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The Linguistics Roadshow

Abstract: This paper presents an overview of the Linguistics Roadshow, an interactive showcase about the science of language and a hub for fun and interactive resources about linguistics. The Roadshow began as a travelling high school outreach programme introducing Australian students to linguistics and has grown to include online resources, providing an accessible introduction to linguistics with information about how students can pursue their interests in language. This paper is intended to provide a general guide to conducting linguistics-themed school incursions, to highlight opportunities afforded and challenges faced in undertaking this kind of outreach. We discuss the motivations for developing the Roadshow, outline the process of designing the workshop programme and materials, and offer a detailed description of the content and format. We reflect on our achievements and impact as well as lessons learned, and discuss future directions for a sustainable Roadshow and for linguistics outreach in the Australian context.

Keywords: linguistics; outreach; school; education; Australia

1 Introduction

Many disciplines offered at a university level, such as English, physics, and history, are among typical secondary school subjects, meaning that school students who develop interests in these areas have clear directions for further study. This is not generally the case for linguistics. In some countries linguistics is among standard offerings (e.g. A-Level English Language in the United Kingdom; Hudson 2007), while in others it is an elective in some schools (e.g. Loosen 2014; Paxton et al. 2021). In general, though, linguistics is not a discipline encountered during secondary (or primary) schooling. This presents challenges to the discoverability of linguistics at university, which is important for the viability of teaching programmes but also for ensuring the discipline is accessible to the most diverse possible range of potential future linguists (Larson et al. 2019; Lidz and Kronrod 2014; Linguistic Society of America 2018). Key motivations for teaching secondary school students about linguistics include a desire to equip students with deeper understandings of language structures, and the tools to systematically investigate these (e.g. Denham and Lobeck 2010). However, there is also increasing recognition that when engaging with young people and their communities, linguists can and should work to address popular misconceptions about language, cultivate awareness of linguistic diversity and language variation, and combat linguistic prejudice (e.g. Bucholtz et al. 2014). In this paper, we introduce the Linguistics Roadshow, a high school[1] outreach programme in Australia endeavouring to increase the discoverability of linguistics and to share the insights it offers.

In Australia, the only formal linguistics teaching at high school level is the subject English Language within the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE). VCE English Language develops skills in understanding and analysing language structures and usage, taking Australian English as a reference point (Mulder 2007;

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[1] The term 'high school' as used here is synonymous with 'secondary school', and refers to schooling for students typically aged 12–18, from Year 7 to Year 12 in the Australian system.

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Mulder and Thomas 2021).[2] High school students may also encounter linguistics through the Australian Computational and Linguistics Olympiad (OzCLO), a team-based language puzzle competition (Estival et al. 2014). OzCLO is open to students in most Australian states and territories, though participation skews towards students from metropolitan rather than rural[3] areas, and from private and selective government schools.[4] The opportunity to reach other student cohorts came with the ARC Centre of Excellence for the Dynamics of Language (CoEDL), a multi-institutional research centre that operated from 2014 to 2022, funded by the Australian Research Council.[5] Through an internal funding scheme, the authors were awarded funding in 2015 to develop and pilot the Linguistics Roadshow as a high school outreach programme, billed as "an interactive showcase on the science of language, presenting the big questions and the little-known facts about language for a general audience". Our motivations were threefold:

– to raise the profile of linguistics as a field, by making it more discoverable and offering engaging and interesting messages about language
– to increase public understanding of linguistics and language, especially in relation to the Australian context
– to reach students who, due to distance, have fewer opportunities to connect with universities and discover new fields, and to complement existing curricula

A key feature of the Roadshow was therefore that it involved a team of volunteer linguists travelling to rural locations to deliver workshops at no cost to schools. With our initial grant and later supplementary funding, between 2015 and 2018 we were able to deliver the programme to around 600 student attendees,[6] engage with other community members, and develop a suite of resources for the programme and for wider access.

2 Development and design

2.1 Audiences

School students in Years 7–10 (i.e. aged 12–16) were chosen as the target audience for the Roadshow, given the curriculum pressures facing older students.[7] Students from rural schools were selected as we wanted to address the gap between study areas available for rural compared to urban students (e.g. Dean et al. 2023) and introduce a less familiar university discipline in a relatable way. Focusing on school students also allows access to secondary audiences such as teachers, family, and friends. The wider Australian public were also considered as a more abstract audience, as they would be able to access some of our materials through the Linguistics Roadshow website.

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2 VCE English Language is available to students in Years 11 and 12 in the state of Victoria, and currently has around 4,000 students completing the subject in their final year (Year 12) at over 140 schools (Mulder and Thomas 2021).
3 We use the term 'rural' to refer to areas outside major cities and classified by the Australian Bureau of Statistics as Inner Regional, Outer Regional, Remote, or Very Remote based on relative access to services.
4 OzCLO currently has around 2,500 Year 7–12 students participating each year (https://ozclo.org.au/). 'Private school' here refers to non-government schools, either Catholic-affiliated or independently operated, often with significant tuition fees. Government-operated selective schools have criteria for admittance, generally academic merit.
5 CoEDL operated across four universities in Australia: the Australian National University, the University of Melbourne, the University of Queensland, and Western Sydney University (see https://legacy.dynamicsoflanguage.edu.au). We gratefully acknowledge the funding support provided by CoEDL (Project ID: CE140100041).
6 This would not have been possible without the involvement of four additional "Roadies": Amit German, Karri Hedge, Jason Kohlman, and Peter Nyhuis.
7 Initially we focused on Year 10 only, but due to school interest and composite classes, we focused on a larger age range and adapted the delivery as needed.

2.2 Workshop design considerations

To ensure the Roadshow was an appealing event for schools, visits were designed to be fully contained in-cursions, meaning that the schools needed only to provide a large space, a time slot of about 100 min, and students. We planned to bring all of the required equipment with us, including laptops, speakers, projectors, portable projector screen, iPads, souvenir items, and everything students would need for the activities.

In the first year, we relied on personal contacts with rural teachers to connect us to two of the schools we visited, giving us a starting point to liaise with school administrators. Other visits were organized by directly contacting schools, generally via calling teachers responsible for English and languages programmes, with a follow-up email attaching the full details. To make the Roadshow more feasible and efficient, for each visit we ensured we had a number of schools to visit over a multi-day trip, and other events to attend on each trip. While we had no doubt there would be interest from teachers, in recognition of their limited time capacity we knew we needed to clearly demonstrate the value of the programme. In contacting schools, we foregrounded the

We would like to invite your students to take part in the Linguistics Roadshow!

The Linguistics Roadshow is a program designed to introduce students to the science of human language, through an interactive showcase of language and linguistics. The Linguistics Roadshow is brought to you by young researchers from the Centre of Excellence for the Dynamics of Language and the University of Melbourne.

The Linguistics Roadshow will visit your school and is designed as a two-hour session for Year 10 students. It will include mini-talks and hands-on group activities. The broad focus will be on the diversity of human languages and communication, and the tools that help linguists unravel the most puzzling problems about the languages of the world. Topics will be accessible and interesting for all students, and relate to their everyday experience with language while complementing a range of existing curricula across the sciences, English, LOTE, maths, history and geography. Additional online and printed resources will also be provided to students and teachers.

Activities:
Seeing Sounds – We'll explore some of the mysteries of human speech sounds, and how the workings of the vocal tract can be represented visually. Students will learn about anatomy and speech production, and see examples of speech in waveforms, spectrograms, and video clips including MRI and ultrasound.
Babel in your own Backyard – There are lots of different sorts of Australian English, and diverse influences contributing to it as it grows and changes. Students will be given a taste of some of the variation in spoken and written English, and will be able to contribute their own input on local and individual usages.
Languages of the Land - Students will be taken on a tour of the Australian linguistic landscape, focusing on the many Indigenous languages from across the country. They will learn about the diversity of these languages and their structures, and use this knowledge to solve a puzzle in an Indigenous language.
From Rugrats to Robots - How do we define language? Is it something that only humans can learn? Students will find out about the differences between human, animal and machine communication, and what it takes to learn a language as a child and as an adult.

Structure: The Linguistics Roadshow is a two-hour session aimed at all Year 10 students in your school. For large schools, we recommend scheduling two separate sessions so that all students in the year level can attend. Each session will be presented by 4 researchers.

Cost: This is a free program supported by the Centre of Excellence for the Dynamics of Language.

Requirements:
- A large room suitable to accommodate students (numbers to be confirmed on arrangement).
- 4 large tables (or pairs of tables). Chairs are not required.
- Access to electrical power sockets
- White wall or projector screen
- Duration 2 hours, set up time 45 minutes and pack up 30 mins.

To register: We are currently scheduling Linguistics Roadshow visits to Victorian schools. Please contact the Linguistics Roadshow at lingroadshow@gmail.com to discuss arrangements. If you have enquiries please feel free to call us on +61 3 8344 0909 (Jill) or +61 3 8344 5165 (Katie and Rosey).

ARC CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR **THE DYNAMICS OF LANGUAGE**   **www.lingroadshow.com**   THE UNIVERSITY OF **MELBOURNE**

Figure 1: The information about the Roadshow distributed to teachers after initial contact.

educational importance of the programme (Figure 1), and then reiterated the relevance and importance of our messages during the visits, with teachers present as a secondary audience.

The workshop was designed to be an engaging school-time event with additional materials to take home (Section 3.2.3), and further resources on our website (Section 3.3). We were mindful of students' capacity and willingness to sit still and listen for extended periods of time. We also wanted to give information in a punchy way that delivered messages quickly and accurately. We therefore decided to have discrete parts in the school visits, including a quiz, a talk, and action stations (discussed in Section 3). This meant there was the opportunity for students to move around, and for information to be presented in different ways. To ensure the content was relatable and accessible, all activities provided opportunities for students to reflect on their use of language across a range of topics, including sociolinguistic variation and language acquisition. Indigenous students make up a larger minority in rural schools than in most urban schools and, with this in mind, we wanted to open up conversations about diversity within Aboriginal Englishes and Australian Indigenous languages as a way to recognize and celebrate the linguistic heritage of Australia's First Nations people.

3 Roadshow content and structure

3.1 Core messages

The Roadshow focuses on three core messages and aims to reinforce these across the different components of the programme. These messages are given below:
(1) Linguistic diversity at the global level
   – there are more than 7,000 languages around the world
   – linguistic diversity is distributed unevenly, with some relatively small regions with many languages and some large regions with relatively few languages
   – languages vary in many ways, including in the structure and meanings of words, how words combine into sentences, the sounds of speech, and the elements of sign
(2) Australia's rich linguistic landscape
   – Australia is home to many spoken and signed languages, including hundreds of traditional and new Indigenous languages, and migrant languages (including English)
   – Australian English emerged from a mixture of dialects from across the British Isles
(3) Linguistic variation in Australian English
   – there is significant variation in the ways that individuals and groups use English in Australia, and in language use across contexts
   – all of these different ways of using the language are equally correct, and prescriptive and discriminatory attitudes need to be questioned
   – descriptive data can reveal patterns of language use
   – communication is multimodal
   – writing is largely an attempt to capture a spoken or signed language, and not all languages have a written version
   – languages change, and young people tend to lead language change

3.2 School visits

We designed the delivery of the programme to be dynamic and high energy, avoiding technical terminology and prioritizing accessible activities demonstrating something new (and maybe surprising) about how languages work. Most importantly, we aimed to relate to students' everyday experience with language, and chose topics that would generate discussion and invite differing opinions and insights. The final structure of the school visits was a two-hour workshop for groups of up to 60 students, beginning with a quiz, then a short talk

presented by three or four linguists in turn, followed by three hands-on activities that students rotated through. In the sections below we describe the various aspects of the two-hour workshop in greater detail.

3.2.1 Pre-quiz and talk

The Roadshow begins with a brief welcome from the Roadies (each wearing a Roadshow T-shirt with their name on the back) and an acknowledgement of the Traditional Owners and the languages of the land the workshop is being held on, if possible with a 'welcome' or 'hello' from local languages featured on the slides.[8] We then distribute a short paper-based quiz (Figure 2) and play some fun music[9] while the students complete it (Figure 3).

Figure 2: Part of the Linguistics Roadshow quiz.

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9 We use the song "Prisencolinensinainciusol" – an unintelligible nonsense song by Italian singer Adriano Celentano intended to sound like American English.

Figure 3: Students completing the quiz.

The quiz is intended to get a general sense of what students know about language, including questions targeting common misconceptions around linguistic diversity, multilingualism, and language modalities. It is also designed to raise some questions in the minds of the students that will then be answered in the course of the workshop. Once students have completed the quiz, we begin the talk.

The talk lasts for 10–15 min and rotates around presenters.[10] It follows the loose structure below:
– welcome and intro
  – what is linguistics and what is a language?
– global diversity
– language acquisition
– language in Australia
– language: you're doing it right!
  – linguistic variation
  – language change

  [students complete action stations; see Section 3.2.2].
– what can you do with linguistics?
– questions

We use a set of colourful and interactive slides to pace the talk and provide a focal point. We script and learn the talk beforehand to ensure the content is clear and engaging and to keep us within the time frame. At the start of each section we generally pose a question, inviting the students to consider some central point (e.g. "So where did Australian English come from?"), and then we take them through key aspects in an engaging way, sometimes briefly entertaining common or humorous misconceptions (e.g. "Did Australians develop a unique accent because they had to keep their mouths closed to stop all the flies getting in?") before discussing the real answer. We deliver the talk in a dynamic and fun manner, interacting with the audience and each other and keeping the energy high.

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10 The final version of the talk can also be used as a stand-alone presentation that a solo linguist can present. This means that the materials are helpful for other interested linguists to present at schools in their area, while the full Roadshow experience remains especially designed for school visits.

3.2.2 Action stations

Next we divide the students into three groups and allocate each group to an action station supervised by one of the Roadies. Students remain at each action station for 20 min and then rotate to the next. Various activities have been developed and used across different Roadshow visits; we profile three representative activities here.[11]

3.2.2.1 Babel in your own Backyard (words around Australia survey)

To begin this activity, students complete a paper survey (https://bit.ly/AusWords) containing 12 questions targeting regional variation in Australian English (e.g. "What general term do you use to refer to swimwear?"), and also gathering basic demographic information. The survey focuses mainly on publicly known lexical variables, for example, the seemingly perennial and fiery debate around whether to call a battered, deep-fried potato snack a *potato cake* (the preferred Victorian variant) or a *(potato) scallop* (the New South Wales variant). In the action station, we then go through the students' answers, discussing any variation that occurs, and explore maps of the variation together (discussed further in Section 4), noting which words pattern strongly according to different parameters (e.g. state; urban vs. rural) and which do not. We use the maps as the basis for further discussion of linguistic variation drawing on students' own experiences, and discussing language attitudes (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Roadie Rosey with the Roadshow maps.

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11 After the first year of workshops, we determined that discussion-based activities would not reliably be embraced by students, and it was best to use activities centred around a goal.

3.2.2.2 Languages of the Land (Dyirbal Jumble activity)

This activity is designed to introduce students to diversity in the morphosyntax of the world's languages through the window of noun classes in Dyirbal,[12] a north-east Australian Aboriginal language. In the activity, students are asked to imagine they are linguists working with speakers to document an Australian language. They have collected a set of phrases and their translations, but they need to figure out the best way to analyse them. In the first part of the activity, the students are given an envelope of 20 laminated cards with two-word Dyirbal phrases and a picture on them (Figure 5). Students are told that the phrases all refer to nouns (i.e. the kinds of words that name a person, place, or thing). Their first task is to figure out how best to allocate the phrases into broader groups, and to look for "clues" in the words to figure out the best way to group them (Figure 6). The students should notice that the first word in each phrase identifies the group (i.e. noun class) that phrase belongs to (either *bayi*, *balan*, *balam*, or *bala*). Once the students have successfully categorized the phrases into four groups, they try to work out the semantic basis for each group.

bayi barrgan
'wallaby'

Figure 5: Material from Task 1 of the Dyirbal Jumble activity.

Figure 6: Students puzzling over the Dyirbal Jumble activity.

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12 Dyirbal is well-known in the literature for its semantically driven system of noun classes, which inspired the title of George Lakoff's 1987 book *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*.

In the second part of the activity, an envelope with a further 10 cards is provided – this time with the noun class marker omitted. Based on their semantic classifications from the first part, they try to allocate each of these to one of the four categories. We then round up the activity with a discussion touching on details of the Dyirbal language, aspects of the data the students found interesting, and language diversity within the context of language loss.

3.2.2.3 Seeing sounds

This action station focuses on speech production. In small groups, students are introduced to the basics of the vocal tract and the articulators, and are provided with iPads and A5 laminated handouts with mid-sagittal representations of the bilabial, dental, and velar places of articulation (Figure 7). The graphics on these hand-outs were designed as trigger images for an augmented reality app, Aurasma.[13] Pointing the iPad camera at each image triggers a video overlay showing each speech sound being produced during MRI imaging.[14] A second part to the activity focuses on acoustics, and uses a four-sided shape with spectrogram images for animal names in different languages to trigger audio to accompany the images.

3.2.3 The (Road)show bag

At the start of the visit, the Roadies distribute goody bags or "show bags".[15] The show bags contain items to use during the workshop (e.g. pens, quiz, survey) and additional fun and engaging items which link to the core themes, as souvenirs to spark further conversations and act as reminders of the workshop content. The intention is that these items will go home with the students, ending up on fridges and kitchen tables, and help students make their own discoveries and communicate what they have learned to secondary audiences like family
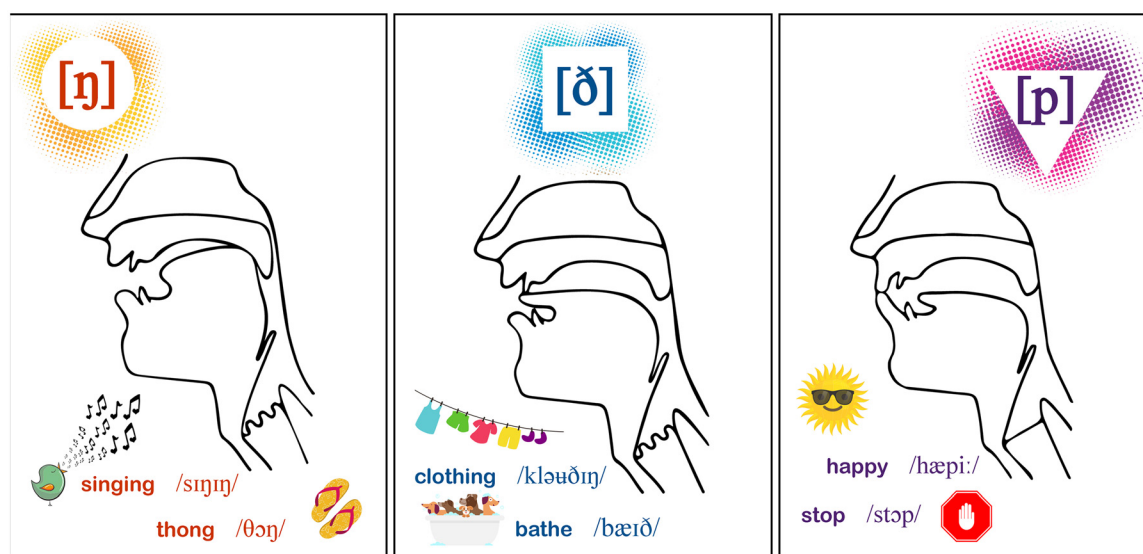

Figure 7: Example of materials used with the augmented reality app. Mid-sagittal images created with reference to "Sammy" Interactive Sagittal Section created by Daniel Currie Hall (https://incl.pl/sammy/). Other graphical elements taken from vectors available via Freepik and Vecteezy (with relevant permissions).

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13 Later known as HP Reveal, and then discontinued in 2020.

14 This drew on the University of Glasgow web resource Seeing Speech (Lawson et al. 2015).

15 This is in reference to the popular themed bags containing novelty and commercial products associated with Australian agricultural shows.

members and friends. Items remaining in the classroom may allow teachers to follow up on the Roadshow's messages through further learning activities.[16] The show bags contained:

– Roadshow booklet with information expanding on the key messages and providing resources for further discovery
– fridge magnet map of First Nations languages[17]
– set of badges relating to words from the Words around Australia survey
– "paper fortune teller" or "chatterbox" with language-related trivia questions
– colourful Auslan (Australian Sign Language) alphabet
– make-your-own paper larynx[18]
– spectrograms of key/local words
– wug/robot sticker
– Roadshow pen

3.3 The Roadshow website

The Linguistics Roadshow website (https://lingroadshow.com) has a range of purposes. In the first instance, the website hosts information about the project itself – what the Roadshow is, who we are, and how we can be contacted. Its main purpose, however, is to serve as a home for useful and interesting information about language and linguistics for a general audience, and especially teachers and students. The information on the site parallels the content of the in-person Roadshow visits, and reflects and expands on the Roadshow's core messages (Section 3.1). A key function of the site is to provide activities for teachers to add linguistics to classroom curricula across multiple year levels. These activities were initially based around our action station activities but the current iteration of the site[19] includes an expanded set and links to resources available elsewhere. The website also hosts the set of popular maps from our Words around Australia survey (Section 3.2.2).

4 Impact

Our experience with the Linguistics Roadshow showed us that there is enormous scope for linguistics outreach work in schools. We were most effective in our goals when we remained attentive to who we were trying to reach, and why. Homing in on three key messages and remaining true to our three motivations helped us to stay focused and realistic about what we could achieve. This more focused outreach complemented other more wide-ranging, general-public linguistics outreach.

To date, we have delivered this programme to some 600 attendees in Victoria and Western Australia. Student engagement during our visits was good, and informal feedback from teachers was positive. We learned a lot about the kinds of knowledge and experiences that students bring to these workshops, and the topics that excite them. We also had opportunities to engage with the wider community, for example through visiting local language centres, and giving a talk at a public library, enabling us to build connections between linguistics-curious people and linguists at universities.

16 We gave the schools large maps showing the diversity of Australian Indigenous languages to display in the classroom. The map is produced by the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS): https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/map-indigenous-australia.
17 With thanks to the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages for giving permission for us to use their 2015 *Aboriginal Languages of Victoria* map, and to First Languages Australia for giving us permission to use images based on an earlier version of the *Gambay – First Languages Map* (https://gambay.com.au/).
18 Using a template created by Jeremy Fisher at Vocal Process (https://vocalprocess.co.uk/build-your-own-tilting-larynx/).
19 The website was redesigned and enhanced in 2023. Our thanks to Piper Edmonds and Emily McEwan for their assistance, and to Monash University's School of Languages, Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics for several small grants which facilitated this.

While we do not measure our success in numbers alone, the reach of the Linguistics Roadshow materials has extended far beyond our original target audience. Our publicly accessible survey activity mapping lexical variation in Australian English has been particularly popular, attracting responses from almost 28,000 participants, with the resulting maps viewed over three million times.[20] This was largely because prior to our first Roadshow visits in 2015, we posted a link to the Words around Australia survey on Twitter to gather some preliminary data to reference in our discussions with students. We were surprised to quickly gain several thousand responses, and to see just how much these materials resonated with the Australian public. There was extensive media coverage of the maps (e.g. in the UK-based newspaper *The Guardian*) and significant (and regularly recurring) public discussion of linguistic variation and (especially) state-based rivalries around preferred variants. In a short time we gained a lot of experience in other kinds of public engagement through contributions to numerous media outputs (e.g. Vaughan et al. 2016), including a newspaper dedicated to school students (*Crinkling News*). The Roadshow was awarded the Australian Linguistic Society's Talkley Award, which recognizes society members who have made significant contributions towards promoting language and linguistics in the Australian public arena. Content from the Linguistics Roadshow has been incorporated into high school curricula and textbooks and exams for VCE English Language, and has also fed back into undergraduate teaching. The activities have been used with groups of school students visiting our (and colleagues') institutions, for example during university open days and the National Indigenous Summer School. Our website has had 200,000 views from almost every country in the world, and cumulatively, the Roadshow experience has shown us that there is an appetite for reliable, engaging, and accessible information about language, particularly in relation to the Australian context.

5 Lessons and future directions

5.1 Challenges

The Roadshow was our first experience in conducting a large-scale outreach project, and we have modified the design and delivery as we have learned more throughout the process. It has been a rewarding and successful outreach programme, albeit with some challenges that may be relevant and instructive for others attempting outreach like this. Key obstacles for the longevity of the Roadshow – and for this type of outreach generally – include (a) securing (ongoing) funding; (b) scaling up and expanding to other locations; (c) reliance on precariously employed staff; and (d) the sustainable maintenance of resources.

Versions of the Roadshow can be run on a very small budget (e.g. a single linguist could give the talk at a local school at no cost). To run it in full, it incurs costs for travel, accommodation, and producing items for the show bags. It was only possible for us to run the Roadshow in its original format because CoEDL awarded us money for this idea. Funding also impacts how the Roadshow can be run in other locations. We attempted to expand the programme by promoting it at linguistics conferences and holding training workshops, with the aim of creating satellite versions around Australia. However, despite enthusiasm, no other teams were started, in part due to the issue of funding. Even with existing funding, attempting a cross-institutional outreach programme presents issues in a way that cross-institutional academic collaboration does not.

Beyond this, managing expectations in expanding the Roadshow was difficult in terms of where the Roadshow was run. Following the surprise success of the first year of the Roadshow and the interest generated by the maps on lexical variation, we were approached by a number of city-based schools. Unfortunately, we did not have the capacity to run the full workshop multiple times a year, and so focused our resources on maintaining our commitment to rural students. Through a booking system of some kind, it could be possible to arrange talk-only or talk-and-activity versions of the Roadshow, but this poses difficulties when considering availability of personnel, which is on a voluntary basis.

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20 https://lingroadshow.com/all-about-language/englishes-in-australia/vocabulary/mapping-words-around-australia/. With thanks to Lauren Gawne for additional mapping assistance.

Reliance on precariously employed staff posed and continues to pose an issue, which – since this was a passion project rather than institutionally managed – meant that it became difficult to ensure the continuation of the Roadshow in person, as we progressed with our careers and moved institutions. The benefits in doing this type of outreach as early career researchers, however, were great, and very valuable in terms of professional development. Further, though not always formally acknowledged, universities have been very positive about the skills we have demonstrated through creating the Roadshow and in some cases have continued to fund Roadshow-related activities.

Lastly, maintaining the Roadshow resources requires considerable effort. Maintaining the website takes time, and we aim to continue to add to the online resources. Existing activities can require regular updating, particularly if dependent on specific technologies.

5.2 Sustainability moving forward

From our experiences with the Roadshow, we make the following suggestions to enhance the sustainability of this type of public outreach:

(1) Tangible university-level acknowledgement of outreach and engagement activities in academic workloads would provide a real-world payoff for conducting this type of work.

(2) A central funding scheme, not associated with one institution, would make this type of project easier to develop and implement across universities.

(3) For this intensive type of outreach, embedding an outreach and engagement component into research/ postgraduate degrees would result in more people on the ground, while also giving training for linguists to continue this type of work later in their career. It could also be incorporated into undergraduate coursework.

For us, a crucial pivot for the Roadshow in recent years has been changing our focus from rural school incursions to maintaining the website and online resources – made possible in part by funding from Monash University. These resources are open-ended in terms of end users; teachers in schools can download activities, while linguists can download the slides to present the talk to students in their area. This means the main aims of the Roadshow – primarily to introduce high school students to the science of language – are possible in different formats. Our vision for the future of the Roadshow is that it should be a central place for teachers and students to access reliable materials on language-related topics, and for linguists to have tried-and-tested materials to use as outreach materials.

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