Creating a regional Master-Apprentice training network in Australia

Margaret Florey and Knut Olawsky

Resource Network for Linguistic Diversity www.rnld.org
Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language & Culture Centre www.mirima.org.au
www.rnld.org/MALLP
Setting the scene in Australia

• Australia is home to some 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages

• 2012 *Our land, our languages* (Federal Govt. Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs) reported that "Today there are about 18 languages, strong in the sense of being spoken by significant numbers of people across all age groups"

• Indigenous languages are not yet recognised in Australia's constitution

• Australia has not yet ratified UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage
Setting the scene in Australia

• Against this backdrop, many exciting reclamation and revitalisation activities are taking place in communities, Indigenous organisations and schools across Australia

• There are strong outcomes in terms of language learning, strengthening of identity, capacity building in documentation and revitalisation strategies, and Indigenous management of language activities

• However, conversational fluency and rebuilding of intergenerational transmission of language are not being achieved in most settings
Train-the-trainer workshop proposal

• In order to address this situation, in 2012, the Resource Network for Linguistic Diversity proposed running a national train-the-trainer Master-Apprentice Language Learning Program (MALLP) workshop

• Goals:
  i. create a pool of 10-15 Indigenous regional trainers who would subsequently be able to deliver expert training in the Master-Apprentice method in communities, Indigenous organisations, and key Indigenous educational institutions across Australia

  ii. and, through this creation of local Master-Apprentice teams in numerous locations, to help rebuild conversational fluency in Australia's Indigenous languages
What is the Master-Apprentice Language Learning Program (MALLP)?

- Master-Apprentice model was created in 1992 by Leanne Hinton in collaboration with American Indian partners.
- MALLP was created in response to the need for a method to develop new speakers of languages in situations where natural transmission in the home has been interrupted.
- Managed in the US by the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival (AICLS) www.aicls.org
Some Master-Apprentice principles

• An informal method to help adults learn their heritage language
• Goal is to be able to speak conversationally
• Pairs a learner (apprentice) with a speaker (master)
• Team aims to spend 10-20 hours a week together
• Language immersion method — Leave English behind!
• Learn language you can use, and use what you learn.
  The team does activities together
  — go shopping, do household tasks, have tea, play games, go fishing, hunting, etc.
• Apprentice is a "language hunter" — an active learner
Master-Apprentice

• Used to support up to 200 languages in North America. Over 100 teams in California alone, representing some 40 different languages
• US trainers note that many other groups have trained themselves using the manual *How to Keep Your Language Alive*
• Method used internationally e.g. in Canada, Brazil, and Japan
• The manual has been translated into Portuguese for use by Brazilian tribes, and is currently being translated into Japanese for use by the Ainu.
• In Australia, there have been only 2 Master-Apprentice programs:
  – pilot program for Bandjalang (NSW) (Bradley Laurie and John Hobson)
  – ongoing Miriwoong program (WA) since 2009 (Knut Olawsky)
The Australian proposal

• RNLD developed partnerships with Australian organisations:
  – Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language and Culture Centre (Knut Olawsky)
  – Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (Margaret Carew and Kath Dabrowska)
  – Koori Centre, University of Sydney (John Hobson and Susan Poetsch)

• Each Australia partner became a mentor for a small groups of participants

• Margaret Florey and Knut Olawsky held preliminary discussions about the workshops with Leanne Hinton
Issues discussed during proposal phase

• Why had the model not been used widely across Australia? Were there factors that might prevent it from succeeding?
  – Lack of access to experienced trainers
  – Challenge of self-teaching from MALLP manual
  – Importance of a support network
  – Lack of experienced local teams to mentor / model the method
  – Complexity of Australian situation with few languages with fluent speakers able to act as Masters

• The concept of 'master' is relative according to context:
  – if a given language has only a few partial speakers remaining, those speakers may be considered 'masters' for the purposes of the program
  – many potential masters were likely to be adult L2 learners

• Could we realistically train trainers in just 3 days?
  In the US context, MALLP trainers have typically been an Apprentice and/or Master in a team before beginning to train other teams
Australian MALLP workshops

• ILS funding agency asked RNLD to increase the proposal to two workshops for some 35 participants ..... and we agreed

• Leanne Hinton and AICLS partners Nancy Steele (Karuk) and Stan Rodriguez (Kumeyaay) agreed to come to Australia as trainers

• Funding was awarded on 24 Dec 2011, just 10 weeks ahead of the workshops

• Due to unforeseen factors (including floods in the NT and a cyclone in WA), we eventually ran 3 workshops involving 41 participants and 26 languages
  – Alice Springs, NT, March 13-15
  – Kununurra, WA, March 19-21
  – Kununurra, WA, June 25-27

• RNLD staff undertook all logistical arrangements

• ILS sent 2 observers to each workshop
## Participants and languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>26 languages</th>
<th>7 states and territories</th>
<th>41 participants</th>
<th>Participants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arrernte</td>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Cristobel Swan, Peter Abbot</td>
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<tr>
<td>Warrumungu</td>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bunny Nabarula, Penny Philips</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nunggubuyu (Wubuy)</td>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
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<td>Leonie Murrungun, Jangu Nundhirribala</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bidjara</td>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>John Waterton</td>
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<tr>
<td>Butchulla</td>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Joy Bonner</td>
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<td>Kalaw Kawaw Ya</td>
<td>Queensland</td>
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<td>Sharon Phineas, Martha Maka</td>
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<td>Kuuku Ya’u</td>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Greg Pasoe, Ben Pasco</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taribelang (Bunda)</td>
<td>Queensland</td>
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<td>Phillip Brown</td>
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<tr>
<td>Awabakal</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
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<td>Jacqui Allen</td>
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<td>Dhanggati</td>
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<td>Caroline Bradshaw</td>
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<td>Gamilaraay</td>
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<td>Donna McLaren</td>
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<td>Gumbaynggirr</td>
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<td>Michael Jarrett</td>
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<td>Ngiyampaa</td>
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<td>Brad Steadman</td>
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<td>Paakantji</td>
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<td>Murray Butcher, Alfred Fazldeen</td>
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<td>Adnyamathanha</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Gillian Bovoro, Ema Bovoro</td>
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<td>Wirangu</td>
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<td>Estelle Miller, Leonard Miller</td>
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<td>Yankunytjatjara</td>
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<td>Boon Wurrung</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
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<td>Fay Stewart-Muir</td>
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<td>Woiwurrung</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
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<td>Miriwoong &amp; Gajirrabeng</td>
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<td>Noongar</td>
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<td>Charmaine Bennell, Denise Smith-Ali</td>
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<td>Nyangumarta</td>
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<td>Wajarri</td>
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<td>Leonie Boddington</td>
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<td>Yinhawangka</td>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Julie Walker</td>
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Complexities

The selection of participants posed a number of further challenges which the AICLS training team and Australian partners needed to address:

• Only 11 of the 26 languages were represented by 2 or more people due to practical limit on numbers. Therefore most participants did not have a potential conversational partner.
• Of those 11 language teams, only 6 included fluent speakers.
• The workshops included at least 7 reclamation languages more appropriate to a Breath of Life workshop.
• There are limited or no written sources for several of the reclamation languages (e.g. Taribelang, Palawa Kani).
• (How) could we combine different scenarios in one workshop?
Activities over 3-day workshop

- MALLP goals and principles
- Planning – survival questions, preparation of topics and resources
- Warm-up and confidence building non-verbal communication activities for early learners
- Immersion sets
- Games
- Materials and resources to support language learning; puppet-making
- Developing new vocabulary
- Master-Apprentice in daily life - building conversational fluency
- Language pods
- "Language line" using timed conversational topics
- MALLP assessment methods
- Forming a team or language pod; continuing the network of support
Non-verbal communication warm-up and confidence-building activities for early learners
Listening and repetition
Immersion sets

Warrumungu (Revitalisation scenario - Master is fluent speaker)

Woiwurrung (Reclamation scenario - Master is adult learner)
Immersion activities & new vocabulary for modern items

Games – counting & numbers
Puppet play
Language line
Modifications and management

• US trainers and Australian mentors met daily to debrief and address any issues we had observed

• In Kununurra, extra sessions were held with reclamation language participants to pre-plan the language needed for activities

• The topic of language pods was made a separate agenda item in both workshops
  – formed in reclamation scenarios which do not have fluent speakers who can act as Masters in a team
  – members come together as a group for a few hours a week, rather than forming one-to-one teams
  – due to the lack of fluent speakers, language pods involve more preparation for the sessions. The learners decide on a particular topic for each session, and search for vocabulary from written sources, or begin to develop lexical items as needed
  – pods are seen as a potential transitional stage towards a more fully fledged MALLP program, which can be created once the pods begin to produce more fluent speakers
Outcomes!

• Positive impact of mixing strong languages, adult learners, and reclamation languages in one workshop

• Allowed participants from reclamation communities to learn methods by working with speakers of stronger languages

• Master-Apprentice immersion exercises challenged and confronted participants from the stronger language groups and triggered realistic self-evaluations of speaking ability – with positive outcomes

• Participants from reclamation communities realised they could build sentences and communicate with preparation time
What's happened since?

- In 2012, RNLD ran 8 workshops building on Master-Apprentice skills through the Documenting and Revitalising Indigenous Languages training program to strengthen skills and confidence, and bring in new participants.
Woorabinda, Qld

• Workshops held April, June, Oct 2012
• Language committee formed to guide language work
• 43 participants aged teens to elders
• No fluent speakers
• 18 reclamation languages

• Trainee John Waterton began learning one of his heritage languages in June 2012
• Immediately began teaching it in the preschool
• Recently began weekly language classes in the school
Adelaide, SA

- Workshop held Sept. 2012
- Co-trained by MALLP trainees Gillian and Ema Bovoro
- 24 participants
- 3 languages (Adnyamathanha, Kaurna, Pitjantjatjara)
- Family-centred language pod
- Planning time necessary in all activities
Lockhart River, Qld

- Workshop held July 2012
- Trainees from MALLP workshop unable to participate
- 6 participants, 2 speakers
- 2 endangered languages (Umpila, Kuuku Ya'u)
- Potential for 2 Master-Apprentice teams
Tennant Creek, NT

- Workshop held May 2012
- Co-trained by MALLP trainee Penny Phillips

- 8 participants, varying fluency
- 4 revitalisation languages — Mudburra, Warrumungu, Warlmanpa, Wambaya
And ...

• In the 11 months since the MALLP workshops, trainees from across Australia have independently drawn on the skills they learned in the diverse activities that they are running.

• Here are some examples ......
Port Hedland, WA

- MALLP trainees Dennis Thomas and Julie Walker from Wangka Maya language centre
- 2 languages (Nyangumarta, Yinhawangka)
- Community information session run by trainees at Wangka Maya with support of WM linguists Jess Mathie and Amanda Hamilton
- Master-Apprentice committee formed
- Discussion of local model for MALLP
  - small pilot with 3 pairs OR grassroots model - unlimited number of pairs
  - concerned to be encouraging and inclusive
  - creation of "do it yourself" info packet
- Currently 4 teams formed – 2 Banyjima & 2 Nyangumarta
- Not yet commenced - seeking funding for program officer to coordinate MALLP
Melbourne, VIC

- MALLP trainees Fay Stewart-Muir and Mandy Nicholson from VACL
- 2 languages (Boon Wurrung, Woiwurrung)
- Strong linguistic support at VACL
- Incorporating MALLP skills into existing activities
- Demonstrating MALLP methods at VACL workshops and retreats
- Fay — playgroup (aged 2-4), classes at Pakenham Secondary College, language sessions for boys in juvenile justice system
- Mandy — "MALLP triggered grammar", she learned to "get off the single words"
- Resourcing Woiwurrung language teaching prep to Year 3 at Thornbury primary school
- Also language work with family at home (Yorta Yorta, Gunditjmara, Woiwurrung)
Ceduna, SA

- MALLP trainees Estelle and Leonard Miller from Far West Languages Centre
- Workshops held August 2012 and February 2013
- 4 participants – 2 speakers, 2 trainees/apprentices
- 2 languages (Wirangu, Gugada)
- 3 stage plan
  i. document languages
  ii. develop Master-Apprentice program to build speakers and pool of teachers
  iii. introduce language classes in school and community
Sydney, NSW

- MALLP trainee Donna McLaren ran 5-day *Teaching Aboriginal Languages* workshop in Oct 2012
- Languages included Dhanggati, Gamilaraay, Dhurga, Gathang, Wiradjuri, Awabakal
- Day dedicated to immersion language methods (MALLP, TPR, ASLA)
- Introduced concepts of Master-Apprentice teams and language pods
Bunbury, WA

- MALLP trainees Charmaine Bennell and Denise Smith-Ali
- Noongar language has no fluent speakers left
- Charmaine has been an adult learner for 15 years
- Weekly language classes at Djidi Djidi Aboriginal School. MALLP triggered a change in language teaching methods. Charmaine felt that because of her own weakness with oral language, she was not allowing students to respond in language lessons. Classroom sessions now focus on talking, not reading or writing - "Just speak it!"
- *Elders group* meets every week. Charmaine is Master for her mum and aunty. Language has been a "healing thing for her mum" and has given her life new direction. "It's her time to shine"
MALLP in the Australian context

- Members of many language "communities" are very dispersed in the highly urbanised nature of contemporary Australia; difficult to have good contact between master and apprentice
- Common feeling that a 1-1 pairing is unusual / uncomfortable
- A majority of participants are more comfortable with a group / family-based approach – whether using Master-Apprentice or language pod model
- A number of the trainees are simultaneously masters and apprentices
- In a number of locations, children (adult second language learners) are teaching their parents their heritage language
Conclusions

• Master-Apprentice will continue to develop slowly
• ILS funding agency was keen to see a national Master-Apprentice organisation (along the lines of AICLS) emerge from the workshops. Trainers felt this needed to be a grassroots initiative, and to date this has not occurred
• We are encouraging the funding agency to be realistic about the time needed for Master-Apprentice teams and language pods to develop
• Further follow-up training is essential, as are networking / catching up sessions
• Puliima conference (August 2013) will provide the first opportunity for participants to come together and discuss progress and challenges
Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the Arrernte and Miriwoong peoples, on whose land the three Master-Apprentice Train-the-trainer workshops were held.

We are deeply grateful for the skilled training provided by the members of the US training team — Leanne Hinton, Nancy Steele and Stan Rodriguez from the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival <www.aicls.org>.

We offer our heartfelt thanks to all of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who travelled from across Australia to take part in the training program, bringing with them expertise, dedication and enthusiasm. We appreciate the input participants provided to this presentation.

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