

# What works well for teaching a reawakening language?

A Gamilaraay teacher's perspective



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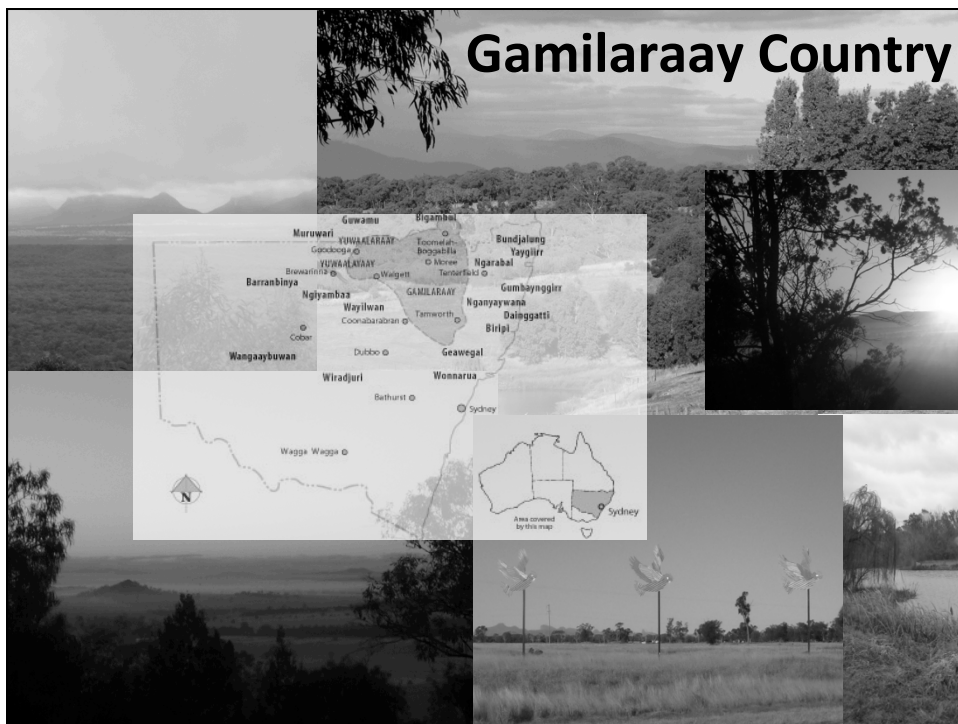
## Yaama maliyaa

Hello friends.

My name is Tracey Cameron. I am a Gamilaraay woman. I come from New South Wales, Australia. Today I will be talking about my work (research project) teaching primary aged children Gamilaraay, a reawakening language.

## Yaama maliyaa

Tracey Cameron ngaya. Gamilaraay ngaya yinarr. NSWdhi, Australiadhi ngaya dhaay yananhi. Nguwalay ngaya garay guwaalday waandi ngay. Dhiirraldanha ngaya gaayli Gamilaraay, garay giirralaandaay.



## Background

- A language being reawakened
- Documentation
  - from 1832 → reconstruction in recent decades
  - written and audio recordings of partial speakers
  - learners guide, dictionary and short texts
- The challenge - a living language again

## My research project

- MILE and Gamilaraay language course
- The school
- The class
- An Aboriginal perspective



- My Question: *How do beginner level students effectively acquire and retain Gamilaraay language - vocabulary and structures?*
- A gap in the literature
- The project – using a communicative approach systematically comparing the effectiveness of
  - *literacy-focused strategies and*
  - *orally-focused strategies*

## Which teaching approach to take?

- Communicative approach
  - incorporate LSRW; social view of language; meaning & grammar; fluency & accuracy; eclectic; learner autonomy; maximum use of the target language, prioritises interaction and use of the language
- Consistent with community priorities
  - Parent suggestions: *Kids need to speak their language, I never learned how to speak my language, I want my kids to talk their lingo*
  - Uncle Ken Walker: *My dream, my personal dream is to one day be able to walk down anywhere in my country and hear my people speak my language rather than English*
- Applied to a revitalising language
  - a challenge to be well-prepared and one step ahead of the learners; and to teach language useful outside the classroom

### Literacy activities:

games, eg Dhii Maniilalayndaay  
(Animal Hunt)

Dhulu-ga.

Dhalaa  
bandaarr?



Wiamala guda  
dhulu-ga!



Yawu.

Yaama nhama  
bandaarr?



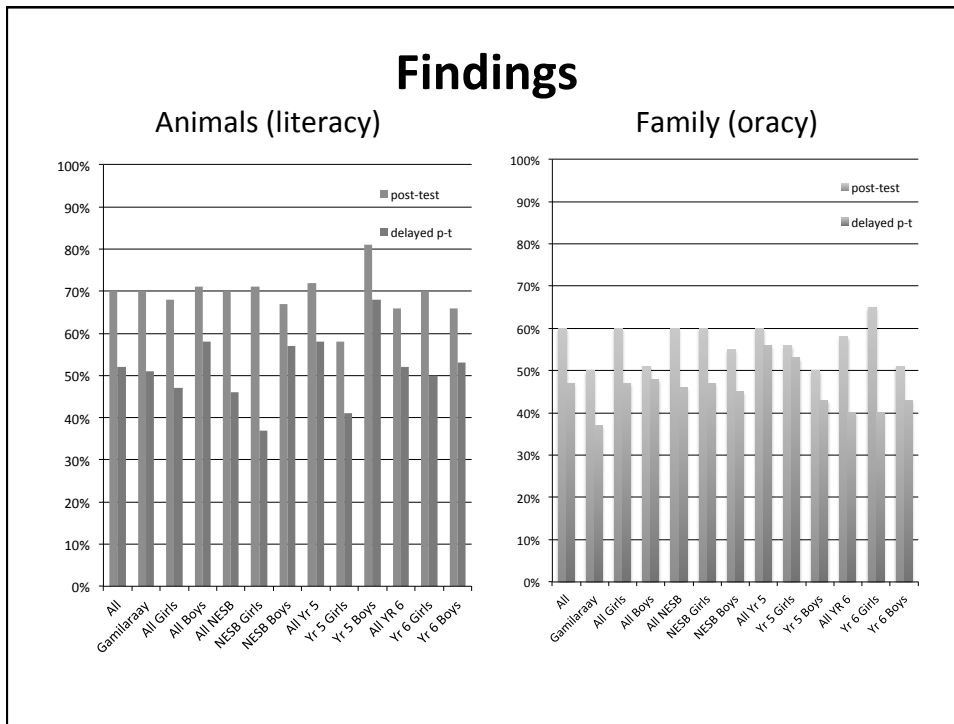
### Oracy activities:

card games, eg Gaba Dhiiyaan (Happy Families)

Yawu, ngaya  
gunibaraay.

Yaamanda  
gunibaraay?





## Discussion

**My analysis**

- based on the data, my observations and student feedback

**Literacy focus**

- initial acquisition high (post-test) due to novelty factor & environmental print support

**Oracy focus**

- longer term retention (delayed post-test) due to high level of interest in the games & the lack of print support

## **Conclusion**

### **What's needed?**

- communicative activities work
- a balance between literacy and oracy
- strategies for developing memory skills

### **Limitations**

- 2 topics
- order of topics
- timing of research
- absent students limit data

## **Additional outcomes and future directions**

- my own language proficiency
- community support and involvement
- ongoing revitalisation of Gamilaraay