Creating a digital shell for sharing Indigenous language and culture

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Australian context

• 500 Indigenous languages spoken prior to colonisation
  • 120 still spoken today
  • 13 considered ‘strong’
• Of 120, only 6 can be studied at University level
  • 3 in revival
    • Gamilaraay
    • Kaurna
    • Wiradjuri
  • 3 still used inter-generationally
    • Arrernte
    • Pitjantjatjara
    • Yolŋu Matha
Indigenous languages at Uni

- Difficulty of developing new courses
  - Require ongoing engagement with Aboriginal language authorities
  - Sufficient time and funding to properly negotiate the process
  - Develop appropriate pedagogies, resources, administration
- Lack of resources for many languages
- Low enrolment numbers

Benefits
- Workforce development
- Increase visibility
- Support language advocacy
- Inform language policy
- Cross-disciplinary interest
  - Medicine, environment, education, law, etc
Digital shell project

• Proposal to create a digital shell
  • used by any language group to share knowledge
  • linguists, educators and language authorities work together
  • identify language materials, negotiate access, authority
• Students access web-based resources under authority of language owners as part of tertiary courses
• Arrangements for payment, access, supervision, assessment, teaching, etc would be negotiated separately with Unis
• Seed funding from Australian government
Pilot project – Bininj Kunwok

- Bininj Kunwok – language family from West Arnhem Land, NT
- Actively involved in language resource development
- [www.bininjgunwok.org.au](http://www.bininjgunwok.org.au)
- Social media (Facebook page, Twitter)
- Mailing list of people receiving “Karriborlhme Kunwok - Let's learn words!”
- Kunwinjku materials in the Living Archive of Aboriginal Languages
Living Archive materials

www.cdu.edu.au/laal
Pilot project - Bininj Kunwok

- **Stage 1 Feb – June 2016**
  - Meet with Bininj elders on country to agree on key people and scope of resources
  - Explore online tools or bespoke options for digital shell
- **Stage 2 June – Aug 2016**
  - Populate shell with existing resources from LAAL and BK website
  - Ethics approval and recruit volunteer learners to test site
- **Stage 3 Sept – Nov 2016**
  - Run pilot trial – 4 units (3-4 hours a week), available over 12 weeks
- **Stage 4 Dec – Jan 2017**
  - Data collection and analysis
- **Stage 5 Feb – Mar 2017**
  - Final report and financial acquittal
Stage 1 - establishment

• Establishment of Bininj Kunmayali – ‘People’s Knowledge’ committee
• Work with local Bininj in Darwin to develop resources
• Technical development
  • Decision to use WordPress
    • free, accessible, flexible, customisable, easy to use platform
  • Researched Learning Management Systems
  • Selected LearnPress
    • additional plugins for forums, quizzes, glossaries, etc
Stage 2 - development

- Audit of materials available in Bininj Kunwok
  - videos, books, audio, websites
  - digital and analogue
- Selection of appropriate resources for **4 week** course
- Building the shell
  - Bininj Kunwok language materials in sequenced units
  - Generic information about Aboriginal languages for use by other groups
- Ethics approval
  - Learners agree to give feedback
- Recruitment of volunteer learners via Bininj Kunwok website mailing list
Stage 3 - Run pilot course

- Ran 1 September – 30 November 2016
- 4 units spread over 12 weeks
- Released fortnightly
- 150+ volunteers (non-Indigenous)

Useful phrases

You might find these phrases useful when speaking to Bininj.

- yeledj yiwokdin = speak slowly
- minj bekkan = I can't hear you
- yiyawoyhyimen = say it again
- ngawakwan = I don't know
- nuk = I don't know, I'm not sure
- adju = maybe, I don't know, I'd have to think about it (different meanings depending on context)
- burrkyak = no, nothing
- yikarrme bakk? = Have you got any smokes?
- burrkyak, minj ngakarrme = no, I don't have (any)
Stage 3 - Course content

- Videos of Bininj talking about topics
  - Some subtitled in English, some in Kunwinjku
- Lessons explored details of these topics
  - Skin / kinship systems
  - Grammar and vocabulary
- Audio files for vocabulary, pronunciation
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<td>‘Is it OK to go there?’ ‘Who do I ask?’</td>
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<td>Wurdwurd birriwam ..., Baleh yabok?</td>
<td>Kokok dja ..., Yun yikarrme</td>
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</table>
Stage 3 - Course tasks

Unit 1 – Introductions
• Present text and audio/video in Kunwinjku:
  • My name is ___
  • My skin name is __________
  • I come from _______________
  • I live in ______________
  • I’m learning Kunwinjku.

Unit 2 – Family matters
• Introduce your (immediate) family, e.g.
  • My mother’s skin is Ngalngarrij
  • She calls me djedje / I call her karrang
• Introduce someone else and their family
  • Bininj colleague, or two video options
Stage 3 – Course tasks

- Unit 3 – Coming and going
  - Construct 5 sentences about each picture
- Unit 4 – Karrinahnarren - Free choice
  - Talk about family
  - Read aloud a Kunwinjku story
  - Describe pictures
Stage 3 – additional features

Forums

Kunawok Language course - Forums

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<th>Forum</th>
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<td>Unit 3 Forum</td>
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<td>Unit 4 Forum</td>
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Feedback forum
This forum is an opportunity to interact with other learners and the course facilitators about the course.

Your comments here will form part of the data collected for the research project (as outlined in the Plain Language Statement).

Registered users can post new topics and respond to other posts.

Remember to keep it civil.

Unit 3 Forum
Any comments about unit 3? Tell us what you think.

Unit 4 Forum
Another opportunity to tell us what you think. Where do you think the course should go, if we were to create more units?

Quiz page

Test yourself with these multiple choice quizzes

Unit 1:
- Pronunciation quiz
- Skin systems quiz

Unit 2:
- Family matters quiz
- Skin and family names quiz

Unit 3:
- Grandparents quiz

Unit 4:
- Extended family quiz

Linguistic terms

Here you will find definitions and explanations of some of the more technical terms:

- adjective
- adverb
- affix
- alveolar ridge
- consonant
- digraph
- dual
- final stop
- inclusive/uninclusive
- melody
- morphology
- stem
- stem class
- subject
- morphology
- part of speech
- phonology
- plural
- possessive
- prefix
- preposition
- prosodic profile
- prosody
- reflex
- root
- singular
- stop
- subject
- suffix
- tense
- transitivity
- verb
- verb
- voice
- word order
Stage 4 - data collection

- Survey emailed to all participants at close of pilot course
- Eliciting feedback about all aspects of course
- Some participants will be asked to do follow-up interviews
- Analysis and report due to funding body April 2017
# Statistics

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<tr>
<td>Logged in</td>
<td>113</td>
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<tr>
<td>Started</td>
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<td>38%</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10%</td>
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</table>
Location (n=113)
- Local: 29%
- Connected: 42%
- Academic: 29%

Classification (n=113)
- Local: 29%
- Connected: 42%
- Academic: 29%
Language Knowledge

Prior knowledge of Bininj Kunwok

- No BK: 42%
- Some BK: 58%

Bar chart showing:
- No L2: 19
- Other Indig lang: 36
- Other non-Indig lang: 72
Feedback from participants

- Preliminary findings
  - 56 survey responses
  - Overall rating of 4/5
  - Most popular components
    - Videos of people speaking
    - Reading ‘books’
    - Connections with community
  - Most difficult aspects
    - Finding time
    - Technical aspects
  - Appreciated opportunity to learn
**Challenges - technical**

- Limitations of free WordPress site
  - Plugins don’t play well together
  - Forces certain pedagogical decisions
  - Formats for videos stored in CDU Library
- Learning Management System plugin
  - Difficulty setting up lessons
  - Complicated login system
  - No tracking of participants
  - Add-ons didn’t work (quizzes, profiles)
  - Update lost all lesson links
- Updated version of LMS works better
Challenges – linguistics / admin

- Complexity of language
  - Polysynthetic
  - Very complex verb phrases
  - Noun class system
- Large number of learners
  - Vast array of experience
  - Management of forum
  - Assessing activity submissions
- Time frame
- Bininj ownership

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<th>ENGLISH</th>
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Next steps

• Expand generic information about Australian languages
  • Phonology, ergativity, kinship systems, etc
• Explore opportunities for further development
  • Interest in extending to full semester course in Bininj Kunwok
  • Interest from different language communities
  • Incorporate some ‘face-to-face’ activities
• Negotiations with universities
  • Incorporate into existing courses
  • Accreditation and assessment issues
Acknowledgments

• Andy Peart
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Language Project Committee
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Mah, bonj

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