Variations in Goals and Methods of Linguistic Education
A comparison of academic and community based approaches to linguistics

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We are students from the University of Alberta, where there’s a program called the Canadian Indigenous Language and Literacy Development Institute (CILLDI). As the name implies, CILLDI aims to promote Canadian indigenous languages. Every year, a summer school is held on campus in Edmonton, Alberta. Students take two courses over three weeks in language documentation, revitalization, policy and linguistics. New this year, the program also offers community outreach classes, and is currently running in 2 communities. Upon completion of 6 specified courses, students receive the “community Linguist certificate”, or the CLC.

Though the programs are targeted at minority language communities, University of Alberta students can intern with the program and aide in the instruction and administration of courses. This is the opportunity we had last July, and it is one that has allowed us a unique perspective on linguistic education for various audiences.
Here are some demographics of the CILLDI program.

Demographics

2014 Summer School

- July 7-25
- 10 courses
- 58 students
- 13 interns

2000-2014 Summer School Student Nationalities
Our presentation will essentially be a comparison of three modes of linguistic instruction: at the undergrad level, at the CILLDI summer school level, and at the CILLDI outreach level. We will be talking about goals of students and programs, relationships between students, instructors, and interns, titles, education styles, and timeline effects.
Dr. Sally Rice wrote: “Our goal every July is to train First Peoples speakers and educators in endangered language documentation, linguistic analysis, language acquisition, second language teaching methodologies, curriculum development and language-related research and policy-making.” Further, CILLDI encourages its students to, “Protect, Preserve, Promote, Practice, and Pass on your language …”

Because the programs goals are so broad, Instructors range in what they choose to focus on in class, in part based on the goals of the course, but also based on their personal understanding and evaluation of CILLDIs goals: some instructors emphasize the academic model, others focus on practical application. Classes on language pedagogy focus less on linguistic analyses, more on curricula development.
The reasons students pursue a course of study vary, regardless of whether it's an undergraduate degree or the CLC on campus or through summer school. That said, there are thematic differences in the motivation we've seen between participants of the three programs. Among undergraduates, education is largely seen as an investment in a career, though this is not always the case. Though we certainly network throughout throughout our degree (both with other students and also professionals), it's often not a priority in an undergrad ling degree.

For a university student, universities provide access to academic programs and facilities. Beyond that, undergraduates tend to be looking for a true “university experience.”

Language learning is not generally a focus of a linguistics degree. While linguistics students may choose to minor in a specific language, and knowledge of another language may be beneficial, linguistics is not about learning foreign languages.

The goals of the average undergraduate are generally different than those of the students of both CILLDI programs. While the CLC serves as a reasonable analogue to a Bachelor’s degree in that it offers its holder knowledge and credibility, it often holds more personal value for students because it is intertwined with the expression of linguistic

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**Student Goals**

- Community Linguist Certificate
- Networking
- Access
- Travel Opportunity
- Language Learning
In early undergraduate degrees you have more formal relations with TAs and professors. By the time you get to upper level classes, this formality is lost. In linguistics in particular, even at the introductory levels, professors go by their first names. Despite this, a student-teacher dynamic is generally present, that is, undergrads expect that your professors are more experienced as well as more knowledge.

During the summer school, students (whose experience and educational background varied) tended to defer to their instructors on most matters regarding their language. While instructors were engaged with as experts, intern-student interactions were less uniform. Because few interns spoke any of the languages represented at the summer school, some students were understandably less willing to seek our help. Also contributing to this, most students were aware of the difference in authority between intern and instructor.

However, much of this dynamic could be a result of the generational differences: CILLDI interns were generally in their early twenties, and still undergraduate students; CILLDI students were often years older, more accomplished, and better versed in community languages and associated politics. Despite this, we sometimes observed students underestimate what they themselves had to offer. However, it wasn’t that they devalued the experience of their peers. Advice from fellow students was actually more relied on than intern assistance.
With an undergraduate degree, many students who take linguistics are not studying to become linguists. As a result, most students are probably not likely to use the title linguist. For those who are pursuing linguistics as a career, the marker of a linguist differs. For some the title comes with a particular level of degree, while for others the titles comes with involvement in a particular type of linguistic work.

The majority of linguistics students don’t have ties to endangered languages and so the assumption of a language activist role is not generally relevant. The only way this role become relevant is when students consciously take up endangered language work.

Among some CILLDI students there seems to a misconception about what being a linguist entails. This is not uncommon for anyone outside of the field. Not only did they see linguists as a source of linguistic knowledge, but mainly as polyglots. Because of this, most students would not use it to describe themselves. With regards to the term “language activist”, while many students recognized that they were doing activist work regarding their community languages, few would actually use the term to refer to themselves.

Similarly to the experience of an undergraduate, some students wouldn’t describe themselves as community linguists upon completion of the CLC. However, use of the title was encouraged in some courses, as a means of
We’re going to break education styles into teaching and learning specifically, but before we do that I will give a quick overview of university education format for the sake of thoroughness. Undergraduate courses fall on a semester system, meaning there’s a lot of time for homework, tests, and projects. Individualized projects are less common in your typical undergrad ling degree because most students lack a language they particularly want to work on. Class sizes vary across levels, and the size of class affects the amount and nature of grading an instructor can do. Because we are training academic linguists, correct use of terminology is stressed in many classes. That being said, consistency, particularly between lower level classes taught by different instructors, does differ in our department.

By the time you get to university, whether it is your ideal learning style or not, you’re used to sitting in class room, arriving on time, and (ideally) not speaking to friends when your professor is speaking. Furthermore, students are expected to prioritize school over most (if not all) other aspects of their lives.
These things were simply not the case for all CILLDI students, however. Because many students were not used to it, typical classroom etiquette was not always adhered to. This could be related to prior experiences of students as well as educational background or time spent out of school, which as previously mentioned, varied.

As for technological literacy, summer school students varied drastically in the degree of their knowledge. For students that were unfamiliar with technology, the role it played in many classes affected their ability to efficiently engage in course material.

Another aspect that affected summer school student performance was language proficiency. This applied both to English as a language of instruction, and the indigenous language each student focused on. Some students spoke English as a second language and were therefore constantly translating course instruction into their native language. On the other hand, those with little knowledge of their heritage language would potentially have more trouble completing assignments that required it.

Like their summer school cohorts, CILLDI outreach students seemed at odds with what I might expect as classroom etiquette (most students were significantly late in the morning and after breaks, there was talking in class, etc). Perhaps the largest difference between CILLDI summer school and CILLDI outreach is the technological literacy of
As for teaching styles, Since CILLDI students do have different goals as previously mentioned, the curricula has been adapted to cater to this. This means that many of the theory-heavy courses, have been altered to provide more practical application. Technology appears as both a course focus and a medium for completing course work. Instilling computer literacy is an important part of preparing students for modern language work and gives them a better awareness of the tools that are available to them.

Due to the condensed nature of CILLDI courses, each assignment was designed to build directly on the last in order to compile a larger final assignment. Aligned with CILLDI goals, courses either produced something practical and immediately usable to students, or taught fundamental skills.

Because these courses focused more on application of knowledge, terminology was not stressed as much as it is in a typical linguistic undergraduate career. However, its importance varied between classes. Some instructors saw it a central aspect of their curriculum, while others focused more on reaching an understanding of the principles the terminology conveyed.

The main difference between outreach and summer school was that material specifically tailored to the language of the community, for example, Examples of linguistics phenomena. Because all students were working with the same
Time

- Class Timeline
  - Structure of day
  - Expectations
  - Retention

This brings us to Time. The timeline was a large factor affecting the shape of the program. CILLDI summer school had a hyper-condensed curriculum: students took two courses over three weeks, with each course receiving roughly 5 hours of actual instruction a day for 7 days. While the hours of instruction were almost equivalent to that of a regular undergraduate course, the actual time-line was very different. While the condensed course offered more intensive instruction and less time for material to be forgotten, there was also less time to grasp the information. Students were sometimes overloaded with information in the higher level courses, and there is reason to wonder how much information was actually retained once the three weeks had ended. Because the summer school was only held once a year, students often retained minimal amounts of linguistic material as evidenced during the first few classes of higher level courses.

This condensed timeline affected what could be assigned and how in depth assignments could be. With a full day of classes everyday, there was simply no time for students to work on elaborate assignments, nor for instructors to mark them.

CILLDI outreach, while over a longer period, were similar. Classes occurred twice a week, Fridays and Saturdays, for four weeks over a two month term. Each class was about 5 hours long, and included a 2 hour review of the previous sections. This is in stark contrast to the class schedules of CILLDI summer school. On one hand, this elongated course (though still condensed) allowed more time for students to study the material they had learned,
The goals of CILLDI and BA Ling programs are fundamentally different. While both make essential use of linguistic knowledge, undergraduate programs aim to create academic linguists and prepare students for continued studies in ling at a graduate level. CILLDI is a program that works to provide its students with the knowledge necessary to perform language revitalization work. Though the two overlap, these fundamental differences, combined with the significant differences in time, are largely the cause of the variations we’ve discussed.

While they share a common goal, CILLDI’s two programs, the summer school and the outreach program, are carried out in significantly different settings. Because it is community based, students of the outreach program share a language and are more familiar with one another. While it limits exposure to the multiplicity of indigenous language work being done in Canada and beyond, this provides a better environment for group work and allows CILLDI to tailor classes to fit the needs, resources, and interests of the group (for example, there is no need to cover linguistic traits that do not occur in the community’s language, and technology classes can focus on what is available to the students).

It’s important to remember that our presentation is an examination of the CILLDI program between July and December of 2014. As we mentioned in the beginning, the institution has been around for 15 years, with this year being the first year the outreach program has been offered. CILLDI has changed since its inception, and will
Thanks for listening!