Keeping It Simple: the Minimal Course model for helping English speakers learn core conversation patterns in Algonquian (and other) languages

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- Finding this presentation....

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1.   Introduction

- Both immersion- and grammar-based approaches to Indigenous languages can be overwhelming, and particularly hard for busy adult learners to access.

- A new approach, the _Minimal Course_, implemented by Maliseet, Abenaki, Long Island Algonquian, Michif, and Makah revitalization efforts, aims to both enhance immersion and/or provide an accessible introductory course for more time-constrained adult beginners.

- _Here we'll draw our examples mainly from the Abenaki 101-102 course series at the University of Southern Maine, plus the Long Island Algonquian course series at Stony Brook University._

- Here we report some new insights on key consistent/general principles and specific practices, based now on several years of implementation:

    - _Relational Approach_
    - _MeaningFirst_
    - _LessIsMore = ModelPhrases + SwapIn = Landmarks_   = extremely brief **_lessonlets_**

- Lots of people to credit!

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...and many, many other speakers and learners along the way!

2.   Relational Approach

- Actively _Relating_ words—comparing them in Pairs (like Q&A)—creates more fluent/natural learning than _breaking_ them into abstract parts.   [_We still can; we just don't have/need to..._]

- Language reclamation work, as we understand it, is also _Relational_: it is not to create _individual_ speakers, but to create/(re-)build a _community_ of speakers.

- Since community _is_ Relations, our design principles everywhere emphasize _Relations_:

    - how learners Relate to fellow learner-speakers

    - how learners Relate to first-language speakers

    - how learners Relate to the language itself (and to _themselves_ as learner-teachers)

        [_...and as above, even how parts of the language Relate to each other_]

2.1   Relations to fellow learners

- Not the traditional Euro classroom model of isolated learners, individually responsible for their learning (… and always _anxious_ about being shamed on-the-spot for individual mistakes, etc.).

- Instead, _group_-based responsibility to help every individual succeed, to help everyone get it right —_together_.

- Besides direct discussion of this kind of group-based responsibility to each other, we also have a solid new practice: in our sessions, learners can always say

    Wijokami!   =   Help me!
    Wijokama!   =   Help h/her/them!

whenever we or others are struggling to say/recall/understand an expression. Always.

- We help each other.

- The *Wijokami/Wijokama* principle underlines the idea of (re-)building a speech community.

- It pushes against the ideas of haves-vs.-have-nots, of better/worse speakers, and especially, all the far-too-normal anxieties of Euro-classroom experiences.

- So we have explicit and ongoing promises to have each others' backs, and we train learners in how to be truly and consistently <u>inviting</u> to other community members, to new and would-be learners.

- *If/when needed, we can still do individual assessments. But not until everyone has all learned it with the group's support.*

- This is where a lot of the healing of language reclamation can come from: from people no longer being/feeling alone, and now being part of something they can be proud of *together*.

2.2   Relations to first-language speakers

- Strategies for coping with highly critical (even mean) first-language speakers.
- Strategies for _anxiety_ about speaking with fluent speakers = how to not feel like you're "wasting their time".

- And especially _group-support_ strategies here:

Much of this is just discussing out loud, as a group, what learners otherwise only experience (without questioning it) as their own personal inadequacy/failure.

=   Not seeing that yes, beginner-speaking feels really painfully awkward,
         but none of this is about _you_ being somehow not good enough:
         it is instead a natural phase that all your _fellow_ learners,
         everyone in this group right here and now, are going through, too.

         And they're _with you_ in that, even when you're out there on your own.   [_this point is key!_]

- _Ask us about more ways to cope w/ awkwardness+anxiety in learner-speaker + first-lg spkr conversations!_

2.3   Relations to the language itself (and yourself): coping with anxieties, and permission to be imperfect = *lowering the (again unquestioned) pressures we put on ourselves*

- Fear of failing the language/the ancestors is real. A major anxiety.

- We help learners let themselves be actively and confidently *not perfect*.

- "Can't make something polished if you don't let yourself make the roughed-out version first."

- Your rough version of the language *is* the first accomplishment: its scruffy edges don't matter as much as this:

    - *it's already recognizably the language*
    - *it's already working as the language more than it's not*

- So the emphasis is on judging yourself for what you have done *right*, not for what you haven't. On what *is* there, not what isn't—and building forward from there.

- *(Ask us abt our CopingStrategies for maintaining/surviving a conversation = building speaking confidence!)*

- This is why we have a lesson (#4) that explicitly _lets_ you use English for part of it.

- So that you don't feel like you have to be 100% in the language, or else not speak it at all.

- So that you can see that most totally fluent speakers go back and forth w/English; so you can, too.

- So that your mild frustration about what you still need English for doesn't _shame_ you, but does _inspire_ you to make _that_ what you learn next in the language.

- _(We'll see in #4 that there's also _another_ reason it's helpful to have that one part be English!)_

2.4   Relations to the language itself (and yourself): *TeachItForward*

- *TeachItForward* =
- Every learner is a teacher-to-be, learning it to teach-it-forward to the next learner
= makes it less about *you* the learner, and more about *others* who will depend on you
= you're not learning it for yourself [= could just give up], but for others = better motivation
= could be more pressure, but usually works out to more willingness to move past setbacks

= unschooling = "portable" oral *lessonlets* free the lg effort from the *We Are (Back) In School* pattern
= instead: learn language on the couch, with friends; no bottleneck of "I can't make that class time"
= every learner who's mastered a one-line lessonlet can now teach it to anyone else
= for learners to have the means to really *TeachItForward* well, they need to understand *Relations*
within the language itself, and the *Relations* within the process of learning it

= so to learn each lesson, for *TeachItForward*, includes Three Questions:

(a)   *What are the key details of Meaning and Sound for this lessonlet?*
(b)   *How does this lessonlet tie to lessonlets before and after it?*
(c)   *How does this lessonlet connect to the rest of the language, and to the real-world community use of the language, especially for teaching-it-forward?*

3.   MeaningFirst

- In the lessonlets themselves, a key grounding principle is the idea of *MeaningFirst*.

- *MeaningFirst*= a design/presentation focus first on what the expression actually *Means*, and less on how you form it, how you say it.

- Designs that emph *MeaningFirst* help learners hv real confidence: they *know* what they're saying.

- *MeaningFirst* turns our lg-learning into what lg is actually for: *communication*.   *= Relation*

- Learners only really learn a phrase/pattern if it *Means* something to them: if it's clear what it does, how it matters, for actual communication.

- "Grammar" tends to get taught with less attention to Meaning, and a lot more attention to the exact *Forms* of the words, etc.: what endings to use, what order of words, etc.

- It gets presented, wrongly, as *rules* for saying things right—instead of as easy simple *tools* for saying exactly what (*Meanings*) you want.

- So just like how pronunciation is left mysterious—nothing but "Listen, and repeat after me!"—in that kind of teaching, Meaning is also left in whole or in crucial part mysterious, unexplained.

- This is mainly bc the kinds of Meanings involved in "grammar" are always simple and important, but often very hard for a fluent/first-lg speaker to explain clearly or even notice:

  the cat vs. _a_ cat in English—as a fluent speaker, can you explain this clearly+accurately on the spot?

- What fluent speakers are good at is knowing when the _Form_ is wrong: when what you say doesn't sound like it matches/expresses this Meaning, this still unexplained Meaning.

- Teachers can much more easily just teach+test full charts of all the _Forms_ of a pattern. While leaving learners' understanding of the _Meaning_ of those Forms still very limited/muddled.

- For learners, this leaves Meaning—which is what we want and need most—stuck over there in a dark corner, even as these big charts of _Forms_ keep getting put in our faces.

- If we flip this, though, and focus on Meaning first, then any Form we learn is grounded and Related: it actually Means something to us.

- So in the Minimal Course, most lessonlets introduce at most _one_ basic Meaning-ful _pattern_ at a time.

- Each lessonlet uses a Pairing of (usually) just 2 new Forms (_like the pattern for YOU vs. ME_), so learners can focus on their _Meaning_/use.

- Both new Forms are always tied directly to the _one_ key difference in _Meaning_ the lessonlet teaches (_like the Meaning YOU vs. ME_).

- (_And in these lessonlets, we always very intentionally design the conversation to hinge on on that exact Meaning, to be about that exact Meaning: so that the learner can't miss it. Like: is it YOU who's going to pay, or ME?_)

- So there is no distraction of memorizing entire charts of Forms. And the conversational Meaning —the practical everyday use—of the lessonlet is *centered* around that one basic pattern's Meaning.

- Through this, learners can pick up key lg patterns that otherwise are usually presented through unfamiliar academic jargon—"Conjugate this verb!"—and now w/o any need for those terms!

- For learners to catch the Meaning easily, it has to be easy to find; it has to pop out at you. For that, we need very brief, very simple lessonlets, with very little going on in them.

4.   LessIsMore: minimalism is what makes Meaning pop

- When learners hear they only need to master one Q&A pair per lessonlet/session—not a list of 25 vocab words, or a chart of 9 verb endings—they not only relax and feel more confident, but also can directly focus on the _Meaning_ of the essential patterns.

#2   Kia na kigawess?   - Ôhô, nia na nigawess.
            Is that your mother?   - _Yes, that is my mother._

Here, what's in the lessonlet is so stripped down that learners can't help but notice the pattern _themselves_: the change from _kigawess_ '_your_ mother' to _nigawess_ '_my_ mother'. Just from this, we can get them to follow the pattern

        kigawess : nigawess   ...so   kokmess : nokmess
        your mother : my mother   _your grandmother : my g'mother_

...and never need to chart it out, or discuss abstract prefixes etc.—and we can do totally _orally_.
- The core pattern+Meaning just "pops"—because by design, we haven't distracted them with tons of other information to wrangle all at once.   _Or really any other info: and that's the point!_

5.   ModelPhrases+ SwapIn, Loopback, and Landmarks

- In the design of this approach, the phrases like in lessonlet #2 become *ModelPhrases.* That is, in

#2   Kia na kigawess?   - Ôhô, nia na nigawess.
            Is that your mother?   *- Yes, that is my mother.*

we *only* have them learn this exact Q&A. We do *not* immediately load learners up with other words for kin/family, etc. Because the aim is for them to get the simple basic *pattern* and above all, its *Meaning*—and not miss that while scrambling to learn a pile of new vocabulary that goes with it.

- Instead, we ask them to master just these *exact phrases* (and the patterns+Meanings) within them. So that if we then give them a phrase of the exact same pattern, but with a different bit of vocab swapped in, they generally have no problem Relating it to a ModelPhrase = *understanding it!*

#2-NEW   Kia na kidôba?   - Ôhô, nia na nidôba.
            Is that your friend?   *- Yes, that is my friend.*

- Key is the focus on the one small *pattern*, not the vocab. *As the first+foremost thing to learn solidly.*

- The Minimal Course approach moves _quickly_ from lessonlet to lessonlet, introducing next to no new vocabulary.

- Instead, it just gets people solid on these simple pattern examples, these ModelPhrases for expressing these bits of core, everyday, used-in-every-phrase/conversation kind of _Meaning_.

- _This means we can in fact introduce nearly_ <u>all</u> _the core patterns of the language in about one to two dozen lessonlets. Again, bc each time we focus on just one simple set of ModelPhrases that highlight its_ <u>Meaning</u> _for everyday conversation, and also make the pattern "pop"._

- Only after people have really mastered the exact ModelPhrases of each lessonlet, for a good number of lessonlets (usually a dozen or more), do we then do _Loopback_.

- Loopback is two things.

- One is simply going back and swapping new vocabulary into the _whole_ ModelPhrases. This crucially reverses the norm of teaching "grammar" as "start with vocab, then add endings".

- Instead, we start with whole ModelPhrases. These already have their Relation-showing endings, etc., which learners have gotten the Meanings of, via the simple ModelPhrase Pairing approach.

- We keep the whole ModelPhrase a complete whole, and only make one change: _SwapIn_ a new bit of vocab _over_ the ModelPhrase's original one.

- As we did with _FRIEND_ above, SwappedIn over _MOTHER_.

- For realtime talking, it _much_ easier to customize existing phrases than to build words frm scratch.

- It also helps keep learners' expressions as close as possible to what they _know_ we can/do say in the lg. And that gives them real confidence to speak.

- Loopback is also going back to earlier lessonlets, and adding some new _Expansion_ to the Meaning that the original lessonlet lets you express.

- We'll see an example of this with the "Six-Step Conversation" coming up, but some other Loopback Expansions include:

  - going back to a YOU vs. ME lesson and now Expanding each to talk about Y'ALL vs. US

  - going back to a WhatIsThat lesson and Expanding it to talk about WhatAreThose = plurals

  - going back to a YOU vs. ME lesson and Expanding to talk about S/HER/THEM

- Through the Loopback approach, we keep the original lessonlet radically simple—making it easy to get and master the _Meaning_ and the pattern that expresses it. And only later, after this is mastered, do we come back to build more, _Related_ expressions off of it.   *(Moving fwd by circling back...)*

- So that each original thing learned is intensely simple and grounded—and then is the foundation for weaving up a rich network of new expressions, all clearly and solidly _Related_ to each other.

- Beyond the USM Abenaki course, we have found that the Loopback approach has been nearly inexhaustible. In the Abenaki community language courses, we have been able to spend weeks at a time in Loopback Expansions for just lessonlet #1:

1   Awani na?   - _____ na.   Kagwi ni?   - _____ ni.
     Who is that?   *- That is _____ .*   *What is that?*   *- That is _____.*

Here we are able to Loopback with *plurals* (*Who|What are those?*), with *possessors* (*Whose X is that?*), and even feed into *events* (*Look at that!*).

- Because the initial lessonlets are so simple, after just eight months of online classes, we have trained from the ground up a whole set of new teachers (5 now hired to teach in the Middlebury Abenaki course!) who can teach (-forward) the initial lessonlet set.

- The original teacher (Bruchac) then presents the Loopbacks to these, which the new teachers observe and work towards also teaching.

- On average, learners need about 4 times through the initial lessonlets to be ready to teach it themselves. And of course, they improve their own command of this set as they TeachItForward.

- ModelPhrases like in #2 also become *Landmarks.*

- Landmarks let us to talk about the language patterns *using the patterns themselves* as names/ examples.

- So any corrections/guidance are just, "Remember [*kigawess* and *nigawess*]? Say it like that."

- "*Kigawess* = talking about YOU, *nigawess* = talking about ME—right?—so if *kidôba* = your friend, and you want to say 'my friend', then how would you say it?"

- Landmarks are not just simple; they are *inclusive.* As a first-language speaker-teacher, you don't need to know any technical linguistics terms/analysis to teach this course—all you need to know is each simple Landmark phrase itself, and how it's used as an example and an explanation of a basic meaningful pattern of the language.

- Landmarks detechnicalize how we can talk about language, making it more accessible and less overwhelming.

- It is worth saying more than once:

    We _never_ need academic jargon to talk precisely about the language and its patterns.
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- The academic tradition has just never asked itself really hard what _other_ ways we could talk about the patterns we unquestioningly call "ditransitives", "inanimates", "conjuncts", "obviatives", etc.

- These basic patterns are in fact pretty simple. So we can explain _any_ of them in plain language (and name/talk about them using Landmark words/phrases) _just as precisely_ as with the academic jargon.

- The fancy-sounding words make users sound like they have some deeper understanding than the rest of us, which they don't necessarily have, and also make the patterns sound more complicated than they probably are. We don't avoid jargon because we're anti-academic: we avoid it because it's unnecessary and also excludes many would-be teachers and learners.

- (_Learning patterns via Landmarks does make it very easy to pick up the jargon if you then need to, though!_)

6.   Principles in practice

- So let's now look at these principles—*Relational Approach, MeaningFirst, LessIsMore, SwapIn, Loopback, Landmarks*, etc.—in the lessons themselves!

#1 introduces Landmarks of NA vs. NI   (Neh+Michif *ana* vs. *anima*; Anish *aw/wa* vs. *iw/wi*)

1   Awani na?   - _____ na.   Kagwi ni?   - _____ ni.
       Who is that?   *- That is _____ .* *What is that?*   *- That is _____.*

- This is a day-one confidence-builder: showing learners that w/ just these phrases, they can learn the language *using* the language; you can pick up words for people/things on your own, by asking.

- From there, much of its real effectiveness is what it does NOT do.

- Intentionally does NOT make a big deal of the NA vs. NI contrast in the words for 'that'. Instead, it just sets them up as a simple-use Landmark. So that using NA and NI is just a familiar given, one that <u>later</u> we can go back to and look at in more detail/with more polish.

#2 introduces the Landmarks of _kigawess_ vs. _nigawess_—as we saw earlier. This then gets immediately referred back to—i.e., used as a Landmark—in #3 in _kolamalsi_ vs. _nolamalsi._

2	Kia na kigawess?	- Ôhô, nia na nigawess.
	Is that your mother?	_- Yes, that is my mother._
3	Kolamalsi?	- Ôhô, nolamalsi.
	You feel good?	_- Yes, I feel good._

- Key here is that we don't need to cut up the words. To get the pattern of #3, just use #2:

   "Remember kigawess talking about YOU, vs. nigawess talking about ME?""
   "Now kolamalsi is talking about YOU, vs. nolamalsi talking about ME!"

- It's that that simple: no discussions of abstract prefixes. Just Landmarks: the lg building on itself.
- _We will use this approach even more deeply in #7-#8-#9 below._
- Key idea: we're always talking in terms of _real words_, not cut-up bits—keeping it accessible to first-language speakers—and also reinforcing all of those words' real everyday full fluent use, and of course, underlining the _Relations_ between all of them.

- Intentionally _NOT_ including the H/HER Form. YOU-ME alone is a simple opposition of Meaning, immediately usable in conversation. In Alg lgs, it also has very simple opposition of Form.

- Bringing in the H/HER right here adds new complications of Form. And it also would make beginners juggle _three_ different Meanings rather than a crystal-clear _two_-way YOU-ME opposition.

- Once YOU vs. ME alone is mastered, it's then easy (in a Loopback) to introduce H/HER. As literally just the only possible Meaning+Form left! I.e. just exactly the one and only one pattern here that you don't already know: which _now_ is a very simple step.

- Reaching all three through this set of separate steps works much better than tossing all three (or more) at beginners at once.

#4 just makes sure learners know how to say something is NOT, almost as soon as they can say it IS.

(For time, we won't discuss this and related lessons any further.)

4   Ôda kolamalsiw?   - Ôhô, ôda nolamalsiw.

You don't feel good?   *- Yes, I don't feel good.*

#5 introduces the the other set of key endings for YOU (-*an*) and ME (-*a*) ASAP, before learners can start overapplying the *kigawess/nigawess* pattern to eveything.

5   Kagwi waji wlamalsi<u>an</u>?   - _____, ni waji wlamalsi<u>a</u>.
     Why do <u>you</u> feel good?   - *_____, that's why <u>I</u> feel good.*

- By sticking to just <u>YOU</u>+<u>ME</u> at first, we don't fall into the trap of making learners master every possible <u>k</u>*olamalsi/*<u>n</u>*olamalsi* Form before even starting this new pattern, which is just as common in use.

- Instead, they learn both patterns in parallel—which is how the language actually uses them—and from there add onto their knowledge of each pattern at the same time, step by step.

- And again, beginners can focus better on the <u>*Meaning*</u>/use of each—especially the <u>*Meaning*</u> difference between each set—when there are just two new Forms to first learn each pattern through: YOU+ME.

- *So this is how we move so quickly from one core language pattern to the next.*

- Importantly, in this lesson, the "fill-in-the blank" _____ reason-why here is explicitly allowed/ supposed to be in _English_.

5   Kagwi waji wlamalsi<u>an</u>?   - _____, ni waji wlamalsi<u>a</u>.
       Why do <u>you</u> feel good?   - _____, that's why <u>I</u> feel good._

- This lets learners focus on the core Meaning-ful pattern, the _-an_ vs. _-a_, without distracting them by asking them to learn even _more_ new material just to express the(ir) reason-why.

- _It also gives them permission not to have to speak ALL in Abenaki, but instead just say MOST of it in Abenaki —especially, starting and finishing what you say in Abenaki—and so working more relaxedly towards ultimately doing it ALL in the language._

#6 is the same as #4 above: it just makes sure learners know how to say the _NOT_ version of this new pattern—again, weaving/Relating parts (#4+#5) together.

6   Kagwi waji ôda wlamalsiwwan?   - _____, ni waji ôda wlamalsiwwa.
      Why do you not feel good?   - _____, _that's why I don't feel good._

#7-#8-#9 offers probably the most crucial/central series of lessons. See how the simple step-by-step buildup works across them:

#7	Mili ni.	Mila ni.	= *simple dinner-time use, only 2 forms*
	Give me that.	*Give her that.*	

#8	K'milin ni?	K'milôn ni?	= *same as #7, just Q/statement, not request*
	You're giving me that?	*You're giving her that?*	

#9	K'mil(e)len ni.	K'milgon ni.	= *same as #8, just roles flipped* = *Core Four!*
	I'm giving you that.	*She's giving you that.*	

- By doing these in sets of two—simple pairings to make the Meanings "pop" against each other—learners can build up to a clear understanding of all of the "Core Four" patterns seen in #8 and #9.

- These Core Four literally show <u>all</u> the basic relationships in actions: all the markers of the *Givee*, thing Given, and Giver.

- Each separate step works well *orally*: but we then learned a key lesson. When we chart the Core Four out *visually* on a blackboard like below, learners get confused.

#8   K'milin ni?   K'milôn ni?
      You're giving me that?   *You're giving her that?*

#9   K'mil(e)len ni.   K'milgon ni.
      I'm giving you that.   *She's giving you that.*

- There are a number of interesting reasons for this, but we're going to skip to the <u>solution</u> the students themselves produced. This came when we asked them, in groups, to <u>*create a conversation*</u> using all Core Four phrases, plus the two simple "about-ME" ones built off of them.

- The learners created a conversation which, in slightly adapted form here, has all Core Four forms in their actual conversational use:

A: K'milin ni? | *You're giving me that?*
B: Ôhô, k'mil(e)len ni. | *Yes, I'm giving you that.*

(C, an observer/questioner, then asks B (the giver) and A (the givee) about this)

C→B: K'milôn ni? | *You're giving her that?*
B: Ôhô, n'milôn ni. | *Yes, I'm giving her that.*

C→A: K'milgon ni? | *She's giving you that?*
A: Ôhô, n'milgon ni. | *Yes, she's giving me that.*

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- It takes a few good runthroughs for learners to get it fully. But this *Six-Step Conversation* walks them through a real-life *visual* sense of what each phrase Means.

A:	K'milin ni?	|	*You're giving me that?*
B:	Ôhô, k'mil(e)len ni.	|	*Yes, I'm giving you that.*

(C, an observer/questioner, then asks B (the giver) and A (the givee) about this)

C→B:	K'milôn ni?	|	*You're giving her that?*
B:	Ôhô, n'milôn ni.	|	*Yes, I'm giving her that.*

C→A:	K'milgon ni?	|	*She's giving you that?*
A:	Ôhô, n'milgon ni.	|	*Yes, she's giving me that.*

- It start with the core, simple YOU-and-ME conversation. Then it moves to ask the Giver about the other person; and then the Givee—and with that, every Relation is covered.

- Visually experiencing who is saying what, and why, at each step of the conversation, the learner can reinforce (and recover) the *Meaning* at each point—i.e., which *Relation* is being talked about.

- Each ModelPhrase here again then becomes a Landmark for talking about/referring back to each exact pattern.

- Learners later test themselves with a group "speed run" of the Six-Step Conversation, seeing how fast they can still keep track of the Meaning of what they're saying.

- Then another speed test, but doing a SwapIn, replacing GIVE with other vocabulary like FEED/ GIVE TO EAT, or TELL, etc.—to really practice their flexibility/creativity in using the pattern.

- It turns out that with just these four model-words mastered, learners know the entire core set of elements used to show relationships within actions:

k'milin	'you give me it'	k'milôn	'you give h/her it'
k'mil(e)len	'I give you it'	k'milgon	's/he gives you it'

- And more importantly, all other forms are just simple Expansions, based on one of these four models.

k'milin	'you give me it'
k'milinal (wôwanal)?	'You're giving me them (the eggs)?'
k'milin	'you give me it'
k'milinana ni?	'You're giving us that?' [ME>US]

- So w/the original Six-Step Conversation mastered, on Loopback, learners then can very easily just add 1-2 new parts to the original words (*italic+underlined*) to Expand that simple YOU-ME (etc.) conversation out to refer to Groups (Y'ALL-US):

       A: *K'miliN*Anawal nilil? | *Y'all re giving us those?*   *[y'all OR you]*

       B: Ôhô, *k'mil(e)leN*Anawal nilil. | *Yes, we're giving y'all those.*   *[y'all OR you]*

       (C, an observer/questioner, then asks B (the giver) and A (the givee) about this)

       C→B: *K'milôN*ôl nilil? | *Y'all are giving them those? [them OR /her]*

       B: Ôhô, *n'milôN*Anawal nilil. | *Yes, we're giving them those. ""*

       C→A: *K'milgoN*ôl nilil? | *They're giving y'all those?   [them OR /her]*

       A: Ôhô, *n'milgoN*Anawal nilil. | *Yes, they're giving us those. ""*

- Here learners only need abt 2-3 new points to go from the simplest forms to the most complex.

- This depends of course specifically on how Alg lgs work—but the Minimal Course approach is all about finding these basic simplicities for a lg, and centering them in the presentation-design.

- And it turns out all main-clause verb forms in this area of languages are actually just some *subset* of what we've just seen. So learners have actually basically seen it all, this quickly.

- *(If you're working with an Algonquian language with similar patterns, we'd be happy to chat more about the specifics here for your own teaching designs!)*

- So that everything from here is now asking learners to use LESS of what they already know, just in more ways. Rather than constantly blitzing them with yet more new material/elements every time they want to move forward in the language.

- *From there, the next lessons do what we'd expect: just the kagwi waji (WHY) and NOT versions of these patterns.*

7.   Moving forward

- In a total of about 24 lessonlets, we also introduce:

    - basic word-building: for richly describing things
    - particles: ones that show source of information, uncertainty, old/new/contrasting info, etc.
    - word-building for talking about location and movement
    - word-building for talking about time and perspective
    - WHY-, HOW-, and WHERE-expressions + IF- and THEN-expressions to build complex phrases
    - taking the GIVE relationship down to simpler ones like HELP, EAT, etc.
    - LINKERS: words and patterns that connect up simple phrases into rich, complex sentences

- That last point is the key one: we want learners to feel like they can say complex, adult-conversation things as soon as possible...certainly no later than the first "semester" of learning.

- *Linkers* help do that.

- With Linkers, learners knowing just a few words can nonetheless say very complex and nuanced things, almost immediately:

Nolidahôzi	**ta**	kolidahôzi.	*= nice long, full sentence, now can add AND... indefinitely*
I'm happy	*and*	*you're happy.*	

Nolidahôzi	**kanwa**	kolidahôzi.	*= whoa, now we have some real interpersonal drama!*
I'm happy	*but*	*you're happy.*	

Nolidahôzi	**wzômi**	kolidahôzi.	*= this one is pretty nice!*
I'm happy	*because*	*you're happy.*	

- This sends learners home w/a solid sense that they can really live their lives in this language, that they can *quickly* get to express what they need for complex, adult-level interactions.

- Linkers often build off of more specific patterns, like IF here in Abenaki—but even it only needs lessonlet #4. So which Linkers get introduced early, and how, depends on the details of the lg:

Nolidahôzi	wlidahôzian**a**.	*= possibly passive-aggressive; something's going on...*
I'm happy	*if you're happy.*	

- Overall, our design is about having everything come together, all the time, weaving together and building up and up—beginners are never asked to learn anything they can't use today and/or can't use with what they've already learned.

- [Our job is only to help learners do what they can't easily do themselves. So we do some careful vocabulary prioritization (and vocabulary-relation) work for them, but otherwise we assume that they can teach themselves Numbers, Colors, and Animals, etc. on their own. We just help them with the crucial but less obvious patterns that help learners then go <u>use</u> those words in living, everyday conversation.]

8.   Pronunciation

- The Minimal Course approach to pronunciation is its own story; but some key principles are:

- *RhythmFirst* = prrioritizing *rhythm and melody*: often not or barely taught, but when they solidly know word-rhythm + word-melody—the song of the lg—learners can express real Feeling. And their words sound so much better to spkrs—which causes a positive feedback loop of confidence.

- Teaching tricky sound contrasts like long vs. short vowels *orally* first—before ever introducing how they're spelled. A simple *oral* sound-contrast approach introduces a single ModelWord for each vowel (etc.), which any sound in a new word can be matched against. This lets them "spell out" the words orally (by Relating them). First-lg spkrs who don't write are no longer excluded, since they too can easily learn this way of helping learners get all the sounds precisely, by ear.

- W/o this, ppl learn not Sounds but *Spellings*, w/the Sounds mastered slowly or even never.

- Learners who master the sounds orally first have little problem w/spellings, bc those represent (what are now) meaningful Sound distinctions. Only then does the writing system make sense: it gives learners non-English ways to spell non-Eg sounds they can already comfortably hear and say.

9.   Smartphone recording technique

- Designated class time to stop and record orally the essentials of what you've learned today.
- Your notes are with you everywhere, and you know exactly how to say them, because they're in your own voice.

- Provides a record of learners saying the phrase when they had the most confidence that they are doing it right = exactly when we are telling them, yes, you've got it right now, you're good enough to record.
- More benefits to them *actively* engaging with their own pronunciation than drawbacks of sometimes reinforcing errors:

- Still need to hear fluent-speaker models, too, of course. But we also want speakers *fluently* roughing it out enough to then polish/perfect it from there. (Ties back to not leaving pronunciation a mystery.)

- Also has the Metallic Method benefit of self-documentation: your old recordings will later on show you how much better you've gotten, how much you've accomplished.

10.   The power of puppets 🦊

- Adult learners are intensely anxious about making mistakes.

- Put puppets on their hands, and they relax a bit. Puppets are fun!

- But even more importantly, when the puppets are talking to each other, you're not looking at a human face, and no one is looking at your face.

- So that sense of "Someone is about to judge me for my mistakes...!" is dialed down massively. Since you're not looking at them, and they're not looking at you: everyone is looking at the puppets. And the puppets aren't you.

- So we can get people to do the exact same language work, without them feeling nearly as much like their bumpy performance actually reflects directly on them.

11.   BodyCentered approach to (*prioritizing*) vocabulary-building

- Having earlier emphasized vocabulary-*minimalism*, we now also outline a vocabulary *prioritization* plan that starts from the actions/experiences of the body itself.

- Focus not on classic "learning the body parts", but on their outward *actions* + inward *sensations*:

eyes:	LOOK+SEE	LOOKS.LIKE	LOOK.FOR + FIND	(*colors, etc.*)
ears:	LISTEN+HEAR	SOUNDS.LIKE		
heart/mind:	FEEL(*ings*)	THINK(*about, have opinion*)		(*feelings, etc.*)
	KNOW(*thing, person*)	UNDERSTAND	REMEMBER+FORGET	
mouth:	EAT+DRINK (hungry, thirsty)	TASTES.LIKE		
	SAY+TELL ASK+ANSWER	SPEAK(at all; language; talk/chat)		
hands:	GIVE+TAKE	GRAB+HOLD+LET.GO	CATCH+THROW	(+ *many more!!!*)
legs/body:	GO+COME STAY+LEAVE	WAIT.FOR+FOLLOW	STAND+SIT+LIE WALK+RUN	

- These initial BodyCentered vocab items start from a minimal, manageable level that already gives learners a wide range of expression—and then also set them up for step-by-step expansion to an even wider range of now always systematically *Related* vocab starting from this simple core.

- Then moves from Body *outward*: *clothing→home+vehicle→ natural+urban envir., kin+community envir.*

12.   Relational Approach

- These design efforts emphasize *Relation(s):*

    - how words relate to each other (vs. indiv. words abstractly analyzed), in phrases + as usage;

    - how lessons relate to everyday life (all phrases are take-home usable every day);

    - how learners relate to the language and to each other.

- Techniques cultivating mutual support and a *TeachItForward* spirit further enhance immersion experiences and also provide an accessible introductory course for more time-constrained adult beginners.

- *MeaningFirst, etc.*-based lessonlets make it easy for adults to make real progress quickly.

- Overall, these emerging design principles support de-centering academic approaches and re-centering community-based ones.