

The Master-Apprentice Language Learning Program Down Under: Experience and Adaptation in an Australian Context

Knut J. Olawsky

*Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language and Culture Centre,
Kununurra (Western Australia)*

The Master-Apprentice Language Learning Program (MALLP or MAP; cf. Hinton 2001) has found worldwide attention in recent years and has been attested as a valuable instrument in language revitalisation far beyond the borders of North America. In 2009, a pilot project based on this model started for the Miriwoong language in North-western Australia, and has since developed into a successful and expanding strategy which could ultimately lead to a wider application on a nationwide scale. This article describes the various adaptive measures used to reflect the specific needs of the local language community and suggests that similar techniques will be useful for application in other communities. An adaptation of the MAP model in Australia may consider factors such as gender, kinship and other aspects of traditional cultural protocol, as well as some other deviations from the original model. An addition to the program which has proven useful for Miriwoong is the introduction of assessment strategies. These do not only assist in reflecting strengths and weaknesses in participants but can be essential as a tool for reporting requirements. Based on the positive outcomes of the MAP approach for the Miriwoong community, including the adjustments made, the model is recommended for application on a larger scale for other parts of Australia and perhaps beyond.

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE MALLP MODEL.¹ The majority of the languages of the world are in a struggle for survival as language endangerment and extinction are becoming seemingly unavoidable phenomena on a global scale (cf. Crystal 2002). In the context of language revitalisation models (cf. Grenoble & Whaley 2006 or Hinton & Hale 2001 for an overview of different models and strategies) an increasing awareness has developed regarding the restoration of adult-to-adult transmission, particularly in languages which face possible extinction within a foreseeable number of years. Many critically endangered languages rely on only a small number of elderly speakers who are not directly involved in bringing up young children; in this context, where the intergenerational transfer is disrupted and children are not exposed to a natural first language

¹ The author would like to acknowledge the Miriwoong people, past and present, who have been involved in this project and whose commitment has made it possible to share the outcomes of this project. The support of the MG Ord Enhancement Scheme, without which we would not have been able to run this project, is acknowledged with gratitude. Finally, I would like to express my deepest respect for the co-contributors and partners of this venture, including Frances Kofod (MDWg), and our trainers Crystal Richardson, L.Frank Manriquez, Leanne Hinton, Nancy Steele, and Stan Rodriguez (AICLS), as well as Margaret Florey (RNLD) for her support.

acquisition process, adult-to-adult transmission becomes the only way of ensuring language survival.

The Master-Apprentice Language Learning Program (MALLP, or MAP as used in the following), featured in Hinton (2001; 2002), has become a widely known language revitalisation strategy. It involves adult learners and has made some headlines in recent years, based on a growing interest within endangered language communities and its visible success in a number of cases. The model was developed by Californian Indians in response to the critical state of Indigenous Native American languages. First implemented in 1992, the model is aimed at developing new speakers of endangered languages where the natural process of language transfer has been disrupted.

The founding organisation, Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival (AICLS), has trained more than a hundred MAP teams originating from 40 different languages in California alone, and many more teams far beyond state and national boundaries. The principle is simple: MAP is based on language immersion between a “Master” and an “Apprentice”. The master usually is a fluent speaker of the language, while the apprentice may start at varying levels of language proficiency; some learners may have a passive knowledge of the language, others may have some degree of fluency, whereas yet others start from the very beginning, with minimal previous knowledge. Numerous references in Hinton (2002) indicate that language immersion works best where the teams spend a minimum of 10 hours weekly together (ideally up to 20 hours per week; cf. Hinton (2002: 10; 22; 67). Conversation in this context is strictly based on the exclusive use of the traditional language, supported by hand signs and gestures where necessary, while the rule “Leave English behind” (or whatever the dominant language may be) prevails. Training programs supporting this practice offer a range of language-related activities designed to encourage traditional language immersion in conversation. As topics focus on everyday life situations and activities, in many cases, adult apprentices will transfer their newly acquired language skills to younger learners. This may occur in formal contexts through language teaching programs, or informally in the family or community.

Depending on the state and complexity of a language, adult learners will rarely acquire it to the same level of proficiency and fluency as younger learners. The adoption of new vocabulary related to modern world influences, and the simplification of complex grammatical features, are side effects which are not unlikely to occur. As a result, language change within as little as a single generation may be expected.

The success of this model may be based on its simplicity and naturalness in bringing back traditional languages to the home. As such, training workshops offer an important opportunity in motivating and encouraging participants to commit to the revitalisation of their languages on a small but efficient scale.

2. MALLP IN AUSTRALIA. The strategy of language transfer between older and younger members of a language community can be deemed a phenomenon which occurs naturally in a variety of contexts around the globe. This article focuses on one chosen context where the MAP model is put to practice as a planned activity in a structured language revitalisation program. While one-on-one immersion may occur elsewhere as a natural language transfer method, a network of different teams would preferably collaborate in a coordinated approach, entailing some involvement of an organised structure, such as an NGO,

community council, or language centre to assist with the administration of such a program. Administration also becomes necessary where program participants receive compensation for their efforts - which is standard practice in facilitating MAP projects.

In Australia, there are only two known projects within the parameters of the above characterisation. The first instance was the Bandjalang Master-Apprentice program at Tabulum (New South Wales) - a pilot project which began in 2008 as a “proof of concept” research project, conducted by a student in the Master of Indigenous Languages Education (cf. Laurie 2009). According to personal communication with John Hobson (University of Sydney), the project suffered from lack of training and structured support of participants and thus was abandoned after a few months. The other example is the MAP for the Miriwoong language of the East Kimberley region (Western Australia) which is described in this article.

3. THE MAP PROJECT FOR MIRIWOONG.²

3.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT. Miriwoong is a non-Pama-Nyungan language and classified as a member of the Jarrakan family. Its speaker area includes the area around the township of Kununurra in the East Kimberley region of Western Australia. Miriwoong traditional lands stretch up to about 100 kilometres eastward across the border into the Northern Territory, and for another 20-30 kilometres beyond the Ord River towards the west of Kununurra. The northern parts of the former landmass now covered by Lake Argyle are also part of Miriwoong territory.

While a more detailed synopsis of the background situation for Miriwoong can be found elsewhere (Olawsky 2010a), the status of the language can be classified as “critically endangered”. According to Fishman’s (1991) Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale for Threatened Languages, Miriwoong would rank somewhere between stage 7 and 8. Languages at stage 8 of this scale are close to extinction, having only a few remaining users who are not only advanced in age but also live in relative isolation, such as in nursing homes. Stage 7 describes languages where those older speakers of the language are still largely socially integrated, and therefore keep contributing to language transfer up to a certain degree. The risk at Stage 7 is that those speakers do not represent a substitute for language transfer occurring in families with young children on a daily basis.

There are less than 20 fluent speakers of Miriwoong left, most of whom are frail and elderly, and they are passing on at an alarming rate. There are only a handful of moderately fluent speakers in the 40–60 age group, but Miriwoong is not their primary language and they do not have comprehensive grammatical proficiency. While many Miriwoong people have a passive understanding of a range of words, they are not in a position to use language structures in context or interact fully in Miriwoong with each other. The knowledge of Miriwoong in children is limited to those words borrowed by the local variety of Kriol. Most if not all languages traditionally spoken in the Kimberley region are gradually being replaced by the use of Kimberley Kriol. Though Kriol still lacks wider public recognition,

²Gajirrabeng is a language closely related to Miriwoong and was initially part of the program, with the last remaining fluent speaker functioning as a master. Unfortunately, the project was reduced to a Miriwoong only activity following the loss of this speaker.

it has come to dominate as a lingua franca over traditional Aboriginal languages. Many families have also shifted to using Aboriginal English as their first language. While the Kriol variety spoken in Kununurra contains some Miriwoong vocabulary, the impact of its use on Miriwoong has been devastating.

The fact that Miriwoong can be described as a town-based community since the early 1960s, when the township was founded, entails challenges of various kinds. The influence of Western culture and a subsequent clash of values have impacted severely the sense of identity among many indigenous people. Socio-economic disadvantage, unemployment, and other factors have resulted in a crisis of widespread substance abuse and depression, which has itself triggered a series of government initiatives aimed at improving people's lives, but fundamentally ignoring the indispensable link between language and identity.

The first revitalisation efforts go back to the early 1970s, when a group of Miriwoong elders formed the Mirima Council Aboriginal Corporation and started a number of initiatives which resulted in the opening of a language centre in 1991. Today, the Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language and Culture Centre (MDWg in the following) employs a full-time linguist, a part-time linguist, five indigenous language workers, as well as support staff. MDWg manages a range of activities related to language documentation and revitalisation. Documentation efforts focus on the revision of a draft dictionary as well as the production of a comprehensive grammar, expected to be completed by 2015. As of mid 2012, the language centre coordinates a number of structured weekly language classes aimed at different age and target groups: small children (2-5 years old), male and female teenagers, indigenous rangers, and the wider public. There is a demand for additional classes from both the indigenous and the non-indigenous community. These classes focus on literacy and oracy skills over the long term, but suffer from a high fluctuation of participants as well as behavioural issues. An effective but highly time and cost intensive program is a project which connects elders and young adults on extended bush trips and thereby creates a context of cultural and - partial - linguistic immersion through the transfer of traditional activities. MDWg also employs a strategy branded as "public language use", described in greater detail in Olawsky (2010b). It involves activities such as the development of interpretive and bilingual signage, the delivery of welcome speeches in public, language and culture training, media presence, and joint projects. It is part of an approach to reinforce the recognition of traditional languages in public, and to subsequently strengthen the linguistic identity of Miriwoong people.

A few notes on the grammar of Miriwoong are in order as to illustrate the enormous effort language learners need to make in order to achieve a reasonable level of fluency. While Miriwoong phonology and syntax largely follow common patterns found as areal features in other languages (seemingly easy to master even by novices), its verbal morphology exhibits a level of complexity hardly found elsewhere. Miriwoong verbal phrases typically occur as a verb complex, i.e. are composed of a coverb (carrying the semantic content of a specific action or process, e.g. swim, sleep, run, hear) followed by a verb (which holds most grammatical information such as person, tense, aspect, mode). The number of verbs in Miriwoong is rather limited (about 20), each of which has a "broad" or general semantic core such as 'be/stay', 'go/come', 'burn', or 'do/say'. While coverbs do not undergo any major process of inflection, the marking of the various grammatical categories on the verb is subject to fusion, to an extent that virtually all 1,600 different verb forms can be regarded

as irregular, without major visible inflectional patterns. This level of complexity has resulted in younger or partial speakers practically not using any verb forms at all. It will, therefore, become clearer further below, in what way the knowledge of Miriwoong verbs represents purely functional or grammatical knowledge rather than lexical proficiency.

The introduction of the MAP in the above context is part of an overall revitalisation plan for Miriwoong, and while the MAP is understood to be a crucial component in this, it is not regarded as a standalone strategy. Each method has its own advantages and challenges and the MAP at MDWg is no exception.

3.2 MAP AT MDWG STAGE 1. The MAP at MDWg was first introduced in 2009 as part of the *Action Plan for Miriwoong Language Survival*, an initiative to boost the Miriwoong language revitalisation program. It followed extensive consultations with the MG Ord Enhancement Scheme (OES), a partnership between the *Yawoorroong Miriwoong Gajerrong Yirrgab Noong Dawang Aboriginal Corporation* (MG Corporation, the organisation resulting from a successful native title claim of the Miriwoong and Gajirrabeng people) and the Western Australian State Government. The priority of OES is to address the adverse social and economic impacts that the Ord Stage 1 irrigation and agricultural development have had on Miriwoong peoples' lives, and to fund programs which aim at improving their living conditions, including the sectors of education, employment, health and housing. The idea to implement the MAP model for Miriwoong resulted from conversations with Californian Indians which the author had at a convention in 2008.³ It seemed like an obvious step for MDWg to approach OES with an application to support the MAP, for a period of initially 3 years, subject to annual progress reports.

The *Action Plan*, resulting from conversations with OES, incorporated the MAP as a three-generational project to have elders provide the main input to partial speakers, who in turn would pass on their newly acquired knowledge as part of a structured, classroom-based teaching program. Due to the particular focus of OES's goals and government strategies at the time, the creation of employment positions for indigenous people played a major role in applying for funding. As a result, all participants were engaged as part-time employees by MDWg, with entitlements to a salary and benefits.

The initial work schedule described the roles of three groups involved in the project, each of which was associated to certain outcomes, namely, a) measurable progress in the area of language documentation by linguists, b) the acquisition of predefined grammatical structures and vocabulary by apprentices, and c) the progress in younger learners through attendance in regular language classes. Performance criteria also included outcomes achieved indirectly through various activities of the *Action Plan* and were structured as follows:

- Number of hours spent on documentation, language study (linguists/masters)
- Number of pages of grammatical description produced (linguists)
- Number of hours of recordings (linguists/masters)

³ InField - Institute on Field Linguistics and Language Documentation, University of California, Santa Barbara, 23.06 - 03.07.2008.

- Apprentices: number of hours spent with masters
- Apprentices: number of language lessons taught
- Number of participants in language classes
- Number of community members actively involved in projects
- Number of indigenous community members indirectly involved in/reached by projects
- Number of cultural activities supported
- Number of public events supported

The documentation component of the *Action Plan* was initially supported by the Maintenance of Indigenous Languages and Records (MILR) program of the Federal Australian Government, but split off as a separate activity in the second year. The difficulty with the above array of outcome measures was that these encompassed too many different factors, far beyond just measuring the progress of apprentices as part of the MAP. However, where reporting requirements are imposed as part of a predefined scheme, the receiving organisation would obviously comply with the given procedures and performance indicators.

The employment contracts between MDWg and MAP participants outlined a description of the MAP model, an explanation of the employee's role as master or apprentice, and an account of benefits and obligations. The obligations listed in the agreement included regular one-on-one times between master and apprentice, as well as compulsory participation in training workshops and joined weekly meetings. Benefits entailed a fixed weekly salary for 10 hours, regardless the actual time spent. A special condition was included which highlighted the fact that the activity was to be conducted in good faith, without any exercise of control over working hours. The description of the MAP model included a set of simple instructions designed to assist with conducting sessions between master and apprentice:

- Avoid the use of any languages other than Miriwoong (Gajirrabeng) at all cost during team hours.
- Errors and mistakes can be made; this is better than using English or Kriol.
- Try to use full sentences.
- The more time team partners spend together, the more language use will improve.
- Involving external consultants or other language speakers on occasions is helpful and MDWg can compensate additional consultants where this is agreed upon beforehand.
- Cultural activities can also help in improving language skills and MDWg supports such activities through its routine operations.
- Some sessions can be recorded; MDWg can provide recording equipment.

Some participants were employed at 5 hours/week due to time and availability constraints. Initially the program started with five Miriwoong teams and one Gajirrabeng team (the latter working with two apprentices as only one master was available), bringing the initial group size up to 13.

The selection of project participants was based on consent between community elders, within the framework of the model and some input from linguists. Masters had to be fluent

speakers of the language, though some concessions were made in regard to this, as virtually no perfectly fluent male speakers were available. Since it would have been inappropriate to expose senior speakers of Miriwoong to an assessment process, fluency in this context was defined as a relative criterion based on a combination of self-evaluation, judgement by other senior speakers, and linguists' experience in working with the speakers. During several planning meetings, fluent (or at least semi-fluent) speakers were gradually identified informally by the community. Linguists had some input, commenting on language proficiency observed in previous recordings made with most speakers. To be regarded as fluent, speakers had to be able to communicate in a number of different domains, hold monologues without major pausing, and effortlessly engage in conversation with others while dominating Miriwoong grammar – evident through the active knowledge of verb forms which were briefly characterised in section 3.1. The selection of apprentices largely followed their availability and readiness to join the program, as well as the condition to have at least some passive knowledge of Miriwoong. Kinship also was a relevant factor for these decisions as only teams with a no-avoidance relationship could be formed.⁴

The teams were initially composed of one master and one apprentice, except for the Gajirrabeng team which had two apprentices. This team was the only one which was not gender-homogeneous, as it included a male apprentice working with a female master. In most cases, master and apprentice were members of the same family group. Some of the apprentices were also part-time language workers at MDWg and thus had additional exposure to traditional language through their daily work routine. The age range among apprentices was mid/late twenties to late forties. The masters had varying levels of fluency of the language but would complement each other during the weekly gatherings at the language centre.

Participants of the third generation (young learners) were chosen by default, being participants of regular language classes organised with two local school programs for Indigenous students.

The first 12 months of the MAP at MDWg (between mid 2009 and mid 2010) can be characterised as a pilot stage, with participants taking time to adapt the nature of the approach and some experimentation in regard to its structure and early evaluations of progress.

The first training workshop with representatives from AICLS took place at the very beginning of the project in August 2009, and was well received by those who participated (which, however, did not include all team members). Challenges started to evolve when three apprentices became unavailable for various reasons and dropped out. However, in terms of the overall reportable outcome, the situation was not as grim as it would seem. The documentation efforts by linguists were well on track: the training of participants had been conducted, the foundation to familiarize participants with the principles of the project had been laid, and the creation of employment positions had been successful. However, the language learning outcomes were negligible, as most participants found it difficult to implement a daily routine amidst an array of distractions during designated immersion times. While the structured weekly meetings went ahead regularly as “Miriwoong Only”

⁴ Miriwoong culture follows a strict hierarchy of respect levels between different family members; for instance, a man and his mother-in-law are to avoid any direct contact with each other.

immersion sessions, teams failed to spend time together in language immersion in their own time. Language classes (the third leg of the multigenerational approach) also suffered due to severe truancy issues for weekly language classes.

In terms of funds spent and outcomes achieved, the first stage of the MAP seemed painful and unsatisfactory, and it did not come as a surprise when the funding for the activity was discontinued in July 2010.

3.3 MAP AT MDWG STAGE 2. Before progressing to a second stage (which is still ongoing), there was time for evaluation and development of ideas for restructuring the project. Following the advice of elders, some participants were replaced, and teams were re-assigned to match the preferences of masters and apprentices. A second training workshop was organised, again with the support of AICLS, during which the method was reinforced and new participants were trained. Very importantly, the employment agreements were modified to reflect payments based on effort and actual time spent (with an upper limit of hours).

Following the implementation and compliance recommendations by AICLS, apprentices now had to complete a fortnightly log sheet describing the content of sessions conducted with their masters. Failure to submit a log sheet resulted in loss of entitlements for both team partners, which led to masters encouraging their apprentices to keep thorough records. As a result of this measure, the number of hours spent in immersion increased, though most teams would stay below the upper limit of payable hours.

As a strategy to monitor the progress made by teams, an assessment method was developed which evaluates the apprentice's language proficiency at different points in time during the life of the project. A survey with the aim of assessing the participants' opinion about the project and inviting ideas for improvement was also prepared and conducted later in 2011 (cf. sections 3.4 and 3.5 below).

The new teams were assembled in December 2010, and reshuffled repeatedly in early 2011, following the passing away of two masters. Since then, the teams have been relatively stable, with even some recent additions to the teams. The three-generational approach of the project was set to be maintained at a planning meeting in November 2011, where the need to bring traditional language back to the homes was re-emphasised. Participants recognised the crucial role of using language in daily-life contexts in addition to organised activities at the language centre. The need for a weekly joined session of all teams at MDWg was prioritised, and additional funding was requested to provide lunch for these meetings, as an incentive to join. Regular follow-up training workshops were also named as an important component of the project.

During the planning meeting, MAP participants came up with a number of additions to the previous form of the program, some of which have since been implemented:

- the provision of a diary to all apprentices, to help them record and remember new words
- the acquisition of simple, user-friendly recording devices for use in the one-on-one sessions
- the introduction of "survival phrases", i.e. learning how to ask questions in Miriwoong in order to stay immersed in the language (e.g. "How do you say ...?" or "Talk slowly!")

- the occasional involvement of additional consultants who are fluent in the language but not part of the MAP due to their frail state
- the making available of a quiet area of the language centre after hours, so that teams can work in an undisturbed environment when this is not possible at home
- the organising of trips in family groups which would be subject to similar restrictions for exclusive language use without slipping into English or Kriol.

Further proposals, which were implemented during the course of events, included a readiness for greater team flexibility. Firstly, this would allow participants of different genders to work as a MAP team, as long as this did not conflict with any avoidance relationships. Secondly, team members would have the option to temporarily change their team partner if the original partner became unavailable. The expansion of teams to include more than one apprentice per master is another modification which was implemented. This is especially useful where there are more potential learners than masters. Instruction/immersion may occur in a small group, or alternatively in alternate schedules in a one-on-one context.

By May 2012, the MAP at MDWg had 15 participants working in seven teams - one male master was working with two male apprentices instead of one. In one instance, a male apprentice would work with a female master (mother and son), which in terms of cultural protocol is an acceptable constellation. Overall, there were now 6 male and 9 female participants involved and the visible progress in other learners started to gain greater appeal in the community.

While the one-on-one sessions of masters and apprentices are not monitored, participants describe a typical session mainly as a dedicated time of socialising using Miriwoong. Sessions usually begin by the apprentice prompting their master to “tell a story” - which could cover any topic from the past or present; masters seem to have no difficulties in finding things to talk about. Some apprentices record their masters and then play back the recording sentence by sentence, asking questions and conversing with the master. The master encourages the apprentice to repeat sentences in full. There are differences between the individual teams, but all report that they find it difficult to stay immersed in the language. Most apprentices feel the need to remind their masters to slow down when talking. There also is a trend not to employ the various games, immersion tools and activities suggested in the training materials as participants prefer “natural” immersion, talking about everyday topics or past events. Due to an array of distractions in the homes, some teams choose to spend their immersion sessions outside, by a river or under a shady tree.

3.4 MEASURING LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY IN THE LOCAL CONTEXT: ASSESSMENT 1. Statistic data, such as the number of participants, number of language classes, or number of hours spent in immersion sessions, are a somewhat inadequate way of evaluating the progress of language learning. While established formal methods of assessing language proficiency exist, most of these work only to some extent with the MAP for Miriwoong. One factor which restricts the methods of assessment is that the model is based on oracy rather than literacy; the acquisition of reading or writing skills in the language is not a primary goal, and therefore creates a framework within which testing should focus on the oral skills of language comprehension and production. The assessment method intro-

duced at MDWg was based on these two abilities, at different levels of difficulty. None of the tasks involved reading or writing as a required skill. The assessments were conducted in interview form and recorded with the apprentice and linguist present. In order to grade answers, the linguists would evaluate the learner's response following the interview, and determine a score on a scale between 0 and 10 for each task.

It is obvious that neither the content of tasks, nor the grading of answers, is completely standardised or objective, but partly based on assumptions made by linguists. However, the two linguists involved in developing the assessment had a longstanding background with the language community; one had been working with Miriwoong speakers for almost 40 years, the other for 7 years. Thus, any assumptions made were based on a very "educated guess".

3.4.1. LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION. For language comprehension, two levels of difficulty were applied.⁵

a) Understanding sentences (difficulty level 2): for this task, short sentences with a low to medium level of grammatical complexity were extracted from existing recordings of senior, fluent speakers of Miriwoong. These sentences were played back to the apprentice who was asked to explain their meaning in his/her preferred language (Kriol or Aboriginal English). Repeated playback was permissible where requested. The answer was evaluated later and rated as correct (1 point), partly correct (0.5 points), or incorrect (0 points). The overall score for this task was based on the relative number of points for the total.

b) Understanding stories (difficulty level 3): here, the apprentice would listen to a short (1-2 minute) narrative played back from a previous recording. Repeated playback was permissible where requested. Based on how much of the narrative's content the apprentice was able to render, the answer was rated on a scale between 0 and 10. For example, where the participant understood only a few single words (but would not pass the test entirely), a rating of 0.5 to 1 would be applied. Understanding the general story line would result in a rating of ca. 5; a rating of 10 would require perfect comprehension of a sentence after sentence playback.

3.4.2. LANGUAGE PRODUCTION. This area was assessed on three different levels, since active language use does not normally occur in the natural environment of participants.

a) Producing single words from given semantic fields (difficulty level 1): in this section of the assessment, the apprentice was prompted to produce the largest possible number of members within a semantic field, such as names of birds, fish,

⁵Linguists did not see a need to assess the apprentice's ability to understand single words (difficulty level 1) in Miriwoong. This was feasible for the first few apprentices tested, as sufficiently strong passive knowledge was safe to assume. In future assessments, though, an assessment task at this level would be introduced as some of the participants who later joined arguably lacked such passive knowledge.

and kin terms. The semantic fields were from widely known areas of the natural environment. For each field, linguists made a list of words which were assumed as core vocabulary for most speakers. Based on the number of words for each field, a percentage was calculated and translated into a score between 0 and 10.

b) Producing any utterances composed of more than one word (difficulty level 2): in this task, the participant was given the liberty of producing any short phrases that were longer than a single word. For instance, this could be a simple sentence (*Looloo ginayin* - 'He is sitting'), a short command (*Bib boowoonggoo!* - 'Pick it up!'), or a common greeting (*Thena ngera?* - 'What's up?'). The answers were rated according to the number of sentences and the complexity of sentences produced.

c) Translating a series of given sentences from the preferred language into Miriwoong (difficulty level 3): for this task, apprentices were asked to translate a given number of simple sentences from their preferred language into Miriwoong. While all sentences would be considered very simple in Kriol or English, they differed from each other in person, tense, and mode, all of which require entirely different verb forms in Miriwoong, and can be considered a complex grammatical task (e.g. 'he is going' would be *girayin*, 'she is going' *nyindanyan*, etc.). Rating was applied based on the percentage of correct or partially correct answers.

Comprehension and production tasks were presented in random order (but in identical order for all participants).

Four apprentices (A-D) were assessed in February 2011, two in November 2011 (E, F), and two in January 2012 (G, H). This was based on the different starting dates of apprentices. Scores ranked on a scale between 0 (lowest) and 10 (highest). In this article, only the results of the first three apprentices are compared as one apprentice has since left the program and for the other four, the second assessment is still to be conducted. For the sake of providing a more complete picture, the results of Assessment 1 are summarised below.

3.4.3 OUTCOMES OF ASSESSMENT 1. Not surprisingly, the results of the assessments ranked in the order of relative difficulty, with language production being the most challenging task. One exception was the production of single words, a task which most apprentices mastered slightly better than the comprehension of a narrative. The results in Table 1 (below) compare the scores for each type and difficulty level by providing the average results for Apprentices B, C, D (who were later also tested in Assessment 2) as well as for all participants (including those who still have to undergo the second assessment). The first group scored slightly better in comprehension than the overall group, which illustrates the varying levels of language proficiency in different apprentices.

Apprentice / Score	Average (Apprentices B, C, D only)	Average (all apprentices)
I. Understanding sentences	6.7	5.7
II. Understanding texts	6.0	4.1
III. Vocabulary (overall)	6.0	4.6
IV. Produce longer utterances (free)	1.7	1.9
IV. Produce sentences (translate)	0.5	0.6
Average score (total score by 5 tasks)	4.2	3.4

TABLE 1: Average scores per assessment type

Participants scored best in understanding single sentences even though most of these involved grammatical structures of a medium to difficult level. Specifically, most sentences contained verbs marked in varying degrees for person, tense, and aspect, and it was encouraging to see that at least some of these forms were understood correctly even by entry-level apprentices. Even the comprehension of narratives seemed a task most participants were fairly confident with, which reflects a relatively solid passive knowledge of the language. Apart from confirming the hypothesis by linguists that this would be the case, it also encouraged participants in seeing where their own strengths lay.

In language production, the elicitation of single words from certain semantic fields also seemed a manageable task for most. It demonstrates to what extent apprentices have a dormant or passive base vocabulary which can be stimulated in a test situation. Perhaps one reason for the (unexpectedly) high score in this area is the fact that the Kununurra variety of Kriol (which is the first language for most apprentices) contains a relatively large proportion of Miriwoong words, including some of those represented by the semantic fields tested here (notably kin terms). As can be seen in Table 2 below, the production of single words from lexical categories such as nouns or coverbs was relatively strong. In contrast, apprentices struggled with producing words from functional word classes, such as verbs or interrogatives, which attests the weakness of grammatical proficiency in participants.

Apprentice / Score	Average (Apprentices B, C, D)	Average (all apprentices)
a) Kin terms	7.7	6.8
b) Birds	6.8	5.0
c) Fish	7.2	5.1
d) Coverbs	5.3	4.6
e) Verbs	1.3	1.6
f) Question words	2.8	2.3

TABLE 2: Vocabulary production in Assessment 1

The challenge in producing functional word classes in task 3 confirms the trend observed in Table 1, which reflects significantly weaker outcomes in language production: while the free formation of any utterance longer than a single word already proved challenging, the translation of sentences requiring more complex verb forms was close to zero.

Overall, the first assessment confirmed what the linguists had expected, namely that apprentices have a strong passive knowledge and therefore are in an excellent position to improve their language knowledge by stimulating the active use of this “dormant” language data. Consequently, if masters keep stimulating those structures by triggering an active response from their apprentices, including the use of verbs and other grammatical structures, this should lead to a visible improvement in language learners in those areas. Based on the outcomes of Assessment 1, linguists and program participants then decided to reinforce the progress in these areas by including some structured learning (especially of verb forms) during the joined weekly sessions, in order to ensure the most relevant forms would be acquired.

3.5 EVALUATION/QUESTIONNAIRE. In September/October 2011 (8 months after the revision of the program structure), apprentices were asked to complete a questionnaire which was designed as an evaluation of the program from the apprentice’s point of view. The questionnaire included 112 statements which participants were asked to rate by assigning points expressing agreement or disagreement. For example, the statement “I am happy with the way this project is running” could be rated with a maximum of 5 points (“Yes, strongly agree”) down to 1 point (“No, I strongly disagree”), including the option of “Don’t know”. An example section with unrelated statements such as “I like cheese” and “The TV program is good” was included on a practice sheet to ensure participants were familiar with the completion of the questionnaire.

The statements were structured according to different categories such as self-evaluation and program structure (explained in detail below), but were presented in random order. Many statements were repetitive in content with different phrasing, including negative statements or opposites (example: “I think that I can understand most of what my master says in language” vs. “My master uses a lot of words that I cannot understand”). This was done to ensure the accuracy of responses.

The different categories of evaluation covered three main areas:

A. Personal self-evaluation, which included the participants’ judgment on their own understanding and production of the language (further classified in terms of proficiency with single words, phrases, sentences, and stories), on their progress made, and on their commitment.

B. The participants’ opinion about the project structure, which included a general perception of the various components of the project (individual vs. joined meetings, training workshops, assessments and team constellations), comments on the adequacy of compensation, and different ways of learning and transfer which also invited an assessment of language learning methods other than MAP.

C. A detailed team evaluation of the specific context in which each team worked, including frequency, time, length, content, and success of meetings of the apprentice with their master. An opinion was also requested in regard to the weekly joined sessions and their content.

At the end of the questionnaire, some space was left for additional comments and suggestions. The survey was conducted anonymously; the five participants who completed the survey were labelled as A/B/C/D/E. In the following, the results for each area are summarised.

3.5.1 PERSONAL SELF-EVALUATION (A).

A1. Understanding

All participants tended to think that their comprehension skills were good, including single words, sentences and stories, though they acknowledged there are words which they did not understand.

A2. Production

All participants stated they found it relatively easy to produce single words or short phrases but tended to struggle with producing full sentences. Yet most participants would attempt using sentences when talking to children in the traditional language. None were confident with telling a story in language.

A3. Progress

There was a strong sense of having made some progress since participants joined the program, creating a growing level of confidence. Most participants felt that they had made progress in using full sentences. All found it difficult to rank themselves in comparison to others. All participants indicated they would like to use an audio recorder in their sessions.

A4. Commitment

All participants joined the program out of the desire to improve their language skills. However, the level of commitment participants were able or prepared to invest varied: meeting every day would pose a problem for most; meeting once or twice a week would be preferable. While lack of time did not appear to be the crucial issue, the readiness to invest more time depended on other factors. Logistics such as transport were not listed as a major issue.

3.5.2 PROJECT STRUCTURE (B).

B1. General perception

All participants were happy with the usefulness and structure of the program but some stated they would like to implement changes and be involved in restructuring; however, this was not specified in detail and required conversations with individuals. It appeared that the one-on-one structure of the model was one issue that would require investigation as this was not practiced by all teams. For all participants, this project was only one out of several methods of learning the language. Assessments were considered a useful element

of the project by all. Training was another important component of the project: all who had attended a workshop with external trainers considered it useful and requested additional training workshops. Participants were generally happy with their master and no changes were required.

B2. Payments

The financial compensation participants were paid for their engagement was considered relevant and made a difference in their lives but it was not the motivating factor for joining the project. Three out of five apprentices indicated they would continue even without being paid. The level of payment was generally considered adequate. Participants struggled with the way their effort was recorded as they found it difficult to keep log sheets.

B3. Ways of learning and transfer

Most participants (4 out of 5) found it helpful to see words in writing. Listening to recordings was singled out as a strategy all found important. All but one stated they would also like to join a formal, traditional style language class; a family-based learning approach which includes learning as a group was also on the wish list. There was slightly conflicting information in regard to language transfer to children: most participants felt that they engage in language transfer at home, yet they indicated that English or Kriol had a major influence. Progress in language learning which apprentices made in their MAP sessions was generally transferred on to younger learners.

3.5.3 TEAM EVALUATION (C).

C1. Sessions with the master

Afternoons appeared to be the best time for MAP sessions; some participants would also consider evenings or weekends, or even mornings. The frequency of sessions as reported varied from team to team: daily sessions appeared out of the question for all teams and two even indicated that sometimes the weekly joined session at the Language Centre were the only time they saw their master; however, others stated that they regularly met on certain days of the week. The length of those sessions varied, with two out of five participants indicating a session length of 2 hours or more. Participants did not always plan their sessions but had no difficulty in finding topics to talk about during the sessions. All found it difficult to stay immersed in the language as they slipped into English or Kriol. Nevertheless all described the one-on-one sessions as successful. Some participants mentioned distractions during their sessions, but this did not appear to pose a major issue. Most indicated that their master demonstrated patience towards them.

C2. Weekly sessions

All described the weekly joined sessions at the language centre as very helpful, with four out of five not recommending any changes. They praised the fact that everybody during these gatherings was encouraged to use language.

The actions resulting from the survey did not require any significant changes to the MAP at MDWg. The inclusion of structured teaching of grammatical structures as part of the

weekly gatherings was continued; family-based activities in addition to regular M/A sessions were encouraged through field trips which involved additional family members. The use of written language was neither encouraged nor discouraged but left to individual apprentices to include where they found this helpful. Overall, the response to the program as reflected in the questionnaire demonstrated that the strategies applied after the revision of the program structure were largely accepted and effective.

3.6 MEASURING PROGRESS: ASSESSMENT 2. In the next step, the confidence reflected by apprentices that their involvement in the MAP had improved their language proficiency was tested in a second assessment. By October 2011, three apprentices who had also been assessed earlier in the year (Apprentices B, C, D) participated in this task. The setting and structure of this assessment was identical to the first one, though a degree of variance would naturally apply. While the linguists tried to match the level of difficulty of the previous assessment, the selection of elicitation cannot phase out individual differences between learners. Nevertheless, the trend of results showed a very clear picture: while there was virtually no improvement in language comprehension, language production (notably the production of grammatical structures) experienced a boost - which had been the major goal of the program. Table 3 (below), provides a summary of outcomes, including any change in score compared to Assessment 1.

One detail to be noted here is that Apprentice D had spent less time in MAP sessions and at weekly meetings than Apprentices B and C; interestingly, this participant shows the smallest level of improvement.

Apprentice	I. Single sentence comprehension	II. Text comprehension	III. Active vocabulary (overall)	IV. Longer utterance production (free)	IV. Sentence translation	Average
B Feb	8.5	8	6	2	1	5.1
B Nov	9.5	10	7	3.5	4.5	6.9
Change	+1	+2	+1	+1.5	+3.5	+1.8
C Feb	6.5	3.5	6	2.5	0	3.7
C Nov	6	2.5	7	9	3.5	5.6
Change	-0.5	-1	+1	+6.5	+3.5	+1.9
D Feb	5	6.5	6	0.5	0.5	3.7
D Nov	3.5	7.5	6	2	3	4.4
Change	-1.5	+1	+/-0	+1.5	+2.5	+0.7
Overall average change	-0.3	+0.7	+0.7	+3.2	+3.2	

TABLE 3: Comparison of Assessments 1 vs. 2 - Summary (Apprentices B, C, D)

In the area of language comprehension, it is notable that the comprehension of single sentences was weaker for Apprentices C and D compared to the previous assessment, while for Apprentice B it was slightly better. This could be related to the nature of compiling the elicitation data, as mentioned above. In retrospect, the grammatical structures reflected in this task can be considered more complex than the ones in Assessment 1 - a factor linguists were not aware of in assembling the data. However, it shows that language comprehension did not improve notably between the two assessments, which is reflected by an arguably negligible change of -0.3 in the overall rating.

Similarly, there was no major change in text comprehension, though Apprentice B showed noteworthy improvement in this area in understanding the entire narrative perfectly, sentence by sentence in all details.

Surprisingly, the production of single words did not improve, despite the fact that apprentices had been exposed to more language input than previously. The elicitation of words in this area involved a repeat task of semantic fields tested previously, as well as the addition of several new areas (words related to weather and flora within the lexical domain and pronouns within the functional domain).

The results from tasks I, II and III once more showed that the term “passive language knowledge” implies the existence of “dormant” grammatical features in language comprehension, as well as access to single lexical items in language production.

The most crucial outcome of Assessment 2 was the substantial improvement in language production tasks involving functional categories and grammar (more specifically, morphology). All three apprentices demonstrated improved skills in producing utterances of a more complex nature, with all of them being able to produce at least a minimal sentence involving a verb. While Apprentices B and D showed positive development, Apprentice C scored beyond all expectations. A similar result was observed for the production of given sentences: all apprentices exhibited major progress in this area.

The outcomes in the areas of language production easily outranked the lack of progress in language comprehension, leading to an overall significant improvement for all learners. While these results reflected progress on a small scale and for a small group of participants, the trend was undeniable and confirmed the subjective self-assessment made by apprentices in the questionnaire. Overall, this was a very promising outcome which justifies the confidence in the efficiency of the MAP model, in that it can turn passive language knowledge into active language use in speakers of an endangered language. Further developments in the above and other participants of the program at MDWg will be closely observed in order to confirm these findings.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AN AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT. The introduction of the MAP at MDWg was subject to a learning curve, given that the initial 12 months did not have the results one was hoping for. In retrospect however, going through this process can be characterised as useful as it revealed where adjustments and modifications had to be made. While the benefit of fixed salaries supported the community on a financial basis, providing employment and stronger economic stability, as well as the recognition of traditional elders and their knowledge, this approach lacked the desired outcome in terms of securing dedicated times for language transfer. As a positive outcome, the

introduction of weekly joined gatherings of MAP teams proved to be a critical component of the program.

The experimental period of the program at MDWg, while being both costly and instructive, was beneficial in developing the project towards its current state. This does not exclude further adjustments and improvements as these may become relevant due to changed circumstances along the road. In fact, it confirms that an adaptation of methods to the local context is invaluable and undoubtedly adds useful components to an already neatly defined model. The MAP model presents itself as a highly flexible approach, and this is confirmed by its application at MDWg.

4.1 WHAT DOES MAP NEED? The requirements for the introduction of MAP in a language community are simple. For an ideal scenario, the basic prerequisites include physical factors such as useful infrastructure on the one side as well as the initiative of the language community on the other. Most programs will somewhat depend on the availability of funding as it is only fair that participants (and masters in particular) be compensated for their time and involvement. In the case of MDWg, the revised compensation structure assisted in ensuring that regular language transfer occurred.

The presence of a physical base, such as a language centre has also proven invaluable in the case of Miriwoong. The language centre is not only a focal point for gatherings and resources; it also provides the linguistic assistance for structured learning, coordination of meetings and payments, as well as the facilitation of training workshops. Although a MAP could probably work without this support structure, the input it had for the Miriwoong project must be described as crucial.

The most important factor is the commitment of the language community to become active as part of a MAP. Without the initiative and dedication of those whose goal is to preserve their language, any language revitalisation program is doomed. Only a strong group of indigenous language advocates, possibly with the support of a linguist, is able to encourage and motivate others in their community to join in their efforts to keep their language alive. At MDWg, the program is starting to reach young adults as a target group, based on the visible recent success, and a further expansion of the local MAP is in sight.

At the same time, the efforts of linguists should not be underestimated as these can play a vital role in several areas. These include the development of the MAP program and its structure, as well as assistance with defining language proficiency in potential participants. Their role can also be in providing motivation and encouragement, reinforcement of strategies, understanding of grammatical structures, and the development of assessment tasks. Linguists also play an important part in organising and supporting the weekly sessions of all MAP teams, prompting teams to report on their progress and in recording and evaluating the conversation during those gatherings. It is hard to imagine how the development of the MAP at MDWg, including the inclusion of survey and assessment, would have worked without the input of linguists.

4.2 ADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS OF THE MAP MODEL. The advantages of the MAP model have been attested for many projects in North America and other regions, and there is substantial evidence to underscore its usefulness in an Australian context. The in-

terpersonal nature of the approach, being strongly based on relationships, can be regarded as exceptionally suitable for indigenous communities in Australia, as it reflects the traditional way of interaction rather than Western-style teaching methods. The other advantage is the manageability of the program, in that the MAP teams are highly independent and therefore do not require constant support by others. The functionality of language transfer in this scenario is warranted even without ongoing external input. Furthermore, the principles of the model are simple and can be easily absorbed by anyone without the need for an academic background.

There also are challenges and limitations which shall be briefly highlighted here. While Australia does not have a history of different applications of the MALLP model (only two in fact), the impact of training on the success of the MAP at MDWg must not be underestimated. One factor which was singled out as leading to the failure of the first MAP pilot project for Bandjalang was the lack of training. Starting up a project solely based on written instructions in *How to keep your language alive* (Hinton 2002) may not be sufficient for all scenarios, and it can be stipulated that this would have been the case for Miriwoong as well. While I would strongly recommend the above title to any community ready to begin a MAP, a book does not substitute training, even more so in a culture which is traditionally based on face-to-face interaction. It is therefore a favourable circumstance that two train-the-trainer workshops for the MALLP were conducted in Australia early in 2012, which has resulted in a pool of qualified trainers being available throughout the country. The workshops in Alice Springs (Northern Territory) and Kununurra (Western Australia) were organised by a partnership between the Resource Network for Linguistic Diversity (RNLD), MDWg, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE), and the Indigenous Languages Education program (Koori Centre - University of Sydney), each of which is now able to provide links to relevant trainers in most regions of Australia.

One problem the Miriwoong community faced (and is still overcoming), is the absence of a vocabulary to describe modern artifacts and concepts. The MAP model encourages language immersion based on aspects of daily life, which is certainly one of the reasons for its success. Conversation about items or matters which naturally occupy both team participants would seem a natural and straightforward content of any conversation, which can then be complemented by aspects of traditional life. However, in a culture which has not established most words describing features of a modern, Western world, it is extremely difficult to stay immersed in the traditional language and yet move beyond talking about traditional ways of living. A language which does not have words for the things that surround its speakers will have to develop a vocabulary which includes those items. The Miriwoong community has been struggling with this problem and has only just started expanding the vocabulary, which is now in fact a component of some of the weekly MAP gatherings.

It should also be emphasised that the MAP project at MDWg is one out of a range of different activities with the overarching goal of language revitalisation. As such, it has been highly successful but is complemented by other methods and strategies as described briefly in section 3.1. Without lessening the positive impact MAP has had on MDWg's work, it would be fair to say that each of the other activities also play an important role as part of the *Action Plan*, which cannot be addressed by the MAP, such as targeting specific target groups, group-based activities, or raising language awareness.

4.3 ADAPTIVE MEASURES IN AN AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT. It was stated above that a MAP application should be flexible enough to address any specific requirements a local speech community may have. While eventually, it will be up to each community to decide what is effective and what is not, it seems feasible to outline a few adaptive measures which have been supportive of the MAP at MDWg, and to suggest these for a possible adaptation in other Australian contexts.

Naturally, the formation of MAP teams should be subject to traditional protocol. In some contexts this may require a selection process specific to gender or kinship, as it does at MDWg. In communities with only a small number of speakers left, the ranking of these factors may well play a role as avoidance relationships can occur as natural obstacles which rank above gender-specific requirements. In an ideal scenario within the Miriwoong culture, for instance, male and female participants would be kept apart as certain topics in conversation or certain areas during fieldtrips would be subject to avoidance. Even more strictly, male and female participants in an in-law relationship or brothers and sisters would not be able to work as a team due to strict avoidance protocol in the kinship system. This problem was overcome by allowing male and female participants to work together where the type of relationship between master and apprentice did not represent a violation.

One proposal which resulted from the survey among local MAP participants was the inclusion of family-based strategies for language learning. In the context of the Miriwoong family structure this makes perfect sense, as the family is the heart of most indigenous cultures in Australia. MDWg is still exploring the possibilities of how to incorporate extended family structures into the MAP without affecting well-functioning strategies. The involvement of young children and a larger number of participants in such a context could result in distractions and a larger group is also more difficult to manage, which represents a stronger challenge for the goal of language immersion, especially where a majority of people in a group lack the passive knowledge to follow a conversation. At this stage MDWg has opted for greater flexibility in team size and in regard to temporary change of team partners. Some teams have more than one apprentice and one team has swapped apprentices out of practical reasons for a limited period of time. Being open to such changes can be an advantage where the group thinks this is adequate.

The MAP method explicitly focuses on the oral transmission of language and suggests that written language is not required to warrant successful language transfer, especially in the early stages of language acquisition (cf. Hinton 2002:14-15). MDWg largely follows this approach but also has a consistent, easy-to-learn orthography for Miriwoong which most of its apprentices already are familiar with. While most MA teams exclude written language from their one-on-one sessions, a whiteboard is used as a tool during the weekly joined sessions. In practice, a linguist (who could be replaced by a native speaker with writing skills) would write parts of the conversation in Miriwoong on the board to help those who have difficulty segmenting longer utterances or sentences. The written data would then be wiped off before apprentices repeat a sentence after a master. This measure follows the request of apprentices who find this method efficient for their acquisition process. At least one apprentice also uses a notebook during the one-on-one sessions as a support for memorising utterances later on. While banning written language probably has its benefits (especially where it comes to hinder the language acquisition process), a local program may choose to permit reading within a limited context where participants find it useful.

The frequent variation between different kinds of strategies is practical as to ensure participants become aware of various methods they can employ in their own session between master and apprentice. Not entirely insignificant is the logistic organisation of the weekly meetings characterised above. In order to assist all team members to join, transfers to and from the venue are organised by the language centre. As an additional incentive, a meal is provided to all participants, which for many also is an opportunity to share lunch with others without having to make their own arrangements.

Another adaptive measure which is strongly encouraged at MDWg is the language transfer by apprentices to younger, less proficient learners - usually children and teenagers. This usually occurs during structured Western-style language classes organised between the local schools and the language centre where apprentices function as language teachers. Those who do not engage in this role are encouraged to apply what they have learned in their personal environment by using the language with their own children. One advantage of this three-generational approach is that the apprentice “digests” newly acquired words and structures by actively passing these on to others.

The inclusion of assessment strategies is not part of the original MAP model but has proven a useful measure at MDWg. Most importantly, learners discover where their own strengths and weaknesses lie, which in most cases boosts their confidence, as they may not have been aware about the depth of their passive knowledge. Even where there is little passive knowledge of the language, apprentices will get to recognise some areas in which they are stronger as opposed to others. At MDWg, a boost of confidence and subsequent increased motivation was observed in all apprentices after assessments, regardless of their strength. For linguists or coordinators of a MAP, the information gained through an assessment can be invaluable for future planning and for providing direction towards certain areas which require particular attention. In most situations, running a MAP will also depend on funding from an external source, for which reports need to be produced. Having an assessment strategy is a valuable tool for such reporting requirements as it reflects a structured approach towards achieving measurable targets. The fact that the MAP method can be demonstrated to be efficient for the Miriwoong revitalisation program in a measurable way certainly helps the cause of language revitalisation.

The most significant addition to a purely couple-based learning strategy at MDWg is the introduction of weekly gatherings of all MAP teams at a central location (usually the language centre). Most importantly, the requirement of immersion is practiced during these meetings as English or Kriol must be avoided. Prompting the apprentices to actively use the language in front of others may be embarrassing for some at first, but is an important component in order to strengthen their confidence. The structure of these sessions varies, but each meeting would include at least one or two of the following elements:

- a) Review of activities: selected teams will report on the content of their one-on-one sessions and share sentences, stories, or other content with the rest of the group. Selected parts will be highlighted with the support of linguists, and all apprentices are encouraged to engage actively by repeating these with their own masters.

b) Listening to recordings: selected recordings from the Miriwoong language archive are played back and then discussed by the group. Again, apprentices are prompted to actively recite some parts.

c) Use of pictures and slideshows: employing modern media to recreate scenarios or show specific items on a projected screen assists with the expansion of the vocabulary. This allows participants to simply ask questions such as ‘What is this?’ or ‘What are they doing?’ without violating the immersion requirement. In the same way, slides of specific procedures will trigger an instruction-style response from masters which are not only used by apprentices, but may even find a wider application in the development of resource materials.⁶

d) Structured learning: in some cases it may be useful to point apprentices to certain grammatical patterns which are less transparent in context. (Note that this method involves reading to some extent.) For instance, MDWg provides laminated cards with verb forms which need to be assembled into a paradigm by apprentices. The benefit of this activity is that it ensures the practice of less frequent grammatical forms which do not otherwise occur in standard contexts.

e) Language games and activities: during training workshops, participants are encouraged to use any number of different language-related activities, such as role play, card games, or craft activities in order to stimulate language use. Joined gatherings of all teams can function as “mini workshops” to practice such activities with all participants.

The aim of this article was to highlight challenges and benefits of the Master-Apprentice language learning method by accounting for the first larger scale attempt to implement the model in an Australian context. While the effectiveness of MAP in a global context has been accounted for by program participants and witnesses, there have been few (if any) attempts to assess the success of the MAP strategy in a formal manner. Its application to Miriwoong as described here offers two main conclusions: firstly, the implementation of a formal, measurable assessment strategy is a useful tool for the evaluation of progress. Secondly, adaptative measures designed to address the specific situation in a local environment (such as in regard to team size and additional activities), have a positive impact on the progress made by language learners. One may stipulate that similar adaptations are relevant to comparable contexts in Australia and beyond. Based on the encouraging outcomes of the Master-Apprentice model in the Miriwoong environment, the overall conclusion is a simple one: MAP works!

⁶ For instance, during one session, masters and apprentices worked on instructions on how to cook a good stew, based on illustrations and practical application. These instructions were later compiled into a written resource for publication.

REFERENCES

- Crystal, David. 2002. *Language death*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fishman, Joshua A. 1991. *Reversing language shift*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Grenoble, Lenore. A. & Lindsay J. Whaley, 2006. *Saving languages: an introduction to language revitalization*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hinton, Leanne & Ken Hale (eds.). 2001. *The green book of language revitalization in practice*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Hinton, Leanne. 2001. The master-apprentice language learning program. In Leanne Hinton & Ken Hale (eds.), *The green book of language revitalization in practice* (pp. 217-226). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Hinton, Leanne. 2002. *How to keep your language alive*. Berkeley: Heyday Books.
- Laurie, Bradley. 2009. Jinggehla! A report by Bradley Laurie, Emmaville High School. Ms. in *Aboriginal Languages Newsletter 3*. NSW Department of Education and Training.
- Olawsky, Knut J. 2010a. Revitalisation strategies for Miriwoong. In John Hobson, Kevin Lowe, Susan Poetsch & Michael Walsh (eds.), *Re-awakening languages: theory and practice in the revitalisation of Australia's Indigenous languages*, 146-154. Sydney: Sydney University Press.
- Olawsky, Knut J. 2010b. Going public with language: involving the wider community in language revitalisation. In John Hobson, Kevin Lowe, Susan Poetsch & Michael Walsh (eds.), *Re-awakening languages: theory and practice in the revitalisation of Australia's Indigenous languages*, 75-83. Sydney: Sydney University Press.

Knut J. Olawsky
info@mirima.org.au
kj.olawsky@westnet.com.a