

**RNLD/RUIL Internship Program:
Chau Nguyen**

In late October, I had the opportunity to accompany trainer Margaret Florey and assistant trainer Katerina Forrester on a two-day training workshop in Shepparton. The workshop took place at the Yorta-Yorta Nation, where I had the pleasure of meeting an enthusiastic group of people, dedicated to revitalising the Yorta-Yorta language. In my experience, I have attended numerous workshops before with the roles of trainer, trainee and facilitator. However, the themes of these workshops mainly surround language teaching methodology or English Language Teaching. This was the first time I was able to observe linguistic training in the unique context of language revitalisation and it had proved to be a very wonderful and eye-opening experience.

I believe I have learned a lot from Margaret and Katerina in the two days. I enjoyed seeing the scaffolding technique that Margaret used to build up the participants' knowledge of linguistic terms and of their own language. Starting with learning three to five new words of animals in the first morning, the participants were able to add on words of location, verbs and adjectives to create full sentences by the end of the workshop. Margaret asked for English to be left out of these sessions in order to maximise the use of Yorta-Yorta, and the whole workshop was centred around the participants using the language as much as possible. Along the process of learning new vocabulary is the opportunity to practice teaching with each other according to the 4 stages of teaching a language. The participants worked in small groups, taking turn to teach each other the Yorta-Yorta language. In addition to consolidating their knowledge, they also developed an understanding of how to teach the language. Throughout the sessions, in no way did the trainers impose their linguistic knowledge, but rather they facilitated the necessary linguistic tools for the participants to explore their own language.

The session on pronunciation was a highlight in the second day. Again, without imposing her knowledge, Margaret showed linguistic evidences and suggested how certain sounds in Yorta-Yorta might be pronounced. It seemed that the participants had been struggling in this area and the linguistic knowledge was helping in helping them determine the best way to pronounce the sounds in their language. It was very impressive to see the participants monitoring their pronunciation later on in the session. They were also very keen in using audio recorders to record their language production as well as using the software Audacity to edit the audio clips. This showed that they had an awareness of documenting and protecting the language resource for the future generations.

Despite this being a new group of participants, the relationship between the trainers and the participants at the workshop was very open and warm. By building relationships on a more personal level with the participants, I believe Margaret and Katerina became approachable and hence, their knowledge can be accessible to the participants. Asking about the participants' experience, feelings as a learner as well as their perspective on language work helped Margaret and Katerina identify those who seem to be struggling to offer appropriate help and encourage those more fluent in the language to strengthen their confidence and leadership skill. The participants' leadership skills were also demonstrated in the feedback session, where they took charge of asking questions. They particularly showed interest in the young participants who attended the workshop, wishing to hear their feelings about the experience.

Overall, I believe the workshop was truly a success. The strongest evidence is that all the participants were keen on learning more and one participant even asked for more linguistic materials. The trainers were invited back for a second workshop and I trust that many more will take place as the relationship strengthens. For me personally, the experience was very empowering. The pride and dedication the participants have for their language not only inspire me to learn more about languages in Aboriginal Australia but also the languages of my own country that are in danger of dying out.