Run down:
1. The challenge of writing accessible explanations of linguistic concepts
2. Minimal English as a possible tool
3. Minimal English scripts for linguistic concepts
4. Incorporating Minimal English scripts into revitalization lexicography
Writing accessible explanations of linguistic concepts

- Revitalization - must be led by the community to be successful
- However, linguists are often asked to assist
- one of the main roles for linguists is to assist with resource development, e.g. creating materials like learner dictionaries and community grammars
- This requires the linguist to be able to explain features of language in an accessible way
  
  Simple from the community’s point of view = 
  
in terms that the community can understand = 
  
using concepts the community already knows and is familiar with

- This is not as easy as it may sound
(On producing a first-draft wordlist for Ngarrindjeri)

“I will always remember one Ngarrindjeri man who came up to me and said ‘What use is this to me? I can’t even read it!’ This was an invaluable lesson for us; we had to modify our product.”

Mary-Anne Gale
“This was her first job. She’d come down and done a little bit of studying with me and talking to me about different issues and so on. And she started speaking in a professional manner in relation to words, and grammar, and whatever else you might call it. I said, ‘No, that’s no good, I’ve never done it and I don’t understand it’.”

Uncle Ivan Couzens
What I have noticed...

• At the moment, developing accessible explanations of language is an inexact, approximate process
• Often the linguistic produces an explanation which they *think* the community will understand
• Only to find that it overshoots the community’s current knowledge— that it assumes many concepts which the community is unfamiliar with
• The linguist must then attempt to determine where the community’s knowledge is *actually* at and scale the explanation back so that it builds on this
• This requires a lot of negotiation— a lot of back and forth between the linguist and community
• Wouldn’t it be good if we could streamline this process?
Minimal English

• An accessible communication framework based on NSM
• Guiding principle— to communicate in universal and near-universal words as much as possible
• Semantic primes
• Semantic molecules
• Approximate semantic molecules (eat and drink)
• These words make up the core of Minimal English
• There are other universal words in this framework
• For details, see ‘Minimal English for a Global World’
Minimal English

Why are these universal words a good foundation for a clear communication framework?

All people—regardless of their background—can be practically guaranteed to already know and understand them accessible= using concepts the community already knows

By using Minimal English, linguists wouldn’t have to guess whether the community already knows the concepts they are using to frame their explanation. They could safely assume that they do.
Kinds of words

- Phrase
- Noun Phrase
- Noun
- Adjective
- Demon.
- Pronoun
- Verb
- Verb classes

Forms of words

- Inflection
- Inflectional affixes

Words have parts

- Root and Suffix
- Affix
- Allomorphs
- Case marking
When someone wants to know about something: “what is it?”
They can know if you say something like:
“It is an (x)”
“It is a (y)”
“It is a (z)”
Words like these (x, y, z) are called nouns.
There are many other nouns.
When someone wants to know about something:
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They can know if you say something like:
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Words like these (x, y, z) are called nouns.
There are many other nouns.
This script...
...is not NSM
-question frame

**NOUN**

When someone wants to know about something:

“*what is it?*”

They can know if you say something like:

“It is an (x)”
“It is a (y)”
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This script...

...is not NSM
-question frame
-generic ‘you’

When someone wants to know about something:
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- question frame
- generic ‘you’
- expandable vocabulary

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This script...

...is not NSM
- question frame
- generic ‘you’
- expandable vocabulary
- culturally-meaningful examples

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A noun is a person, place or thing??

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There are many other nouns.

Language learning benefits
1. The question and answer frames link the script to the language curriculum.
A noun is a person, place or thing??

Language learning benefits
1. The question and answer frames link the script to the language curriculum
2. This means it can easily be incorporated into lesson plans
3. The question frame gives learners a good vocab-learning tool
4. The script can be interactive

When someone wants to know about something: “what is it?”/language translation
They can know if you say something like:
“It is an (x)”/language translation
“It is a (y)”/language translation
“It is a (z)”/language translation
Words like these (x, y, z) are called nouns.
There are many other nouns.
An added benefit of Minimal English:

Some linguistic concepts are more basic, some are more complex.

In a learning context, it is best to introduce the more basic ideas first.

How do we determine which concepts are basic and which are complex? This is not always clear...

Minimal English can help determine the ideal order for introducing linguistic concepts.
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Words have parts
- Root and Suffix
- Inflectional affixes
- Allomorphs
- Verb classes

Forms of words
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- Case marking

Kinds of words
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WORDS
Kinds of words

Forms of words

Words have parts

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Root and Suffix

Affix

Inflection

Verb classes
FORMS (OF A WORD)

There are some words: ‘says’, ‘saying’, ‘said’

We can think about these words like this: “it’s the same word”

When it is like this, we can say: “‘says’, ‘saying’ and ‘said’ are forms of the same word. This word is ‘say’”

At the same time, we can say: “The word ‘say’ has many forms. ‘Says’, ‘saying’ and ‘said’ are some of these forms.”
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Inflectional affixes

Root and Suffix

Allomorphs

Affix

word, part, after
'A suffix is after the other parts of a word'
'A suffix is after all the other parts of a word'
ROOT AND SUFFIX

Some words are like this:
They have two parts. One of these parts is not like the other.
One part is like this: when someone says this part of a word, people can know well what is someone is talking about.
This part is called a ‘root’
The other part is not like this. You say this part after you say the root.
This part is called a ‘suffix’
We can see these two parts (the root and the suffix) if we write the word
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This part is called a ‘suffix’

We can see these two parts (the root and the suffix) if we write the word
How can MinEng be incorporated into dictionaries?

• A stand-alone dictionary of linguistic terms (can be used in tandem with language dictionaries)
• Electronic formats are more practical and offer more possibilities...
• Design?
References


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