WELCOME

Welcome to the first newsletter of the Research Unit for Indigenous Language. This newsletter will be published twice-yearly and will contain details of the research activities, latest news and other achievements of the Research Unit.

Consisting of a team of researchers from the School of Languages and Linguistics, the Research Unit is led by Professor Gillian Wigglesworth (Director) and Associate Professor Rachel Nordlinger (Deputy Director).

Staff within the Research Unit have been active in research into Indigenous languages and the communities where they are spoken. This newsletter presents some of the highlights, and focuses particularly on fieldwork, new projects, media exposure and public outreach activities. We have also participated in a range of national and international conferences, including the Australian Linguistic Society Conference, this year hosted by the School of Languages and Linguistics.

MORE INFO: Full list of all publications, conference presentations and current grants can be found on the RUIL website.

LAUNCH OF THE RESEARCH UNIT

The Research Unit for Indigenous Language was launched on 16 May 2013. This event combined a meeting of the Steering Committee with a public lecture by Bruce Pascoe.

BRUCE PASCOE LECTURE: ‘PANARA’ - THE GRAIN GROWER OF AUSTRALIA

Renowned author Bruce Pascoe spoke about his research of the last few years into Aboriginal agriculture and how this is encoded in Aboriginal languages, as well as the historical and cultural significance of language. “Panara” refers to ‘the grass people’ - people who grew, harvested and stored grain.

More information can be found on the Articulation website.

STEERING COMMITTEE

The Research Unit is advised by a distinguished Steering Committee consisting of language experts from a range government, academic, community and other organisations.

More info: Profiles of current members can be found on the Steering Committee web page.

NEWS: GRANTS & AWARDS

- ‘WADEYE IPTV: Delivering significant and at risk audiovisual archives to remote Aboriginal communities via IPTV and the NBN’. Lyndon Ormond-Parker, Marcia Langton, Robyn Sloggett, Rachel Nordlinger, Ken Clarke, Julien Ridoux receive a $69,446 Institute for a Broadband Enabled Society (IBES) grant to begin in 2014.

- ‘Getting in touch: language and digital inclusion in Australian Indigenous Communities’ Rachel Nordlinger, Ruth Singer, Jenny Green & Steven Bird are awarded a $39,962 grant from the Melbourne Social Equity Institute Interdisciplinary funding scheme 2013.


- ‘Development of a Somali dictionary App’. Nick Thieberger, in collaboration with the Somali community agency, Burji Arts, is awarded $8,000 from a University of Melbourne Vice Chancellor’s Staff Engagement Grant.

- ‘Documenting the world’s languages with new technologies’. Nick Thieberger is awarded a Ludwig Leichhardt Jubilee Fellowship by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (Germany) to work with colleagues at the University of Cologne (2013-2015).

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MA student, Brighde Collins, has recently returned from a two-month fieldwork trip in Ngukurr, Arnhem Land, NT. Brighde’s research project focuses on tense and aspect expression in Ngandi, one of nine languages spoken around the Ngukurr community. The project will contribute to current research on tense, aspect, modality (TAM) expression in Australian languages, and in Gunwinyguan languages specifically. Through an analysis of current literature and transcribed recordings, the project aims to document and understand the nuances of Ngandi aspectual expression.

Brighde has been working with Ngandi speakers to translate some archived 1980s video footage recently made available from AIATSIS to the Ngukurr Language Centre, as well as reviewing audio recordings made in the early 1970s. One of the secondary aims of the project is to create usable resources through consultation with community members. Together with the Ngukurr Language Centre, Brighde aims to create some short subtitled and translated videos from the transcribed data, piloting some different ways in which these resources could be produced. These pilots will then be circulated amongst community members, with a survey of community response planned for 2014.

Brighde has been warmly welcomed into the community by both the Ngukurr Language Centre committee and Ngandi speakers in Ngukurr. She feels very lucky to have the opportunity to work in such a fascinating and vibrant community, and is very much looking forward to her next fieldtrip in November-December 2013.

Joe Blythe and PhD students Lucy Davidson and Bill Forshaw conducted fieldwork in November in Wadeye NT associated with ARC Discovery Project ‘Language Acquisition of Murrinh-Patha’, and Joe’s ARC DECRA project ‘Acquiring Kinship Terminology in an Australian Aboriginal Community’. In preparation for forthcoming acquisition tasks, Joe concentrated on field-testing KinOath, a genealogical database and kinship application, and worked on an interactional experiment relating to direction-giving. Bill and Lucy collected acquisition data for their PhD projects respectively on verbal morphology and reference strategies. Bill will remain in Wadeye until the end of the year. More info can be found on the KinOath Kinship Archiver web page.

Jenny Green’s fieldwork featured in the Sep/Oct edition of Australian Geographic in a detailed story on ‘Reviving Aboriginal Languages’. The article includes information on Jenny’s research on sign language, sand stories and songs with the Ti Tree community in Central Australia. More information: Reviving Aboriginal languages on the Australian Geographic website.
**Rembarrnga Traditional Ecological Knowledge:** Aung Si carried out a preliminary field trip to Maningrida and Ramingining in Arnhem Land in September, where he was introduced by Dr Murray Garde to senior Rembarrnga community members and to the Djelk Ranger organisation. Aung Si hopes to carry out more extensive fieldwork on the Rembarrnga language and traditional ecological knowledge, starting in early 2014.

**Research Unit for Indigenous Language Research Newsletter, 2013**

**Rachel Nordlinger** undertook a fieldtrip to Wadeye (NT) in July 2013 to continue work on the documentation and description of Murrinh-Patha as part of two ARC Discovery Projects – ‘Language Acquisition in Murrinh-Patha’, and ‘Doing great things with Small Languages’. On this trip Rachel also began work on a new project, led by John Mansfield from ANU, and partially funded by the Thamarrurr Regional Advisory Aboriginal Council in Wadeye, to develop an online phrase book for Murrinh-Patha. As Murrinh-Patha is the primary language of almost all of Wadeye and is still being acquired by children as their first language, visitors and newcomers to the community are often interested in trying to learn a bit of the language to help with communication and cultural understanding. However, there are no easily accessible resources that can help people to do this, especially if they are not linguistically trained and cannot therefore comfortably read the academic publications on the language. The idea of the phrase book is to fill this gap by providing an online resource, combining audio and potentially video, to help non-Murrinh-Patha speakers learn basic phrases and conversational routines in Murrinh-Patha. An important aspect of the project is the involvement of young Murrinh-Patha trainees, who take a lead role in the design of the phrase book, recording the phrases, and doing the transcription, with support from John Mansfield and other visiting linguists.

**Boob tree out the front of Kanamkek-Yile ngala museum, Wadeye.**

**NEWS: MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS**

- **Jenny Green** has filmed a short film of a sand story ‘Antarrengeny Tyepety-akert’ as part of a documentation of Alyawarr sand stories and songs directed by Mary Kemarr Morton & Katie Kemarr Morton. This film has been short-listed for the Asia Pacific International Ethnographic Documentary Festival that opened in Melbourne on 25 October 2013. More info: [Aperture Festival website](#); [Antarrengeny Story - Excerpt](#) on Vimeo website.

- In 2013 **Ruth Singer** has mentored Janet Mardbinda, the first ever year 12 student at Warruwi Community School - Goulburn Island, Arnhem Land. The school is very proud to have Janet, as community members who completed year 12 previously did so at boarding schools in Darwin and elsewhere. Janet has now finished year 12 and will graduate in a ceremony in Darwin in November and has started as a language worker on Ruth’s project ‘Multilingualism and language use at Warruwi Community’.

- **Jenny Green** has helped develop the first online dictionary of sign languages used by Indigenous communities across central Australia. The dictionary includes several hundred videos of hand-signs and other sign-actions used by Anmatyerr speakers from Ti Tree (NT), and by the Ngaanyatjarra people in the Western Desert (WA). The website is named Iltyem-iltyem, which means ‘signalling with hands’ in the Anmatyerr language. It was developed in collaboration with the Indigenous communities and linguists from the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (NT). More info: [Iltyem-iltyem website](#).

- Research Unit partner PARADISEC (**Nick Thieberger** is Project Manager) has been added to the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World collection to protect it for future generations. PARADISEC is a digital collection of endangered languages that was created to digitise research and cultural records to ensure they don’t get lost, damaged or destroyed. More info: [PARADISEC website](#); [UNESCO heritage adds RUIL partner PARADISEC to its Memory of the World register web page](#).
INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE SEMINARS

The Research Unit regularly invites staff, external academics and language experts to present a guest lecture or seminar for interested staff and students at the University of Melbourne. Below are some of the guest presentations in 2013:

For more information please see the RUIL Events web page.

INVITED SPEAKERS

- **Contact language typology and type of innovation: Light Warlpiri as a case study.** Dr Carmel O’Shannessy (University of Michigan) - 7 June
- **Inflecting verbs and coverbs? – MalakMalak’s complex predicates.** Dr Dorothea Hoffmann (University of Chicago) - 2 August
- **The Meeting Point Project – A holistic description methodology for Revival Languages.** Vicki Couzens, Dr Christina Eira (VACL) and Dr Tonya Stebbins (La Trobe) - 16 August

PROFESSOR ANDY BUTCHER LECTURE - 1 October 2013

The sounds of Aboriginal languages and the hearing profiles of their speakers

There was a large attendance at the Research Unit for Indigenous Language public seminar by guest speaker Professor Andy Butcher (Flinders University) speaking on the topic of the sound systems of traditional Aboriginal languages and how these appear to map on to the acoustic space typically associated with the condition *otitis media* with effusion (OME), or ‘glue ear’. This condition is very common among Aboriginal children in remote communities in Australia and may have implications for learning English and English literacy.

More info: [The sounds of Aboriginal languages Articulation web page](#).

OTHER EVENTS

- **Just One World - Lost in Translation? Development versus tradition.**
  - Rachel Nordlinger participated in this World Vision forum held as part of the Writers’ Festival - 27 August

NEWS: SCHOLARSHIPS

Research Unit students received Australian Linguistic Society scholarships in 2013:

- **Kate Horrack** (PhD Candidate) has been awarded the Susan Kaldor Scholarship for attendance at the 2013 LSA Institute.
- **Brighde Collins** (MA Research Candidate) has been awarded the Gerhardt Laves Scholarship for fieldwork on Ngandi in the Ngukurr area (NT).

NEWS: RUIL IN THE MEDIA

The work of Research Unit staff has attracted the attention of media during 2013. Recent examples include the following:

- **Nick Thieberger**’s work on PARADISEC, together with colleagues from the Australian National University and University of Sydney, has featured in a recent ABC media story on ‘Australian universities preserving Asia and Pacific cultural traditions’.
  - More info: [Watch the video on YouTube](#).
- **Jenny Green**’s work on the *Iltyem-iltyem* sign language website has been reported by various media including ABC Radio National, NITV News (SBS) and Koorie radio 1.

UPCOMING IN 2014

Planning is underway for a partnership in 2014 between the Research Unit and the Resource Network for Linguistic Diversity (RNLD). A new volunteer program will enable a small number of linguistics students at the University of Melbourne to link up with Indigenous participants who are studying linguistics modules of RNLD’s Documenting and Revitalising Indigenous Languages (DRIL) training program.

Each volunteer will join RNLD trainers in a community-based workshop in order to get to know the participants and understand the community context and the training needs. Volunteers will then offer some focused ‘on-call’ linguistic tutoring to DRIL participants throughout the year. The volunteers will learn more about Indigenous languages and have the opportunity to gain experience in community-based training and build an effective partnership with Indigenous people.

More info: More details to follow in 2014. Information about RNLD and the DRIL program can be found on the [RNLD website](#).