Teaching Aboriginal Languages at University: To What End?

Rob Amery

Abstract In 2017 the theme chosen by the National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC), "Our Languages Matter", drew attention to Australia's national linguistic heritage, the 250 or more Indigenous languages from across the nation. A mere handful of these languages are taught in universities. Three of these, soon to be four, are "strong" languages spoken by all generations in their homelands and transmitted transgenerationally. The other three are "reclaimed" languages. Most are taught as a single unit within an Aboriginal Studies or Linguistics program and offer little opportunity to gain advanced language proficiency or an in-depth knowledge of the language. The reasons for learning "strong" languages are somewhat different from the reasons for teaching and learning "reclaimed" languages. Furthermore, many of the reasons why Indigenous languages are taught are fundamentally different from the reasons why world languages, such as French or Japanese are taught. This chapter investigates the reasons why Indigenous languages are taught and learnt in Australian universities, with a view to increasing the number of these offerings and expanding the field.

Keywords Indigenous languages · Aboriginal studies · Reclaimed languages · Tertiary sector · Yolŋu Matha · Pitjantjatjara · Kaurna · Wiradjuri · Gamilaraay

1 Introduction

Some research (see, for instance, the Group of Eight 2007) has looked at the motivations for studying a language at tertiary level, focusing largely on issues of declining enrolments and student retention, which are serious problems in the language teaching sector in Australian universities. The same can be said of languages in universities in the UK (Worton 2009) and the US (MLA 2007). In an era of economic

R. Amery (✉)
University of Adelaide, Adelaide, SA, Australia
e-mail: robert.amery@adelaide.edu.au

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rationalism, the teaching of languages per se is under pressure, with periodic closure of programs (Kinoshita 2018). But little has been written about the teaching of Australian Indigenous languages in universities (Edwards 1995; Amery 2007; Gale 2011; Giacon and Simpson 2012; Simpson 2014), and even less about what motivates students to learn Australian Indigenous languages, where there are few opportunities to use these languages for everyday communication and where there is little to read, view or listen to in these languages. Furthermore, there is little opportunity to pursue an in-depth or extended study of these languages, at least not within the tertiary sector itself, as most courses are offered as a single semester-length course or intensive summer school with no possibility of progression, the Yolŋu program at Charles Darwin University (CDU) being the exception.

Indigenous languages have a much lower profile in Australian universities than they do in New Zealand or North America where "nearly 30 Native American languages are taught in U.S. colleges and universities, and [there is] a higher growth rate in enrolments in those languages than in European languages" (Goldberg et al. 2015, cited in Wilson 2018, p. 84). Furthermore, a progression of study to meet a two- or four-year degree (i.e., two to four one-semester courses) is the norm rather than the exception for Indigenous language programs in North America (Wilson 2018, p. 85). Wilson (2018) reports considerable success with incremental advances over a 40-year period in "producing college graduates with sufficiently high proficiency to be the parents, teachers, and curriculum developers to effectuate Indigenous language-medium education and to coordinate it with the tertiary-level program" (Wilson 2018, p. 87). Our fledgling programs in revival languages here in Australia still have a long way to go in comparison. The few courses offered in Australian universities are of insufficient duration to produce knowledgeable or fluent speakers.

2 Why Study Languages at Tertiary Level?

There are some very good reasons why everyone should study a language for its own sake. Acquisition of a second, third or further language is good for the brain. It enhances problem-solving ability, lateral thinking and the ability to grasp abstract concepts. Some evidence suggests that multilingualism staves off the onset of Alzheimer's disease by providing a form of cognitive reserve (Craik et al. 2010; Diamond 2010). It stands to reason that the more typologically diverse that these languages are, the more benefit they might serve in exercising the brain to a greater degree. Indigenous Australian languages used alongside languages from other parts of the world would seem particularly well-placed. I know from personal experience that staving off Alzheimer disease is a reason sometimes put forward by students of Indigenous languages (including both Pitjantjatjara and Kaurna).

There are also profound social benefits in acquiring a second language (Gallagher-Brett 2005, pp. 11, 15–16, 21). Knowledge of a second language allows the speaker to engage with the speech community in ways not possible otherwise. In the case of Indigenous languages, the very fact that a learner takes the time and effort to learn

the language signals empathy and a genuine commitment to the speaker community. Even just a few words can make a world of difference in establishing rapport and respectful relationships. Language courses provide a path into understanding the associated cultures at a deeper level than we might ever gain through English. This is especially the case in Pitjantjatjara and Yolŋu Matha courses where the main aim is to provide insights into cultures and societies which are very different from Anglo-Australian culture. Michael Christie, who introduced the Yolŋu Matha program at Charles Darwin University (CDU) is quoted as saying "It's part of the rich history of our country. If you study the language you start to learn about kinship and about land ownership and about ceremonial history, which actually teaches you something more general about Aboriginal societies" (cited by Statham 2011). By contrast, the gulf between the language ecologies of modern languages (French, Japanese, English, etc.) is not so great. Whilst these reasons outlined above for studying an Indigenous language are shared with other language programs, many are not.

World languages, such as French or Japanese, are the typical languages offered in Australian universities, though ancient languages such as Latin, Akkadian or Ancient Egyptian also figure, as well as a few modern languages, such as Javanese, which are neither national or official languages. Whilst recognizing the diversity of language offerings in Australian universities, I wish to draw some contrasts between Australian Indigenous languages and widely spoken world languages which serve as official and national languages of one or more nation states. These languages, specifically Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese and Spanish, are the most widely offered languages in Australian universities (ULPA n.d.).

Language study is promoted for purposes of conducting business or trade, for diplomacy and national security (Group of Eight 2007, p. 6). This is a result of neoliberal framing of what is valued and valuable within Australian society.[1] The possibilities for conducting business or trade in an Australian Indigenous language are extremely limited. These languages might be used at the community store to purchase some groceries or perhaps to purchase some artworks or handcrafts at the local art and craft shop, but that is probably the full extent of the business transactions made utilizing an Indigenous language in Australia. Even in the homelands of the strongest Australian languages, sadly negotiations with mining companies and government departments are invariably conducted in English. There could possibly be limited openings for the use of Indigenous languages within the North-West Mobile Force (NORFORCE), established in 1981 as a reconnaissance unit within the Australian Army.[2] 60% of NORFORCE personnel are Indigenous, and are drawn mainly from the areas they patrol.[3] But beyond that, there is no scope whatsoever for a role for Indigenous Australian languages in national security. The role

[1] For a detailed history of the agendas behind Australia's successive decisions in promoting language study, see Baldwin (2019).

[2] I contacted the Australian Army, but no information was forthcoming.

[3] https://www.army.gov.au/our-people/units/forces-command/2nd-division/north-west-mobile-force

of Navajo, an Indigenous language from New Mexico and adjoining states, in both World War II and the Korean War should be acknowledged.[4] As for diplomacy there are no known openings whatsoever for Australian Indigenous languages.

International languages are often promoted for their instrumental value. Material promoting language study within Australian universities typically foregrounds their ability to enhance career opportunities. See, for instance, RMIT University's Language studies page.[5] However, the UK study undertaken by the University of Southampton (Gallagher-Brett 2005) shows that for language learners themselves, personal benefits including enjoyment, satisfaction, ability to establish meaningful relationships with others and interest in language and culture are far more important. Students "acknowledge the possibility of employability gains; but this is not the main reason for studying languages" and they are "uncertain about the strategic benefits of language learning for the UK and EU" (Gallagher-Brett 2005, p. 26). This seems to resonate well with the views expressed by Australian students, as evident in testimonials posted on university websites (see ANU Languages webpage).[6]

Additional reasons often cited are to enable students to access the academic literature of another tradition or to facilitate study abroad. None of these reasons come into play when it comes to Australia's Indigenous languages. Options to study a body of knowledge using Aboriginal languages are extremely limited and verging on non-existent in Australian universities, let alone studying abroad in these languages. Academic literature written in Aboriginal languages scarcely exists.

Overseas travel is also often cited as a reason for the study of languages other than English. Travel in the narrow sense is also quite irrelevant for Indigenous languages. It is simply not possible to check into a hotel in Australia speaking an Aboriginal language or to order a taxi, enquire about a bus or tram route or train destination or book a flight. In the broader context, however, a knowledge of Indigenous languages may well be useful for a visitor to Central Australia, the Kimberley or the Top End in order to connect with the local population. But it would be quite pointless to teach many of the usual kinds of expressions that an international traveller would learn in order to expedite their travel arrangements.

3 So Why Then Study an Indigenous Language?

Australia's Indigenous languages are our unique national heritage. A knowledge of Indigenous languages teaches us about the place in which we live, including the landforms, the fauna and flora, the weather and seasons, the places. Through a study

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[4] https://www.warhistoryonline.com/war-articles/the-real-windtalkers-wwii-the-story-of-navajo-code-talker.html

[5] https://www.rmit.edu.au/about/schools-colleges/global-urban-and-social-studies/our-teaching-areas/language-studies

[6] http://www.anu.edu.au/study/study-options/languages

of Indigenous languages we also learn much about the people who speak these languages and their culture, which has developed in relative isolation from the rest of the world over a very long period of time. The grammars of Aboriginal languages are typically regular and systematic and typically have a much richer morphology than English and many other European and Asian languages. Through these languages we begin to appreciate a different way of looking at the world and experiencing the world. We gain insights into Australian history, often from the perspective of first language (L1) speakers of Indigenous languages.

By studying an Indigenous language at university, students can know that they are part of a movement that values Indigenous languages and is working for their continued survival, in the case of "strong" languages, or their re-introduction, in the case of revival languages. What better way to bring about reconciliation than to allow students to experience firsthand the genius of Aboriginal languages with their intricate and complex grammars, complex pronoun systems, complex kinship systems, radically different semantic organization and their ability to adapt and change?

The teaching of Indigenous languages provides meaningful and culturally-affirming employment for a handful of native speakers (in the case of Pitjantjatjara and Yolŋu Matha) or other language activists who are striving to regain their linguistic heritage—in the case of Kaurna at Tauondi College or Wiradjuri at Charles Sturt University (CSU). Furthermore, the study of Indigenous languages at tertiary level potentially plays an important role in the preparation of teachers of Indigenous languages, for which there is significant demand following the 2015 release of the Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages as part of the national curriculum initiative (FLA 2018, pp. 26–28).

3.1 Studying a "Strong" Indigenous Language at Tertiary Level?

Pitjantjatjara was first offered for study at the University of Adelaide in 1966. At its peak it was offered as a progression with three units of study (Pitjantjatjara 1, 2 and 3) at the University of South Australia (UniSA) by Bill Edwards and Mona Tur. It is now offered as a two-week intensive summer school taught by Dan Bleby and Sam Osborne in conjunction with six Anangu tutors (see Gale et al., this volume) as well as in three short winter schools in Alice Springs and Adelaide. In 2019 there were 45 enrolments in the summer school, 40 in the two-day Wiltja intensive, 27 in the three-day Alice Springs winter school and 23 in the Adelaide two-day winter school, bringing the total to 135 enrolments in Pitjantjatjara language in 2019 (Bow 2019, p. 2). Yolŋu Matha has been offered by Charles Darwin University (CDU) since 1992 (Gale 2011, p. 284) by a team (currently Brenda Muthamuluwuy and Yasunori Hayashi), with a total of 139 enrolments in 2019 (Bow 2019, p. 2). For many years Yolŋu Matha was the only Australian Indigenous language offered as a major (Simpson 2014, p. 57). It is also offered at postgraduate level (Graduate Certificate

in Yolŋu Studies).[7] In fact enrolments in Yolŋu Matha in 2019 were predominantly postgraduate (Bow 2019, p. 2). For more detail on CDU's Yolŋu Matha course see Christie (2010a, b, Hayashi, this volume). A new on-line Binij Kunwok course was made available in Semester 1 2019, and was offered through both CDU, with 15 enrolments, and ANU, with 10 enrolments, at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Arrernte was offered in 2019 by the Batchelor Institute for Higher Education in Alice Springs, but did not run for want of enrolments. There are plans for a semester-length course and a short course in 2020 (Bow 2019, p. 2).

The single stated aim of the Pitjantjatjara Language and Culture course offered at the University of South Australia is simple: "To introduce students to the practical aspects of Pitjantjatjara language and culture as a basis for communicating effectively with Pitjantjatjara people."[8] This course is offered as an intensive summer school taught over two weeks. Most of the students are workers in various fields (for instance, art centre coordinators, rangers, doctors, main roads workers, and so on) who are already working in the Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara (PY) lands or intend working in the PY lands soon after taking the course.

Similarly, the Yolŋu Matha course at CDU is marketed for its instrumental value: "This course is designed for professionals (particularly in health and education sectors), government workers, researchers and workers on Yolngu communities."[9] The Yolŋu course offered by CDU probably draws a wider audience because it is offered online. In addition to students working in, or intending to work in Yolŋu communities in northeast Arnhemland, the Yolŋu Matha program has drawn students from Japan, California and various places around Australia.

4 Studying a Revival Language at Tertiary Level?

Kaurna was the first revival language offered for study within the tertiary sector. It was introduced in 1997 at the University of Adelaide (Amery 2007, 2012). There were 16 students enrolled in the 2019 Kaurna summer school (Bow 2019, p. 2). Gamilaraay was offered at the University of Sydney for the first time in 2006 (Giacon and Simpson 2012, p. 66). An advanced course in Gamilaraay is occasionally offered if the demand warrants (Giacon, personal communication, 2018). In 2019 there were six Level 1 Gamilaraay enrolments at the University of Sydney and 11 at ANU whilst there were two Level 2 students and three Level 3 students (two of whom were Gamilaraay/Yuwaalaraay people) enrolled in the upper level winter intensive (Bow 2019, p. 2). Wiradjuri was recently introduced by Charles Sturt University (CSU), but had some prior presence within the University of Sydney's Koori Centre Aboriginal languages summer school in 2009 (McNaboe and Poetsch

[7] http://learnline.cdu.edu.au/yolngustudies/unitInformation.html

[8] https://study.unisa.edu.au/courses/106079/2018

[9] http://stapps.cdu.edu.au/f?p=100:31::::31:P31_SEARCH_COURSE:GCYS

2010, p. 218). A two-year Wiradjuri Graduate Certificate course was introduced in 2014, resulting in almost 100 graduates by December 2019 (Bow 2019, p. 2).

The primary reason for studying a "strong" Indigenous language is not so relevant for revival languages such as Kaurna, Gamilaraay or Wiradjuri where members of these language communities have only just themselves been re-connecting with their linguistic heritage in the last few decades. Few members of these communities have the linguistic competence to conduct a natural conversation in their own language.

For members of these language communities, study of their languages is about re-connecting with their ancestral language and culture, understanding themselves as a distinct people and as custodians of their lands, which were never ceded. However, at least for the Kaurna course offered at the University of Adelaide, only a very small minority of the students are actually Kaurna people. At the most they might comprise just one or two members of the student cohort in a given year, though several Kaurna people do have input into the course via a panel discussion, guest presentations and film or video. The Gamilaraay and Wiradjuri nations are much larger than the Kaurna nation. Whilst still a minority, there are more Gamilaraay people accessing the Gamilaraay program (Giacon, personal communication, 2018), even though it is taught off country in Sydney and Canberra. Several also participate through community access or attend part of the course. The Wiradjuri program, being taught on Wiradjuri country, is primarily for Wiradjuri people. In fact, "a basic understanding and competency in Wiradjuri language gained via the successful completion of the Certificates I to III in TAFE or in other community settings" is assumed knowledge and required for enrolment in the IKC301 Wiradjuri Language course (CSU Handbook 2018).

The teaching of revival languages at tertiary level is more closely tied to the demand for teachers and language resources to support programs within these languages in schools. Indeed a learning outcome of the Wiradjuri course is to "be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how to create Wiradjuri Language resources (with a particular focus on digital resources) for use in the wider community and in other educational contexts" (CSU Handbook 2018). The Gamilaraay course at the University of Sydney is taught as part of the Masters program for teachers of Indigenous languages. When the Kaurna course was introduced at the University of Adelaide in 1997, this was done with financial support from the South Australian Education Department. Over the next few years a number of the students were teachers from Kaurna Plains School, including the Principal. The course was an integral part of research and fledgling efforts to re-introduce the language.

Studying a revival language, like Kaurna, is the key to understanding much about the land in which we live and work, in this case Adelaide and the Adelaide Plains. It is the key to understanding the environment, climate and weather. Consider, for instance, *pukarra* "hot northwest wind frequently preceding a storm". As residents of Adelaide, we know the weather phenomenon well, yet we do not have a word for it in English. *Manya* in Kaurna means both "cold" and "rain", particularly fitting in a climate where winter rainfall predominates (though this is now changing under the influence of anthropogenic climate change). Placenames often provide a window

into the environment, or at least into what used to be there, now often a reminder of a previous era. The lower reaches of the River Torrens were known as Witungga "reed location" (and in English, the Reedbeds). The River Torrens itself is called Karrawirra Pari "redgum forest river", North Adelaide Kainka Wirra, another term for "redgum forest". Some Kaurna placenames have strong cultural overtones. The Onkaparinga River is Ngangkiparingga "woman/female river place" and the lower reaches of the Onkaparinga were indeed a women's site, as opposed to Ochre Cove nearby, which is a known men's site. Yarnkalyilla means "fallen location", referring to the fragments of Kulultuwi's body as it decomposed when carried by his uncle Tjilbruki down the coast (i.e., place of the fallen [bits]). Uraidla refers to the two ears (*yuridla*) of a giant being—the two highest peaks of Mt. Lofty and Mt. Bonython.

A study of Kaurna language and associated records provides glimpses of early contact history. The sentence examples recorded by Teichelmann and Schürmann (1840) and Teichelmann (1857) provide authentic examples of life in the 1830s and 1840s. Consider, for example:

ngaityerli pudlondo, burro ngaii wortarra padneta, perkabbinama ngaii yailtyattoai tulyarlo

RS[10] **ngaityarli pudluntu, puru, ngai wartarra padnitha, pirrkapinama ngai yailtyatuwayi tulyarlu**

"tell my father that I shall come after you, later, lest he think the police have shot me" (Teichelmann 1857, *pudlondi*).

Yakko nindo pindi meyu kundata, tittappettoai. Waieninga; ngannaitya na waiwiltanna?

RS **yaku nintu pinti miyu kurntatha, titapituwayi. Wayirninga; nganaitya naa waiwiltana?**

"You must not kill a white man, lest you be hanged. Be afraid; why are you bold?" (Teichelmann and Schürmann 1840, p. 71)

Furthermore, some sentence examples provide potent insights into cultural practices. Consider the following:

Pammaringga ngai budni, mokarta kundangko, kurru karrendaii.

RS **pamarringka ngai pudni, mukarta kurntangku kurdu karrinth'ai.**

"For the sake of spearing I came (but as it has not taken place or is not to take place) beat my head (that the blood runs down) for I feel ashamed."

(Teichelmann 1857, *pammaringga*)

In this case, the speaker has come to take his punishment, but because for whatever reason the spearing is not going to take place, he asks that his head be beaten severely as he feels so ashamed. Such punishment by spearing or beating the head with a *katha* "waddy" was the accepted form of punishment in a society which did not have gaols.

[10] The original spelling as used by Teichelmann (1857) appears in line 1 of these sentence examples. The sentence is re-spelt in Revised Spelling (RS), the spelling in use today.

Study of Kaurna language also affords insights into Nunga English. For instance, in Kaurna *paitya* is defined by Teichelmann and Schürmann (1840, p. 35) as "s.[11] vermin; reptile; monster; any dangerous or disliked animal; int. expressing wonder or admiration". Similarly, the Nunga English word *deadly* has the same dual meaning, pointing to Kaurna, or other languages like it, as the origin for the Aboriginal English semantics.

For some other students, however, an identification with the Kaurna cause may be a strong motivating factor. Or it may simply be an interest to learn something about the language of the land where they live and/or study. These students are drawn from a wide array of disciplines including education, psychology, anthropology, music, medicine, law, architecture, history, etc.

For others, especially those undertaking a Linguistics Major, enrolment in LING 2039/3015 "Reclaiming Languages: a Kaurna case study" may be just another Linguistics course towards their degree. In a small department, such as Linguistics at the University of Adelaide, there are limited options in Linguistics, with summer schools in Indigenous languages ("Australian Indigenous Languages" alternating with "Reclaiming Languages" in alternate years) being the only summer schools held in Linguistics. Aboriginal languages, and Kaurna is no exception, are a wonderful vehicle through which to teach the principles and analytical skills of linguistics. Furthermore, Kaurna is the best documented example in Australia of a reclaimed language that has been re-learnt and re-introduced on the basis of written historical documentation. Some students may seriously wish to learn about approaches and methods for language revival with a view to working in this area, either with the Kaurna language or with another language in need of revival in some part of the world.

Now that the Kaurna course is offered as a summer school, it attracts a few students who are desperate to finish their degree and need to pick up a course over the summer in order to achieve that, perhaps after having failed a course during the year. These students may have no particular interest in the course content and are aiming for a bare pass. This does have the effect of lowering the tone of the course and level of interaction and engagement with the subject matter.

In the 1990s when the Kaurna course was first introduced it was open to community access, drawing members from the public at large with a passionate interest in the Kaurna language and culture. Community participation in this course, especially from the Kaurna community, but also from teachers and others with an interesting range of expertise and life experience, contributes much to the course, and students benefit as a result. Some years ago, community access was abolished by the university, for reasons unrelated to the Kaurna course itself. As a result, there is little point in promoting the course beyond the University, in contradiction with recent moves by the University to value impact and community engagement. In order to enable continued access by members of the Kaurna community and the general

[11] Teichelmann and Schürmann (1840) used the abbreviation *s.* for Substantive to identify nouns within their wordlist.

public, they are being signed up as volunteers, entailing added administrative processes for no financial return. In January 2017 two members of the public signed up as volunteers and assisted with the running of the course, four others, including two Kaurna people, signed up as volunteers for 2019, whilst another four Kaurna people came along to the first session to share their connection with the language and to talk about how they use Kaurna (Bow 2019, p. 2).

4.1 Course Content

The ecology of Australian Indigenous languages means that the course content for Aboriginal languages in the tertiary sector is quite different from that of other languages. Some topics typically introduced in an introductory course in an international language will have little relevance in Aboriginal language courses and vice versa. Others will be given different emphasis. Whilst some topics will be relevant, they are often approached in a different way. For instance, the topic of family and kinship is likely to be addressed in any language course, but in many languages it will probably be limited to the nuclear family. In Australian Indigenous languages courses, kinship structures, including the moiety system, sections and subsections or birth-order names, and associated behaviours, are likely to play a central role within the course. However, course content is configured somewhat differently from one Indigenous language course to another in response to the state of the target language as discussed above, the perceived needs of the learners, and most importantly, in response to who is teaching the course.

Developing understandings of Aboriginal society and culture is of prime concern, especially when Aboriginal people are centrally involved in course design and delivery. Learning outcomes for the CDU Yolŋu Matha courses focus on understanding key concepts of Yolŋu life and kinship first, followed by understanding sounds, spelling, pronunciation and grammar. The Pitjantjatjara course at UniSA focuses on the concept of *Ngapartji* and reciprocal exchange. The Wiradjuri course at CSU focuses on the impact of invasion history and policies and practices that threatened the loss of the language. The Kaurna course (taught by a non-Indigenous linguist) has a strong emphasis on historical source material and its interpretation. The Gamilaraay course (also taught by a non-Indigenous linguist) has less emphasis on culture (though of course it does come up) and focuses much more on grammatical understanding and communicative competence.

The Unit Description for the 2018 Introductory Yolŋu Matha course (CAS110)[12] reads:

> The unit is designed to give an introduction to the life and language of Yolngu people in Northeast Arnhemland. The course concentrates on Yolngu Matha (Yolngu language) forms

[12] http://stapps.cdu.edu.au/f?p=100:21:0::NO::P21_SEARCH_UNIT,P21_SEARCH_VERSION,P21_SEARCH_YEAR:CAS110,92,018.

> of Dhuwala and focuses on the everyday community version of the language. A basic grounding in the sounds of the languages, the grammar, and a basic vocabulary will give grounding for the learning of other Yolngu languages. Moiety systems, various aspects of kinship, Yolngu life, creation stories, songs, art and ceremonies, and how these relate together, will be presented.

Compare this with the Wiradjuri IKC301 course abstract:[13]

> This subject focuses on developing the Wiradjuri language skills of students within the context of cultural heritage. Students will work together to increase their proficiency in Wiradjuri conversation and will work together to generate resources that can be made available for use by others teaching Wiradjuri Language. Students will also expand their working knowledge of the Wiradjuri language through an expansion of their vocabulary and a developing knowledge of Wiradjuri grammar.
>
> This subject will also provide students with the knowledge and understanding of the Wiradjuri language, including likely contrasts between pre-invasion and post-invasion Wiradjuri language, and a clear understanding of the influences and impact of invasion history on the Wiradjuri Nation, language and culture; including policies and practices that have threatened the loss of the Wiradjuri language.

Of course, whatever the language, an introduction to the sounds and spelling (orthography) and the teaching of points of grammar is essential. Greetings and introductions will also figure in any introductory conversational course. However, welcomes to, and acknowledgements of country are probably more specific to Aboriginal language courses and especially important within revival language courses.

Family and kinship is a topic likely to be introduced early on in most language courses. This is particularly important within the Aboriginal context where kinship systems are highly elaborated and knowledge of kinship is essential in knowing how to behave appropriately within Aboriginal society. Kinship and the moiety system are clearly priority areas for study within the Yolŋu program at CDU. "Explain an operational understanding of the Yolngu *mälk* and *gurrutu* (kinship) systems" is listed as one of just five Learning Outcomes for "Yolngu Languages and Culture 1" (IAS541),[14] while "Apply an understanding of the Yolngu *Mälk* and *Gurrutu* (kinship) systems in interactions with Yolngu people and other language speakers" is listed as one of just four Learning Outcomes for "Yolngu Languages and Culture 2" (IAS542).[15]

Course content may well focus on daily life, mealtimes, around the house, going places, etc., but at least for Pitjantjatjara and Yolŋu Matha, this is more likely to revolve around life in a small community in a remote area, rather than life in a large city. Food as a theme in an Aboriginal language course most certainly will not feature how to place an order in a restaurant or how to bargain in the market, as is likely to be the case in a German, French or Indonesian language course.

[13] http://www.csu.edu.au/handbook/subjects/IKC301.html

[14] http://stapps.cdu.edu.au/f?p=100:21:::::P21_SEARCH_UNIT,P21_SEARCH_VERSION,P21_SEARCH_YEAR:IAS541,12,020.

[15] http://stapps.cdu.edu.au/f?p=100:21:::::P21_SEARCH_UNIT,P21_SEARCH_VERSION,P21_SEARCH_YEAR:IAS542,12,020.

My introductory German textbook (Terrell et al. 1988) for first year German at the University of Adelaide includes chapters on *Geld und Arbeit* (money and work), *Essen und Einkaufen* (food and shopping), *Gesundheit und Krankheit* (health and sickness), etc. These topics are marginal at best for an Aboriginal language taught in the tertiary sector. No learner of an Aboriginal language will ever have cause to visit a doctor speaking the language of study. Nor will it be possible to go shopping (except perhaps in a community store or an art centre) and speak the target language with the shop keeper or shop assistant. Whilst the main purpose for learning languages such as Pitjantjatjara and Yolŋu Matha may be vocational, the vocabulary and expressions needed will bear little relationship to those taught in a German or Japanese class, where various occupations will be introduced and job application procedures taught, all of which will have absolutely no relevance in Indigenous Australian contexts. Many things (such as a daily newspaper), which are taken for granted in a modern world language, have no relevance in an Aboriginal language as they simply do not exist in Aboriginal communities and are not published in Aboriginal languages. For this reason, whilst there are many themes and topics which at a general level are common to human existence and everyday conversation, when it comes down to the specifics, they will be treated in very different ways. It would make no sense at all to model an Aboriginal language course too closely on a modern world language course. In other words, it makes no sense to simply translate such a course directly into an Aboriginal language.

4.2 Implementation

Another important point of difference arises in the teaching of Indigenous languages, which tend to be located at the far esoteric end of the esoteric-exoteric continuum. In the teaching of an exoteric language epitomized by English, everyone is welcomed, even expected to learn English. Teachers of English are drawn from many nationalities and language backgrounds. Indeed, it has been argued that the best teachers of English are not native speakers, but rather highly competent second language speakers (Alghofaili and Elyas 2017). English is not regarded as being "owned" by any particular individual, group of individuals or people and no-one needs to be consulted over the right to teach English. The same applies in large part to the other modern world languages offered by Australian universities. Australian Indigenous languages on the other hand, are located at the other end of the spectrum. Specific owners and custodians living at Galiwin'ku were consulted and permission was granted prior to the Djambarrpuyŋu course being offered at CDU. Mona Tur, herself an Antikirinya/Yankunytjatjara woman, consulted Elders in the Pitjantjatjara-Yankunytjatjara lands in the north west of South Australia prior to the teaching of Pitjantjatjara at the University of South Australia (UniSA). Kaurna Elders were consulted prior to the introduction of the Kaurna course at the University of Adelaide, and so on. Furthermore, it is vital that first language speakers, Elders or those most knowledgeable are involved in the delivery of these courses. Most

Australian Indigenous languages offered in the tertiary sector are taught by a team of Indigenous and non-Indigenous lecturers and tutors. It is very important that the non-Indigenous lecturers are known to the community.

The need to include first language speakers, Elders and knowledgeable members of the community raises the need for training and professional development. It is often the case that the Indigenous members of the team have not had the opportunity to attend university themselves and their schooling itself may have been very limited. Training options for teachers of Indigenous languages are also extremely limited (FLA 2018). For many years A<u>n</u>angu lecturers or tutors were involved in the delivery of the Pitjantjatjara course at UniSA to deliver the conversational component of the course, whilst the teaching of grammar, assessment, and so on, was delivered by the non-Indigenous member of the team. In 2013 and 2014 the A<u>n</u>angu tutors undertook the TAFE Certificate III training "Learning an Endangered Aboriginal Language (Pitjantjatjara)" and in 2014–2015 the Certificate IV "Teaching an Endangered Aboriginal Language (Pitjantjatjara)". As they were already fluent first language speakers of Pitjantjatjara, the focus of the Certificate III course was on literacy, linguistic structure and metalinguistic terminology so that they were able to explain the grammar of their language and answer students' questions (see Gale, this volume; Gale et al., this volume).

5 Conclusion

The reasons for teaching and learning Indigenous languages at tertiary level are much more localized than the reasons for learning a modern world language. Students will study an Indigenous language in order to be able to communicate, often for work purposes, with a specific localized group in Central Australia, the Top End of the Northern Territory, or elsewhere. These languages do not have wide currency and are useful for communicating with a few thousand people at most. By contrast, introductory German textbooks situate German amongst German-speaking countries (Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Liechtenstein, Belgium) and within the world context. There is little by way of literature to read that is written in Aboriginal languages and the amount of film, video or audio recordings in these languages is also limited by comparison with modern world languages. Further study options in and through Aboriginal languages and professions that depend totally on those language skills are non-existent, though knowledge of Aboriginal languages can be very useful for professionals in connecting with members of the target community.

But most importantly, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages are Australia's priceless, irreplaceable national heritage. Teaching these languages at universities does help to confer status and value upon these languages. Students enrol in the knowledge that they are an important part of efforts to maintain, revive and revitalize Australia's national linguistic treasures.

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Rob Amery is the Head of the Department of Linguistics at the University of Adelaide, and his research publications are principally devoted to Indigenous language reclamation. He has worked closely with Kaurna people in implementing strategies to re-introduce their language.