ANU linguists in West Papua for WLP3

A large contingent from the ANU attended the third Workshop on the Languages of Papua (WLP) in Manokwari, West Papua, Indonesia from 20-24 January 2014: Nick Evans, Wayan Arka, Christian Döhler, Yusuf Sawaki and Niko Kobepa. Each of them presented a paper: Puzzles of Aspect in Nen (Nick), Valence, Alignment System and Agreement in Marori (Wayan), Picking up the pieces-distributed morphology in Kómnzo (Christian), Possessive Constructions in Wooi (Yusuf), Modal Distance in the Mee Past Tenses (Niko) and Using Pronominal Syncretisms as a Tool for Diagnosing Phylogeny in Papuan Languages (Nick - joint work with Simon Greenhill).

Immediately after the workshop, from 26 January to 5 February, Nick, along with Henrik Bergqvist (Stockholm) and Lila San Roque (MPI Nijmegen) also gave a master class on Special Topics in Field Linguistics. This class worked with PhD student Niko Kobepa and two of his fellow Mee (Ekagi) speakers Marius Kobepa and Alpius Kobepa on exploring the grammar of social cognition, and with developing new field protocols for obtaining rich data on such semantic categories as engagement and the degree to which the reported information is/was new to the speaker and/or hearer.

Center of Excellence announcement

December brought major news that a Centre of Excellence on the Dynamics of Language bid was successful. The Center of Excellence is led by ANU and involves U. Melbourne, University of Western Sydney and U. Queensland. This COE will attract $4M per year across the four participating institutions for 7 years, from the ARC (75%) and the institutions themselves, starting from June 30. The Centre will focus on developing a new approach to the language sciences in which change and variation is fundamental. Its research will be divided across four programs – Shape (description, documentation, typology, corpus-building), Learning, Processing, and Evolution, linked together by technological threads whose goal is to develop new technologies for obtaining rich new data, especially in field situations. At present the Centre is going through the rather complex set-up requirements; more details will be available on a new website in the next couple of months once key Centre administrative Personnel are in place.
Language Documentation on mobiles

Long term Departmental Visitor Bruce Birch has been awarded a grant from UNESCO to run a workshop in Darwin later this year focusing on the development of crowdsourcing smartphone and tablet apps for language documentation. Participants will include speakers of Northwestern Arnhem Land languages, linguists, and software developers. A media launch for the Ma! Iwaidja Dictionary, a crowdsourcing lexicon development app developed by the Iwaidja Inyman team led by Bruce with funding from the Indigenous Languages Support program, will take place during the workshop.

Versions of the lexicon development app have been produced for the Cameroonian language Mokpe (in collaboration with the Hans Raising Endangered Languages Program), and the PNG highlands language Bena Bena with funds from the Volkswagen Foundation’s DoBeS program. Releases are imminent for Gamilaraay (in collaboration with John Giacon and David Nathan) and Somali (in collaboration with Nick Thieberger and Nadia Faragaab), and the Darwin-based Aboriginal Interpreter Service.

Bruce has just gone live with a blog for the Ma! Project, where details of the workshop will become available over the next weeks, and where news and updates relating to the Ma! Project, to crowdsourcing in language documentation in general, and to the use of mobile devices in the language documentation context will be posted. Please feel free to contact Bruce if you would like to be a guest contributor on these topics.

New PhD students and visitors

The Department welcomes four new PhD students this year: U. Melbourne graduate Eri Kashima, who will be working in Southern PNG; U. of Canterbury (Christchurch, NZ) graduate Kateřina Nai-toro who will be doing comparative research on Southeast Solomonic languages; ANU graduate Keren Baker, who will be working on the Austroasiatic language Lyngnam in Meghalaya, India; and ANU graduate Karma Tshering, who obtained an ELDP doctoral award to work on the ethnobiology of Gongduk, a language of Bhutan.

In addition, during the February-April period, there will be a number of visitors to the ANU, including Volker Gast (Jena), Sonja Gipper (Cologne), Sonja Riesberg (Cologne), Myriam Bouveret (Paris), and Rachel Nordlinger (Melbourne), as well as a three-person delegation from Brazil (Bruna Franchetto, Lívia Camargo and Rafael Nonato) who will be investigating indigenous language maintenance and revival programs in Australia.

New grant to document Kusunda

Mark Donohue and his assistant Bhoj Raj Gautam are celebrating receiving nearly $10,000 in grant money from the Firebird Foundation to facilitate workshops that will bring the two remaining Kusunda speakers together with other members of the ethnic group, and record their oral traditions as best they can. This ensures that the best possible record of their folklore, ethnobiological knowledge, and traditional beliefs will be recorded in its original language while the speakers are still around, and older people with ritual knowledge are still able to share it.

On the two first fieldtrips since getting this grant, Mark and Bhoj Raj succeeded in making the first ever recordings of traditional folk tales in Kusunda, as well as much ethnographic material concerning ritual, witchcraft, shaman practices and taboos, and numerous riddles. The mystery of the village-centric culture of the Kusunda existing in the hilly jungles of central-western Nepal continues.

Armed with this new knowledge, a presentation on January 26 at the Nepal Folklore Society’s annual meeting, entitled Kusunda ra gaonle-harubicko sambandhaka vibhinna ayamharu (Various aspects of interaction between the Kusunda and villagers), was well received.

Gyani Maiya, one of the two last Kusunda speakers.
Publication news

Simon Greenhill and some colleagues from Biology have a paper (just out!) in Proceedings of the Royal Society on the transmission of traditional knowledge in Nepal. The paper is available online, as well as an ANU media release.

Simon, with Russell Gray, and Quentin Atkinson also had a book chapter published as part of a Strüngmann forum meeting on Cultural Evolution. This paper is called Phylogenetic models of language change: Three new questions and is filled with new ideas about how to investigate broad-scale questions in language evolution. In the same volume, Nick Evans has a chapter entitled Language Diversity as a resource for understanding cultural evolution.

Gwen Hyslop published an article entitled A Preliminary Reconstruction of East Bodish in Trans-Himalayan Linguistics edited by Nathan Hill and Thomas Owen-Smith. She also published a paper on Kurtōp Orthography Development in Bhutan in Developing Orthographies for Unwritten Languages by Michael Cahill and Keren Rice.

Tim Hassall had an article accepted by the journal Multilingua. The paper is in the field of second language pragmatics, and is titled Individual variation in L2 study abroad outcomes: a case study from Indonesian pragmatics.

Cathryn Donohue’s book on Fuzhou tonal acoustics and tonology has appeared, bringing together acoustic and perceptual phonetic data with modern phonological analysis. Cathryn is currently in Canberra, extending her areal coverage by working with Mark Donohue on the phonetic and phonological analysis of tone and phonation from languages of Nepal.

Collecting material on Timor languages

Attention on the languages of Timor continues to grow at the ANU. In addition to work by PhD students Owen Edwards and Katharine Gosling in the west of the island, Ginny Dawson is collecting materials on the previously unknown languages of the central mountains in Manatuto district, in East Timor. Working with Senhor João Maria Cristo Rei, a friend of Mark Donohue’s from their earlier documentation workshop in Kupang in 2012, a member of the traditional nobility in Manatuto, and a strong language advocate for his district. With data on Habun, Idatê and Midiki becoming available for the first time, and a more in-depth understanding of Galolen emerging, an overall picture of the linguistic state of affairs on Timor looks to be within our grasp.

Recent talks

While on maternity leave, Gwen Hyslop could not keep away from linguistics for long. She gave a talk at the Berkeley Linguistic Society entitled On the category of interlocutor expectation in Kurtōp.

Rachel Hendery attended the Volkswagen Herrenhausen conference on Digital Humanities in Hanover, as the result of a small Volkswagen grant.

Carol Priestley’s work as a specialist linguist on the Appen Butler Hill Tok Pisin Lexicon Project is continuing. She was the invited discussant for Sophie Nicholl’s and Carsten Levisen’s talks on Creoles, Kriol, and postcolonial semantics at the Endangered Languages, Endangered Meanings Symposium, at ANU from 8-9 November 2013.

Siva Kalyan gave a talk co-authored with Alex François, entitled Historical Glottometry: A wave-model approach to sub-grouping, at the 40th Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society, at the University of California, Berkeley, from 7-9 February 2014.
Uncommon linguistic features amongst languages of the Upper Gorkha region

Mark Donohue, together with his collaborator Dubi Nanda Dhakal, has started work on Tsum, a language of the Upper Gorkha area. Assisted by the very helpful Tsum Valley Welfare Society, they are assembling words and phrases, as well as descriptions and traditional stories, that will preserve the culture and history of this remote valley. A first trip up the Budhi Gandaki river towards the Kutang region, where Kuke is spoken, occurred in January. Conducting a village-by-village survey of those phonetic features that appear to form a diffusion zone in the Upper Gorkha, much phonetically interesting variation was uncovered, including labial-velar stops, word-final lenition and nasal coda lengthening. Against all local norms, Kuke (in the middle of this area) has subject and object agreement, and tense-dependent patterns of syncretism in the agreement paradigms, and numerous other inflectional gems. The latest details are posted here.

Wayan’s Indonesian tour

Wayan Arka is now back at the ANU after a two-and-half-month trip to Indonesia. He first gave a keynote talk at a conference on Austronesian languages of Indonesia at Udayana University (4-7 November 2013). He then visited Badan Bahasa (National Language Board) in Jakarta to initiate collaboration with the institution for the purpose of Endangered Language Catalogue (ELCAT). Wayan is currently the Regional Director of ELCAT for Indonesia. Wayan also did fieldwork in Merauke, and attended the third Workshop on the Languages of Papua (see page 1).

Murray Garde’s book launch

Murray Garde’s new book on Bininj Gunwok language was launched on 18 December at the ANU by the School of Culture, History and Language. Speakers included Margaret Jolly, Nicholas Evans, Jon Altman and special guests from Western Arnhem Land, Stuart Guy-mala and Emmanuel Namarnyilk. The book is an ethnography of communication that focuses on the way Bininj Gunwok speakers refer to other people in everyday conversation. Details and pictures of the launch can be found here.
Promotion, awards and prizes

**Wayan Arka** has been elected as the Chair of the Executive Committee of the International Lexical Functional Grammar Association (ILFGA) for 2014. Wayan has served as a member of the Executive committee since 2011. ILFGA is the official organization of linguists interested in LFG and related topics.

**Mark Donohue** has been awarded funds from the Firebird Foundation that will allow work on Bumthang, a language of central Bhutan, to continue. Work began last year with a semester-long semi-field methods class taught at the ANU, and will be able to proceed both in Australia and in Bhutan with the funds made available from this grant. This continuation forms a nice segue to extension work that Mark conducted with Bhutanese monks living in Kathmandu last month, and will allow to continue to record, transcribe and make available oral literature in the Bumthang language.

The Department is happy to announce that the 2013 Stephen and Helen Wurm Prize was awarded to **Aung Si** for his thesis on Aspects of the Traditional Knowledge of the Solega. This was Aung Si’s second PhD (his first was in Biology) and he is now on a postdoc at the University of Melbourne working on the vocabulary of bees and insects in indigenous languages of Arnhem Land.

**Kwang-Ju back from Nepal**

**Kwang-Ju Cho** was in Nepal from October to mid-December. While it was the best season of the year in Nepal, it was a challenge to recruit research assistants right after a long holiday. He ended up working with two friendly Bantawa assistants who managed to get things done in the villages in time, a real exploit!

The last evening in each village turned out to be a celebration with people singing and dancing. These were wonderful moments to tighten links with villagers. A picture of Kwang-Ju’s dancing skills will be posted in the next issue of the local magazine!

The trip was particularly successful in that Kwang-Ju accidentally discovered grammatical evidentiality in one particular variety of Bantawa; a feature not known to be found in any other varieties.

Forthcoming presentations

**Nick Evans** will be presenting papers at two back-to-back events at NINJAL in Tokyo in late February: a special two-day workshop on International Symposium on Poly-synthesis in the World’s Languages, plus a ‘Typology Festa’.

**Greg Dickson** will be returning briefly in March to deliver his final thesis presentation on March 14. He will also be attending the Australian Languages Workshop the week prior and giving a talk at ALW’s Languages in Contact workshop, *Rethinking the substrate influences of Roper Kriol: the case of Marra*. The Ngukurr Language Centre, situated where Greg did most of his fieldwork, is kindly supporting two community members from Ngukurr, Aaron Joshua and Anthony Daniels, to attend ALW and spend the following week in Canberra. Aaron and Anthony have made key contributions to Greg’s research on Kriol over the years and will now have the opportunity to see what happens at the other end of linguistic research. Please make them feel welcome if you see them around!
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.