Faculty of Arts

Department of Linguistics

Indigenous Languages

LINGUISTICS SYMPOSIUM
UNI OF ADELAIDE | 14.11.19

POST GRADUATE SYMPOSIUM

Thursday 14th November 2019

Napier Building

University of Adelaide

PROGRAMME

9:45 Registration open - coffee

10:15 Welcome

10:20   What is an Indigenous Language?
Associate Professor Rob Amery – University of Adelaide

10:40   Learning and teaching endangered languages
Eleanor McCall & Christina Skujins – Mobile Language Team

11:25   Kaurna and Cornish language revival
Susie Greenwood – University of Adelaide

12:00 Lunch

12:45   Phonological comparison of Thura-Yura languages
Ingrid Kerrigan – University of Adelaide

1:20   Hybridity in Daly River languages
Chris Venning – University of Adelaide

1:55   Southern Daly comparative project
Emmett Bell – University of Adelaide

2:30 Afternoon Tea

2:45   Polysemy vs Homonymy in indigenous languages of Australia
Anh Le – University of Adelaide

3:20   Animal language
Mario Pilla – University of Adelaide

4:00 Finish

You are welcome to join us for social drinks after the event
University of Adelaide Club (Level 4, Union House)

ABSTRACTS

1. What is an Indigenous Language?

What is an Indigenous language? Who is Indigenous?

In Australia the position is fairly clear as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have occupied the land for tens of thousands of years. However, elsewhere, with documented movements of people and expanding and contracting empires, the situation is less clear.

Associate Professor Rob Amery – Head of Linguistics - University of Adelaide

2. Learning and Teaching Endangered languages

The Mobile Language Team (MLT, https://www.mobilelanguageteam.com.au/) was established with Federal Government funding in 2009 to promote the revival and maintenance of Aboriginal languages in South Australia. There are 46 languages in South Australia and approximately a quarter of these languages are still spoken to some degree. The other three-quarters of languages have a strong community base, but currently do not have speakers. Many of these language groups are currently involved in language revival programs.

This presentation will explicate the different methods of language learning and teaching in the Endangered language space by presenting a series of case studies based on the work of the MLT. The effective learning and teaching of Aboriginal languages is a major challenge facing communities who are looking to revive and maintain their languages into the future.

Eleanor McCall & Christina Skujins – Mobile Language Team

3. Kaurna and Cornish Language Revival: A comparative study

2019 is the International Year of Indigenous Languages, bringing the opportunity to raise the profile of efforts to revive or reinvigorate the world's many indigenous languages. Kaurna, the language spoken by the inhabitants of the Adelaide Plains at the time of first contact and colonisation by British settlers, is unquestionably an indigenous language. The last native speaker of Kaurna died within living memory, so issues remain contentious and cultural sensitivities raise challenges that may not apply to non-indigenous languages. The Kaurna revival is arguably moving at a slow pace.

On the other side of the world, after a much longer hiatus, Cornish is also being treated as an indigenous language. Is this culturally appropriate or just a practical consequence of the small number of protagonists involved? Comparisons are often drawn with progress made by other Celtic languages such as Welsh and Breton - but is this helpful or productive?

Perhaps we should look further afield at languages more closely aligned in terms of condition when seeking strategies to overcome hurdles and map pathways for the future. Working together with parties in the wider world of endangered languages, indigenous or not, may lead to more positive steps beyond preservation towards daily use.

Susie Greenwood – MPhil Candidate – University of Adelaide

4. <u>Phonological comparison of Thura-Yura languages</u>

Adnyamathanha, Kuyani, Wirangu, Barngarla, Kaurna, Nukunu, Ngadjuri and Narungga are known as the Thura-Yura languages, so-called because the word for 'man' is either *thura* or *yura*. The languages are/were spoken in what is now South Australia, from north of Lake Torrens, south to the Eyre Peninsula, east to the Adelaide Plains and west into the desert.

This presentation will examine the phonological variation within this group, based on a list of 'body parts' cognates, and attempt to discuss the relatedness of those languages.

Ingrid Kerrigan – MPhil Candidate – University of Adelaide

5. <u>Hybridity in Daly River Languages</u>

This paper will focus on 'hybridity' of nominal classification in the Southern and Western Daly River languages. The Daly languages are non-Pama-Nyungan polysynthetic languages occupying a geographical region on the western edge of the 'top end' of the Northern Territory of Australia. A sub-set of these languages, found within the Southern and Western Daly River subgroups, display a very interesting property in their nominal classification systems: 'hybridity'. Established typology on nominal classification (attributable to Dixon 1982, 1986) has treated gender (noun classes) and (noun) classifiers as distinct and mutually exclusive within a given language, Dixon allowing the caveat that the two kinds of system may combine within a given system if the system is in transition from a classifier system to a gender system. Recent work by Fedden and Corbett (2017) (but also see Aikhenvald 2000) has shown that there are many languages with concurrent systems of gender and classifier systems, i.e. a language can have more than one system of nominal classification where the system is not necessarily a system in transition. Hybridity is distinct from concurrent systems: rather than there being two systems we have one system with a mixture of properties such that it can be difficult to decide whether we are dealing with gender systems or classifier systems. My hybridity argument nonetheless comes in the context of Fedden and Corbett's work on concurrent systems and pushes the typology of nominal classification.

Chris Venning – PhD Candidate – University of Adelaide

6. <u>Southern Daly Comparison Project</u>

In Northern Territory, there exists two language groups, the Murrinh-Patha group and the Ngan'gi-tyemerri group. These language groups seem to be unrelated at a first glance, lacking many cognates for even the most basic of terms. However, deeper analysis has revealed evidence for the two languages being of one family.

In this presentation I will show the progress that has been made to compare the two languages, and explain the many difficulties in doing so.

Emmett Bell – Bachelor of Arts Student – University of Adelaide

7. Polysemy vs Homonymy in Indigenous Languages of Australia

Two or more phonologically similar lexemes can be polysemous, i.e. they are actually one lexeme with several related senses, or they can be homonymous, i.e. they are completely unrelated lexemes. However, on what grounds can we decide this (un)relatedness? *Fly* in English is homonymous because we decide that the insect and the action moving through air using wings are "unrelated" senses. But *wii* in the Damiin language of northern Queensland polysemous because linguists decide that the several senses it carries ranging from 'firewood', 'fire', 'food', 'string', 'country' are "related" – why is that? One can easily be prone to logic or cultural facts about hunter-gatherer societies to decide this (un)relatedness. In this talk, I argue that basing the decision on logic or cultural facts is a fruitless path to pursue in the categorical studies of semantic change in general and of polysemy in particular of Australian Indigenous Languages.

Anh Le – MPhil Candidate – University of Adelaide

8. Animal Language

If you cast your eyes far enough back, all human languages look like 'invader languages' of a kind. Other creatures were communicating with each other long before human beings covered the globe.
In this presentation, I'll be looking at some interesting details of animal communication.

Mario Pilla – Bachelor of Arts (Advanced) Student – University of Adelaide