked to a unique Indigenous term) is 16,398, with many more terms still to be added. Preliminary explorations these connections have revealed some potential cognates spread over vast distances, such as between Tiwi and Kayardild.

Including the Linnaean term also means the database can link to specimen records in the Atlas of Living Australia to compare the distribution of plants, opening up an avenue for discovering instances of anthropogenic migration, such as has been found with *Livistona* palm species (Kondo et al 2012) and Australian Boab *Adansonia gregorii* (Rangan et al 2015).

So far, the database concentrates on non Pama-Nyungan languages (and a few neighbouring Pama-Nyungan languages) as there is a significant pre-existing corpus of Top End flora terms thanks to ethnobiologist Glenn Wightman. Furthermore, in focusing on the north-northwest region of the continent, this database provides another angle for exploring the relationship between the non Pama-Nyungan languages bloc and Pama-Nyungan languages, which remains a mystery. I look forward to sharing the development of it with you and receiving feedback and developing potential collaboration opportunities.

Mitji: Semantic change as influenced by localised cultural practices

Corey Theatre

The cultural associations that are present in Australian languages differ from those that occur in other languages, for example Indo-European languages, and subsequently the types of synchronic polysemy (the same word being applied to multiple concepts) that occur are also different (Evans, 1992). For example, in Aboriginal languages we are likely to find a single word such as **winy** covering both 'fire' and 'firewood', but we are less likely to find a single word covering both these concepts in Indo-European languages.

Evans (1992) demonstrates that such attested synchronic polysemy can be used as evidence to support semantic change cross linguistically. Therefore, given that we find the colexification of 'skin', 'matrilineal clans' and 'subsections' in Iwaidja (McConvell and Ponsonnet, 2018) it is plausible to suggest that the Gunditjmara and Western Kulin form **mitj** 'skin/bark' is cognate with the Ngarrindjeri forms **mitji** 'name' and **mitjili** 'member of the same clan'.

While many of the synchronic polysemies that occur in Australia are widespread (Evans, 1992), this presentation hypothesises that in some cases localised and specified cultural practices influence the semantic extension/specification resulting in a divergence in the types of synchronic polysemy that occur cross linguistically. So, in Boandik (Bunganditj) we find **miRi** 'stringybark' and **miRaman** 'canoe', however, in places such as the Western Desert where canoes are not manufactured this synchronic (near) polysemy does not occur. Likewise, in Pitjantjatjara we find **miri** 'skin' extended to refer to intergenerational moieties as in **nganana miri** literally 'our skin', however, we do not find this type of synchronic polysemy in Boandik (Bunganditj) where there are no intergenerational moieties. While there is tendency for the word meaning 'skin' to be extended to a social organisation system as seen by the Iwaidja, Ngarrindjeri and Pitjantjatjara examples above, the different type of social organisation systems present in these societies creates a divergence in the extended meanings of these forms.

In section one, I will show the relevant phonological correspondences, demonstrating that these are regular and frequently occurring. In section two, I will outline the cultural practices that underpin the semantic changes. In section three, I will show examples of synchronic polysemy, and in the final section I will bring all these ideas together to show how a specific form, **mitji**, has undergone various phonological and semantic changes resulting in a network of localised and culturally dependant meanings.

Collect, connect and share: starting an evidence-based language program at a native title body corporate

Rosie Sitorus, Joan Ashburton, Kristy Stewart, Chanice Fleming, Denis Coutant, Breanna Kelly & Amanda Hamilton-Hollaway

In 2021, the Puutu Kunti Kurrama and Pinikura people (Pilbara, WA) began advocating for language reclamation and revitalisation as a priority for their recently-formed Registered Native Title Body Corporate, the Puutu Kunti Kurrama and Pinikura Aboriginal Corporation (PKKP). In 2023, the PKKP language program began. Since then, this program has expanded rapidly—but moreover, as a grassroots initiative based on best practice research, it has also expanded thoughtfully. This presentation will describe how the team at PKKP has been developing a language program from scratch without reinventing the model, by weaving together lessons learned from similar initiatives (e.g., McConvell et al., 2005; Tran 2020, *inter alia*).

Throughout, we will provide specific, replicable suggestions for other groups considering new, or newly restructured, language programs.

The first important lesson we have learned from other language initiatives centres on staffing and expertise. While programs like ours are about language, prior experiences show that they rely just as heavily on project and data management, long-term program planning, training, and relationship-building within the local community and beyond (Olawsky, 2014; Truscott, 2014). At PKKP, we have intentionally built a large language team with this combination of skills, in addition to knowledge of language and linguistics. We anticipate that our careful attention to staffing will make our language program more resilient, and we suggest that other groups consider the variety of skills that such programs require when hiring new staff.

Second, we have relied heavily on best practice research to design our program itself. The three pillars of our program—which were set based on goals articulated by PKKP members—centre on collection of old and new data, the connection that community members can form with this data, and the sharing of words and culture that such language data can catalyse. In each of these areas, we are continually examining previous research and

carefully developing our own procedures where needed. For example, we have incorporated best practices around data transparency and findability into our process for gathering existing data from archives and individuals (Bird and Simons 2003; Navidi et al., 2017). Through comprehensive and meticulously-updated spreadsheets, we note every single resource we find, complete metadata about it, who holds it, whether and when we have requested a copy, whom we've corresponded with, the outcome of each request, and dozens of other pieces of information. With this level of record keeping, we aim to future-proof our work, making each of our steps traceable and all our decisions explained. We suggest that other groups likewise document their processes to help mitigate future confusion and duplication of work.

In sum, we are building an evidence-based language program at PKKP. By doing so, we hope to avoid the efficiency, sustainability, and operational problems that could otherwise hinder a program like ours.

An 1838 Wiradjuri text

David Nash

A unique leaf with a 133-word printed text in the papers of the Rev. James Günther seems to have been overlooked by students of the Wiradjuri language.

Handwritten under the text is “by WW. Sydney in May 1838”, which can only refer to the Rev. William Watson (1798–1866), who for most of his adult life was a missionary at Wellington Valley, and who is known to have learnt to converse and preach in the Wiradjuri language. However this is the only Wiradjuri record extant directly from Watson.

It is readily seen that the WW text is a translation into Wiradjuri not of a Bible passage, but an exhortation, a sermon. I aim to investigate this text for what it might add to knowledge of Wiradjuri grammar. It calls for attention as the only other passages with connected sentences we have of 19th century Wiradjuri are Günther’s translation of portions of the Bible.

A necessary step is to prepare a back translation into English, and at the same time infer (by a kind of abduction) what the starting English version would have been. Then the Wiradjuri version can be analysed for grammatical features which do not parallel English. Such features are likely to be good indications of Wiradjuri ways of talking. This then would be a small additional resource for Wiradjuri language revival.

Learning and Teaching Dharug: Growing the Dharug language Community

Debbie Smith & Leanne King

The Dharug Dhalang 'Dharug language', sometimes called the Sydney Language, is the first Aboriginal language community to be impacted by invasion and occupation. As Dharug people, we are committed to reviving our language. With Dharug people at the core, we are driving Dharug language learning and teaching for ourselves and inviting allies to join and support us in our language journey. 'Being a language activist involves continually convincing yourself and others of the importance of what you're doing in helping to keep our identity strong...you have to be out there promoting the use of our languages in all different contexts... education, land claims tourism and media'. (Bell, 2007 p.1). In our presentation, we report on the variety of our teaching and learning projects and their potential contribution to our aspirations for reigniting Dharug Dhalang:

The Dharug Dhalang course for community members is a turning point with now over a thousand participants. Commencing in 2020 – initially face to face, then online during Covid– these Dharug lessons are now delivered online, enabling more Dharug community, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supporters, and non-Indigenous allies to access the course and begin learning a little of our language and about how to support us reviving it.

Education settings – early childhood, schools and tertiary– are an important focus for growing the Dharug Dhalang learning community. This year 23 primary and high schools are engaged in a mentoring program with curriculum and teaching resources supplied for program delivery by Dharug Dhalang champions Corina Norman and Jasmine Seymour. Teaching Dharug with this wrap around support is an effective way of learning. Excitingly, this year these language champions will also teach Dharug at the University of Western Sydney, expanding our community of language learner speakers, as well as the (small) number of Indigenous languages offered at university in Australia.

Cultural camps, following in the tradition of other Indigenous communities, e.g. the Myaamia community Oklahoma, are open to both Dharug and the wider Aboriginal community. These camps combine traditional practices and knowledge of Country with Dharug Dhalang. A number of Dharug teachers wishing to further their language prowess have undertaken the MILE (USYD), which includes a linguistics taster, language teaching and research project. This has develop our language toolkits for curriculum development and language projects.

Quality Dharug Dhalang resources are also a crucial part of our language revival work. Celebrating the start of NAIDOC week 2024, Bayala Aboriginal Corporation opened its website with freely available information and resources such as 'Bayala Dharug Dhalang', containing vocabulary, conversation scaffolds with aural recordings via QR codes. We are also working with research institutional partners to develop an app that will include everyday words and phrases and sentences supported by aural recordings, a comprehensive dictionary and a grammar and learners guide.

Working together at Ngukurr Language Centre

Rose Munur, Dawson Daniels, Charlee Horni (Ngukurr Language Centre) & Tula Wynyard (University of Melbourne)

This collaborative presentation talks about how community and university linguists are working together to support Indigenous languages of the Roper River Region in south-east Arnhem Land. In particular, this presentation will highlight ongoing work on Ritharrŋu-Wägilak and Marra.

Rose Munur (Ritharrŋu), a community linguist, and Tula Wynyard (Dharug, English/Irish), a university linguist, both want the Ritharrŋu-Wägilak language to stay strong, and they have been documenting the language at the Ngukurr Language Centre. The project involves Elders who grew up speaking Ritharrŋu-Wägilak, while younger people like Rose mostly speak Kriol but know some Ritharrŋu-Wägilak from hearing it when they were growing up.

Rose is proud to keep speaking and learning language in her community, even when it is difficult, “...We’re learning and doing our best, but here in this community [Ngukurr], the only language that’s spoken really hard is Ritharrŋu-Wägilak. Here at our work, and outside at the *wäŋa* [at home]... [It] makes me feel very proud that this language hasn’t broken down, it’s still here today and I’m really happy to be going forward, to learn more from the old people.”¹

The language of Tula's ancestors from the Sydney area, Dharug, hasn't been spoken fluently for many years, but the community are bringing it back using old documents like word lists – this experience has made her think deeply about what kind of recordings are important for the future when working with Ritharrŋu and Wägilak mob.

Dawson Daniels will also present about his language learning journey as one of the younger generation of language workers. His language is Marra,

¹ Translated from Kriol.

from the area just south of Ngukurr. Although there are no fluent speakers now, mob from Ngukurr have been working hard to help the language flow on to the next generations.

The Ngukurr Language Centre is vital in providing space, time and resources for this all these kinds of language work, and facilitating bush trips to learn and teach language on Country. It has also been important in setting up good relationships between university linguists like Tula and the local community in Ngukurr. Charlee Horni will offer perspectives based on her role as coordinator of the Ngukurr Language Centre.

The presentation weaves together the context of Ngukurr community and the linguistic diversity of the region, and talks about how different generations' cultural knowledge, skills, and experiences can help with language work. It also shows how community members, linguists from universities, and language centres can work together to support languages for the future.

When talking about music leads to language use

Mahesh White-Radhakrishnan

The Music!Dance!Culture! podcast has provided a ripe context for performers to showcase vulnerable music and dance forms including by First Nations performers. Episodes produced and in the pipeline focus on contemporary Yolngu music (Curran, White-Radhakrishnan and Pearson 2021), Warlpiri Yawulyu, the Warlpiri hip hop festival Milpirri (Curran, White-Radhakrishnan, Dowset, Wanta Jampijinpa Patrick, Jangala 2022) and Mawng Inyjalarrku (Curran, White-Radhakrishnan, Brown, Manmurulu and Manmurulu, in preparation). While talking about music often leads to music, we have found that it can also lead to the use of the associated languages, through the words and concepts used to talk about these forms as well as in the forms themselves. Hence, an episode on Yolngu contemporary music featured songs in Yolngu language and a discussion of Yolngu cultural concepts. Likewise, an episode on Milpirri featured Warlpiri hip-hop tracks, a live performance of Warlpiri Jardiwanpa, and an unpacking of important Warlpiri themes and cultural concepts. We will illustrate, through these examples, the potential scope of music podcasts as a rich context and fun way for associated languages to be used, foregrounded and imparted.

Revitalising Gamilaraay-Yuwaalaraay and Broader Implications for Australian Indigenous Languages Policy and Practice in Comparable Revival Contexts

Christopher Orchard, Odee Welsh & John Giacon

This paper presents a synthesis three diverse viewpoints from (Indigenous and Non-Indigenous) members of the Gamilaraay and Yuwaalaraay (GY) speech-community engaged at various levels in language learning, teaching, research, and asset development. The presentation will take a necessarily multidisciplinary approach to investigating the potential pathways and challenges towards integrating more complex and communicative language use in both On-Country and Off-Country contexts, across multiple sites of exposure.

In dialogue, the three authors will explore their own unique relationships with the language(s) with a view to describing the factors contributing to past and current successes as a necessary space of critical reflection towards developing understanding of the requisite elements underpinning further revitalisation of language, cultural reclamation, and nation building. By platforming diverse perspectives in conversation, the presentation will offer insights into the diverse strategies used to support language use, while also addressing the challenges and external influences that continue to effect strategic decision-making, language use, and Indigenous nation-building efforts. Through diverse viewpoints, the paper reflects (some of) the multiplicity of desires and needs within the speech-community.

Finally, the presentation will confront the complex issues around the establishment of effective language governance institutions, essential for political alignment and community development. By weaving together these perspectives, the study critically assesses how we can continue "Supporting further community success in revitalizing Australian Indigenous Languages" aiming to foster a deeper understanding and supportive environment for ongoing revitalization efforts.

Archives for analysis; facilitating archive access in revitalisation contexts

Gulwanyang Moran

An increased focus can be recognised of archival institutions in Australia making steps towards facilitating greater access to language and cultural materials for First Nations peoples through various projects and programs in the wake of the Tandanya – Adelaide Declaration 2019 (Barrowcliffe, et al, 2021). This focus has supported an understanding in First Nations language communities globally of the role of archival institutions and the materials they hold within language analysis and revitalisation work (Burke, 2023).

Facilitating greater access to archival materials brings forward several opportunities to conduct analysis work with unearthed materials or reanalyse existing materials. Analysis and reanalysis led by First Nations peoples can foster a deeper understanding of the cultural context by which the language is placed and bring sense making to the documented language. This analysis work contributes to a revitalisation that goes beyond the study of language as an object explained through its properties of phonology, grammar, lexicon and syntax; It facilitates a reclamation of cultural and social practice that First Nations languages sits (Leonard, 2020). Without First Nations led analysis work there is a high probability that the output is a colonized version of an ancestral language.

In this presentation we will share a project led by First Nations archive workers to facilitate greater First Nations access to archival materials in the State Archive Collection in Museums of History NSW in partnership with the NSW Aboriginal Languages Trust. We will share the indexing approach, language analysis and identification, and the plans for preservation and access. We highlight the importance of building capability and relationships among First Nations language communities and linguists working with NSW languages, their understanding of the role of archival institutions and materials within revitalisation and reclamation work.



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