Notes from endangered language fieldwork

June 22-25: Nick Evans travelled up to Mornington Island, his old Kayardild stomping-ground in a trip supported by Alcaston Galleries, in Melbourne, to enable him to conduct a Kayardild-language interview with artist Sally Gabori about a painting of hers, for which a detail will be reproduced in enlarged form on the wall of the new Brisbane Supreme Court and District Court. Of the interview, Nick said, “This was fascinating – Sally gave a very detailed and interesting account of the painting and her preferences as to which elements should go up on the wall”. On the way to Mornington Island, Nick gave a talk at James Cook University (Cairns Campus) on linguistic diversity in southern New Guinea.

Meanwhile, Sébastien Lacrampe is currently spending two months in Lelepa, Central Vanuatu. He is focusing on enlarging the Lelepa corpus he started building in 2006 as well as giving more than a go at solving a few grammatical and phonological mysteries that have kept him awake at night.

While on Lelepa he is organising a series of orthography development workshops for and with Lelepa speakers; the outcome of these workshops being the publication of a book of Lelepa stories in text and audio form with translations in the official languages of Vanuatu, English and French. This project is supported by the World heritage Tourism Committee for the Lelepa region.

Farewell John Bowden

During the month of June we bid farewell to John Bowden, who now takes up a position at the Jakarta field station of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig. John joined the Department of Linguistics in 1999, succeeding Nikolaus Himmelmann as our specialist in Indonesian languages. He brought great enthusiasm and energy to his teaching, research and service to the academic community. In fact it is mind-boggling to recall the range of his contributions over and above the norm. John, a most collegial fellow, always found it hard to say no. His competence with electronic technology were spotted early and he was put on the RSPAS IT Committee soon after arrival, among several other committees. For several years he also served as managing editor of Pacific Linguistics, almost a full-time job in itself. He was also instrumental in getting the Wurm Endowment established and operative. After political crises prevented his return to Halmahera, where he had...
Wayan Arka has won a CAP internal research grant ($4973) to organise a one-week workshop in December 2010 in Merauke. The workshop combines his linguistic fieldwork with local capacity building effort in the domain of awareness of language maintenance and participation in language documentation. The target participants are representatives of minority language group in the surrounding areas of Merauke, Indonesian Papua. Most of languages of minority groups of Indonesia, particularly in West Papua, are either under-documented or completely undocumented. Given the often difficult political and socio-economic circumstances as well as the remoteness of these languages, one way to help document these languages is to actively involve members of the communities in basic linguistic and documentary work.

Maïa Ponsonnet received $7000 from the Hoffman Foundation who provides small grants for projects on Australian Indigenous Languages. The grant is for a pilot project to develop the skills of two Dalabon women to use ELAN to transcribe and translate recordings from the Dalabon corpus being assembled cooperatively by various parties including Nick Evans, Maïa and Sarah Cutfield from AIATSIS. Project participants Marie and Queenie Brennan are experienced language workers from Barunga community in the Northern Territory. The project allows the women to engage with Dalabon researchers at a higher level and should the pilot be successful, go on to work as research assistants.

**Farewell John Bowden**

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... done outstanding descriptive work on the Taba language, John moved his research focus to East Timor, as part of a team of three scholars documenting endangered languages. During his decade at ANU he obtained, in collaboration with colleagues, research grants totalling well over a million dollars. He also taught a course on field methods in the Faculty of Arts every second year, leading to two students going on to do in-depth work on the exemplar language. John’s shoes will be hard to fill. We wish him the best of luck in his new post.

We also farewell Anneliese Kuhle, who has spent a little over a year with us as an exchange PhD student, working on reciprocals cross-linguistically. Anneliese will be returning to Freie Universität Berlin to complete her PhD – viel Glück mit dem Endspurt!

And lastly, Frank Lichtenberk spent over four months here on research and study leave from the University of Auckland, returning in early June. Frank spent most of his time here working on possessive constructions in Oceanic languages but also gave two talks, attended reading groups and took part in the Social Cognition and Language workshop held at Kioloa. Frank says he thoroughly enjoyed his time here. He was impressed by the quality of work done by the students and by the collegiality in Linguistics.

**Recent Pacific Linguistics publications**

Pacific Linguistics, publisher of linguistics texts since 1963 and hosted by the School of Culture, History and Languages, continues its strong publication record this year. Recent releases include:

- Old Khmer Grammar
- Philip Jenner and Paul Sidwell (PL 611)
- Reconstructing Proto Koiarian: The history of a Papuan language family Tom Dutton (PL 610)
- A grammar of Abma: a language of Pentecost Island, Vanuatu Cynthia Schneider (PL 608)
- The Buyang language of South China: grammatical notes, glossary, texts and translations Li Jinfang Li and Yongxian LIO, (Pl 607)
- Moli (Baining) texts Tonya N. Stebbins with the assistance of Julius Tayul, (PL 606)

These publications are available as PDF files for students. To contact Pacific Linguistics go to their [website](http://www.pacificlinguistics.org/) or email [Julie Marley](mailto:Julie@pacificlinguistics.org).
Heading north for the winter: More fieldwork news

During July, Mark Donohue will be leading a team of linguists and archaeologists to the Onin region of western New Guinea, in Indonesia. Following a scouting trip in February 2010, during which Mark identified local communities and sites that could be investigated, the multi-institutional team (from ANU, Monash, Universitas Negeri Papua, Université Lyon and Leiden) will spend several months surveying and conducting in-depth investigations of sites and languages. The Onin peninsula is home to four or five Austronesian languages (Onin, Sekar, Arguni, Yarik and Kambran), and three or four other languages (Iha, Mbaham, Karas and Mor).

In June, Greg Dickson returned to Ngukurr community (Southern Arnhem Land) where he worked as a community linguist from 2004-07. Commencing his PhD fieldwork on the Marra language, he quickly got to work with the Marra language team to process never before transcribed/translated recordings made by Ken Hale in 1959. Greg will also work with the 10 or so Marra speakers to document more linguistic and cultural information.

Maïa Ponsonnet will venture north on French National Day for a short two-week field-trip. She will work with Dalabon and Kriol speakers in Katherine, Northern Territory or in the remote communities of Barunga, Beswick/Wugularr, Weemol.

Bits and pieces from around the traps

Jeremy Snyder, from the University of Western Australia, joining us as a new PhD student in June. En route from Perth Jeremy stopped off in Bowral for the HCSNet WinterFest, where he had been awarded a scholarship to study intensively before appearing in Canberra. Given that Jeremy is going to be heading off to New Guinea almost immediately, he won’t have to put up with Canberra’s winter for long this time around. Jeremy has stuck around long enough to deliver a seminar shortly after his arrival: on July 5, Jeremy gave a talk as part of his thesis proposal review entitled “Why I’m going to Fakfak for my PhD”. (Note: for those hearing this unforgettable placename for the first time, Fakfak is a small city in West Papua, Indonesia).

Sébastien Lacrampe has co-authored an article with Valérie Guérin to be published in the next issue of Language Documentation and Conservation: Guérin, Valérie and Sébastien Lacrampe, to appear. Trust me, I am a linguist!

Carpet revealed in Mark Donohue’s office

On June 8 Mark Donohue launched a long-awaited campaign against his office. He has now secured a pathway from the door to his desk, discovering hitherto unsuspected carpet. He plans to discover the colour of his desk next, and later to gain access to the bookshelves, assuming he manages to defend the gains already made.

Stay tuned for future discoveries in Room 7206A.
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The Asia-Pacific is the most complex and varied linguistic landscape in the world, with three thousand of the world’s 7,000 languages. Many are endangered and in coming decades the region is confronting an epochal narrowing of the human knowledge base through language loss. Linguistics in the College of Asia and the Pacific promotes the study of this linguistic diversity in its fullest sense, including documentation and description – producing grammars, dictionaries and collections of textual materials, usually from on-site fieldwork – work that is equally important for small speech communities themselves. Minority languages researched in the department cover sites ranging from Vanuatu, New Caledonia, PNG, Australia, Indonesia, Timor Leste, the Philippines, Taiwan, India and Japan. Other research focuses on national languages of the region, such as Japanese and Indonesian.

Our postgraduate training aims to produce descriptive linguists of the highest quality. We teach into all levels, including undergraduate courses in Japanese, Indonesian, Linguistics and Pacific Studies, Master’s Courses in Linguistics and Applied Japanese Linguistics, and advanced doctoral training. We co-host Paradisec, a digital archive dedicated to recordings of languages and cultures of the Pacific. We also publish the monograph series Pacific Linguistics, which has produced over 600 publications.

Coming up...

AIATSIS is hosting the Indigenous Technologies and Indigenous Communities symposium on July 13–15 at the Shine Dome with workshops held on July 16 at the ANU School of Music and National Film and Sound Archive. See website for more details.

The series of seminars from CAP Linguistics continues throughout July and beyond, including:

July 23 (11:00am–1:00pm): “Object verbs in Huon Peninsula languages” – Edgar Suter - Coombs bldg, Seminar Rm C

July 30 (12:30–1:30pm): TBA - Duck Young Lee - Baldessin Precinct bldg

For more details on our seminars visit: http://chi.anu.edu.au/events/

On July 23rd, (12:30–2:00pm) there will be a CAP Linguistics lunch (venue tba). This is a chance for our new group to join in a meal together. More details later but please note the date and time.

Wayan Arka and Antonio Guerreiro (CNRS, Université de Provence, Marseille) invite presentations for an interdisciplinary workshop on Borneo & the Austronesian World to be held in the Coombs building on August 23. Contact Antonio (antonig7065@yahoo.fr) or Wayan (wayan.arka@anu.edu.au).

August 8 is the due date for abstracts for the first meeting of NWAV (New Ways of Analysis Language Variation) Asia Pacific. The conference will be held at the University of Delhi, February 23-26, 2011. See website for more details.

Linguistics morning tea. Photo by Christian Döhler