Key factors in the renewal of Aboriginal languages in NSW

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Key factors in the renewal of Aboriginal languages in New South Wales

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1. Introduction[1]

Across the state of New South Wales (NSW) a number of language rebuilding (LRB) efforts are currently underway.[2] We use the term LRB to refer to development of a communicative, spoken form of a language that is no longer used to any substantial extent, based on prior written and audio-recorded records. Several other terms are used for this process, including 'language revival' (Walsh 2005), 'language reclamation' (Leonard 2007; McCarty 2003) or, more imaginatively, 'awakening sleeping languages' (Hinton & Hale 2001). Whatever term is used, it only begins to direct our attention to the complex intergenerational task that underpins the revitalisation of Australia's ancestral languages. One of the contentious issues addressed through the rebuilding process is that, to be representative of aspirations of Aboriginal communities, the resulting languages need to be both epistemologically true

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[1] We have pleasure in offering this paper in honour of Luise Hercus. Luise and Giacon have been colleagues in the Linguistics program at the Australian National University since 2006 when he began his PhD there. They made a number of memorable trips together, including two to Birdsville and nearby areas, firstly following the path of the Wangkangurru Swan History and later looking for Kunamaka swamp, an important site in the Fire History. Another trip was to western and southern NSW, where Luise had recorded Paakantyi and numerous other languages (see Nathan, this volume; Koch & Obata, this volume). On many occasions, descendants of those Luise had interviewed spoke of their hope to relearn their forebears' languages. The 1,000 tapes of Aboriginal languages Luise recorded which line the walls of her office, along with her grammars, dictionaries and numerous other publications, will be a treasure for future language rebuilders. Our hope is that this paper may help these materials be more effectively used and may help people again speak their languages. The authors thank Harold Koch and Peter Austin and an anonymous reviewer for their many helpful comments.

[2] For a broader perspective on language maintenance and revitalisation in Australia see Walsh (2014).

to their traditions and open to new concepts and realities beyond what was recorded, or conceived by traditional speakers.

The rebuilt languages (RBL) will inevitably incorporate some features of the first language of the rebuilders. Because of this last factor the resulting language may be described as a 'hybrid' of its traditional form. It is acknowledged that this term could be contentious, and the authors intend no slight, but wish to argue that it is crucial to the future of RBLs to acknowledge that they will change and have already changed because of the environment in which they are being used. There are two conceptually distinct changes: development of the languages so they remain relevant to the lived experiences of the communities in which they are the sovereign languages, and, secondly, the influence of English language patterns.

However, the degree of hybridity of the RBL is not pre-determined. The more knowledge of the traditional language is incorporated into the rebuilding process the less English will affect the rebuilt language. The two key factors here are research into the traditional language and then education of the teachers of the rebuilt language.

Language rebuilding is a process, and it is possible for the process to stall, and for language knowledge to plateau. This is true both for the overall description of the language and for individual learners. Within an vibrant language such as English, the language description reflects part of the actual language; for a rebuilding language, on the other hand, the description (the grammar and dictionary) is in fact the most complete version of the language. In the NSW context, with many relatively isolated groups reusing a given language,[3] there is also a tendency for the rebuilt languages to fragment into a number of versions.

We consider several NSW language programs, particularly Gamilaraay-Yuwaalaraay (GY), that Giacon has been associated with, Gumbaynggirr, and Wiradjuri. These programs share a number of common features that have assisted them to develop and teach usable language over a long period. However, the structures which were suitable for the initial period of rebuilding are generally not adequate for later stages of the process.

Therefore we propose some measures needed for language rebuilding to continue effectively, including a good understanding of language rebuilding and an appropriate set of structures to support it. In particular, underpinning language research and development and training of language teachers needs more emphasis, and the process would benefit from greater coordination. We do not examine other issues, such as the extent of use of RBLs by individuals, families, schools and communities, or how traditional is the language used in these settings. Investigation of these issues would certainly assist good planning for language rebuilding.

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[3] For instance, the Yuwaalaraay-Gamilaraay community numbers in the thousands. Many are located in Yuwaalaraay-Gamilaraay lands, in widely separated and generally small towns. There are often a number of representative indigenous bodies in one town. Other members live in regional centres, capital cities, and around the world. Gamilaraay land covers around 75,000 square kilometres (Ash et al. 2003: 1); the total extent of Yuwaalaraay-Gamilaraay lands is approximately the size of Ireland. There is no overall community organisation, and certainly none that coordinates language work, so cooperation between linguists and community members is generally on an individual or small group basis.

2. Why language rebuilding matters

When English-speaking settlers arrived in Australia in 1788 there were around 70 Aboriginal languages spoken in what is now New South Wales (Wafer & Lissarrague 2008). Currently none of these languages are fully spoken; one or two have speakers with substantial handed-down knowledge, but much of the information about the languages is contained in historical records.

There has been growing interest and activity in the languages over the last 20 years; after years of decline people are learning and reusing them. The reclamation of Aboriginal languages matters because they are the ancestral languages of the land. It is from and through these languages that communities are enabled to mount their sovereign legitimacy through the assertion of ontological links to country, and to describe the epistemic positioning of this knowledge within the landscape in which these languages once resonated. As such, language is a powerful tool to both assert one's place, and to acknowledge its enforced substitution with a 'foreign' language. The destruction of languages has had a negative impact, and is seen as a powerful marker, used by the dominant colonising population to control the complex multilingual groups whose lands they took. They prohibited and punished the use of other languages, particularly minority languages. Many Aboriginal people in NSW have personally experienced this. It is a way of devaluing and destroying their cultures. The effects are not only on language but also on all issues that are related to cultural domination and attempts to destroy identity, including health, well-being, resilience and educational achievement (Marie, Fergusson, & Boden 2008). The reuse of languages can begin to reverse the damage done by their destruction.

The main purpose of language reuse is as a statement of identity and an expression of Aboriginal people's cultural sovereignty (Ardill 2013; Bidois 2013). The positive effects of this for one Walgett school program are documented in Cavanagh (2005).

3. Features of rebuilt languages

Over many years of working closely in the processes of rebuilding languages, a number of features have been commonly observed. Firstly, the incompleteness of the resulting language is a constant reality and challenge. Secondly, any growth in the languages is incremental and often irregular. Finally, rebuilt languages are hybrid, and they tend to develop multiple versions, many of which are localised and temporary. There has been no systematic study of the use in homes, workplaces or schools of these rebuilt languages.

3.1 Incomplete

As a result of policies that forbade the use of languages in public spaces, the first languages of Aboriginal communities were unable to expand, to describe the new realities that were and are part of the rapidly evolving socio-cultural environments in which the communities were forced to engage. For a language to have contemporary

everyday use it must develop new words and expressions, for instance greetings and farewells, which are rarely found in historical sources (see, e.g., Giacon 2001).

From informal observation of GY and other RBLs it is quite clear that the vocabulary and structures used by learners are quite limited. Pronunciation is clearly influenced by English. Generally there is poor understanding of morphological and syntactic features such as cases, verb tense and aspect, and word order. Many features of the language are not used. Often people working on the language have only had access to elementary courses and have not been introduced to much of the material in grammatical descriptions, such as the introductory grammar found in Ash et al. (2003) or the more complete and complex features discussed in Giacon (2001, 2014).

3.2 Incremental

The process of language rebuilding is an incremental one. This is true of both what might be called the 'described language' and the 'used language'. The 'described language' includes all that is known about the language – typically recorded in grammars, dictionaries and other scholarly publications. It includes the results of research and of what might be called language engineering or language development. 'Used language' refers to what re-learners of the language actually say and write. It will include 'described language' to the extent that the re-learners have absorbed it.

It is very easy for progress in the language to cease, which can be referred to as 'plateauing'. Language description can stop because no one is working on it. Language learners may not increase their knowledge because opportunities or incentives do not exist. Structures which can help prevent this lack of progress include employment for researchers and easily accessible courses for learners.

3.3 Hybridization

The RBL will be hybrid. Hybridization results from the power that is exerted by the colonial language over the Indigenous language, and is a consequence of the influence of the language ecologies of colonised locations (see Zuckermann 2009; Zuckermann & Walsh 2011). Zuckermann describes Modern Israeli as a hybrid; although its context is different in many respects from that of NSW Aboriginal languages, there are some common factors, and NSW revitalisation can learn from the Israeli experience. Many features of English are commonly seen in current GY. There are well-described features of GY which many learners do not master. For instance, word-initial velar nasal *ng* is very common in Aboriginal languages (e.g. GY *ngaya* 'I', *nginda* 'you'). Students understand the concept and often pronounce the sound accurately when focussing on pronunciation, but they revert to [n] rather than [ŋ] during GY conversation, when their focus is on the wider content.

While the *ng* sound can be easily and accurately described, there are many aspects of GY which are not so clearly understood or described, and so cannot be taught. For instance, there is no clear description of GY intonation patterns, so the learners don't know what to aim at, and the only option they have is to use

the intonation patterns they know, which in this context are generally English ones. Reid (2010) suggests that rebuilt languages will have predominantly English pronunciation. As King et al. (2009: 85), who have extensively studied the pronunciation of current Māori, state: 'We also know that second language speakers of any language bring the phonological system of the first language with them when they come to learn and speak their second language'.

Two of the many other features of GY that learners have difficulty using are word order and the marking of plurals. English word order is relatively fixed, while traditionally GY showed greater flexibility. GY learners predominantly use English patterns rather than the variable GY pattern. In many situations GY does not mark plurals morphologically. Many GY learners adapt to this, but others do not, and use markers on all plurals. More rarely learners use English 's' to mark plurals.

Ideally, as more is discovered of the traditional language, the RBL will be revised, recapturing more of the traditional language, but this is not easy since people who have learnt a language would need to relearn a modified version, which is a major task. As well, teaching resources would need to be changed.

Hybridity is generally obvious in the speech of adults who have learnt a second language (an L2), so we can, e.g., often recognise from their accent the country of origin of people who learn English as adults. Their way of speaking English is hybrid, retaining their L1 pronunciation, and often other lexical or grammatical features. Their children, on the other hand, learn from those around them, and tend not to maintain the hybrid features. However, for an RBL there is no 'native population' for people to learn from, so the usage of the first re-learners can shape the language permanently. It will stay hybrid.

While hybridity in RLB is inevitable, the degree of it is not. Distinctive features of a traditional language which are clearly described and effectively taught and practised can be retained in the RBL. While the discussion has so far centred on the language itself, of equal importance is ensuring that the process of rebuilding maintains the language's unique ontological and epistemic links with Aboriginal knowledge. It is crucial that the rebuilt linguistic structures still enable speakers to reconstruct descriptions of themselves, their being and their place in the country.

The focus of LRB is on language use. There is a tendency to begin language teaching soon after research begins, to simplify the language for early learners, and to have people who have learnt a little of the language teach others. This will tend to result in a more hybrid language.

3.4 Multiple versions

The situation of RBLs in NSW means that multiple versions can easily develop. In other L2 contexts, most learners are taught the standard version of the target language by teachers who know it well. The learners can also acquire the language by immersion and from copious text and media sources. Neither of these situations apply to NSW RBLs.

For example, the total Gamilaraay corpus includes less than a thousand words, most of them quite simple and recorded from people who knew relatively little of

the language. There are 60 hours of Yuwaalaraay on audio tape – a much richer source – but the language is not suited for early learners and as a consequence these resources are rarely accessed or used in a systematic way, except by researchers.

While people may use dictionaries or lessons as a shared starting point, interpretation of them varies. Each local group or teacher in a classroom tends to develop their own idiosyncratic language variations. Any attempt to use language communicatively quickly shows the gaps in the language knowledge. For instance, if someone wants to say 'hand in your homework' they need to develop words for 'homework' and 'hand in'. Because there is so little communication between the various people teaching the language and, because of the sheer amount of language that needs to be developed, each location tends to come up with a version of rebuilt language that emanates from their local understanding and knowledge. It is not clear what impact these multiple versions of rebuilt GY will have. Many versions may have a very short life, briefly used for one speech or one class or in one family, and not more widely.

Another factor is that people whose ancestral language is being rebuilt often have a feeling of ownership and responsibility for the language. There can be ambivalent feelings aroused when a 'foreigner' is seen to be teaching the language.[4] We do not discuss this important matter any further in this paper.

4. Language research, development and learning

4.1 Language research and development

The first step in rebuilding a language is analysis of historical sources, undertaken in the light of any existing previous analyses, in order to produce a current description. This description is vital since only features of the traditional language which are described can potentially be incorporated into the rebuilt language. Language description is typically published in dictionaries and grammars, whose authors develop a keen knowledge of the language. This expertise and the materials produced are key for teaching and for production of other resources. The research is effective if it is shared and if others learn from it.

Language development[5] involves the creation of new language, informed by documented patterns, to fill 'gaps' in the recorded or remembered corpus. The

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[4] While this is true, it is also true that there are very few indigenous linguists in Australia, and until that is addressed much of the research into and teaching of indigenous languages will be done by non-indigenous people. Many indigenous people, particularly those with long involvement in language rebuilding, express strong appreciation of the work done by non-indigenous linguists, and acknowledge that work as an essential part of the current strong activity in revitalisation (see Gale, this volume).

[5] Actual GY language development takes place in a number of contexts. There are frequent requests to Giacon for translations. For instance, there is an annual rugby league game between an Indigenous team and other top players. The translation involved the development of words for 'football' and 'forgive', among others. For more on this translation see: Gamilaraay. wordpress.com: February 12, 2015.

gaps may be parts of the traditional language that have not been recorded or may be needs-driven, so that learners are able to generate new, but epistemologically authentic, ways to describe the lived realities of local language communities.

Ideally, language development is done on the pattern of the traditional language – 'how fluent speakers would have done it'. Since fluent speakers are not currently available in many if not most of these communities, language development is best informed by those who have the greatest knowledge, and by the members of the language community who have the greatest knowledge of the language. When no information on an aspect of language has been found in the traditional language sources, the patterns used in other Aboriginal languages can provide a template. This will result in a revised language that is closer to the original language than the alternative, which is generally to follow the pattern of English. This approach is used in a number of Australian languages. Amery (2000: 114) writes:

> An understanding of the broad typological features of other Australian languages, particularly those mostly closely related to Kaurna, aids in the interpretation of the historical materials and in the construction of the Kaurna language as it is used in the 1990s.

Eira (2010: 72) in turn reports that the similarity between Kaurna and Narungga was used to complete a pronoun paradigm for the latter.

4.2 Available learning resources

There are vast differences between L2s and RBLs. Commonly, L2s such as English or Indonesian can be used to discuss any situation, have millions of speakers, thousands of people able to teach them, course materials, and readily available examples in books, on-line, radio, TV and films. L2 learners are often immersed in the language – living in an area where the language is used.

The situation with RBLs is very different. GY, for instance, has not developed words for the now common socio-cultural realities of people's daily lives (e.g. 'government', 'religion', 'sport', 'job'); nor can learners immerse themselves in the language. There are very few situations where GY is used and none where it is used continuously or where complex GY is found. Teachers of GY do use the language regularly but at a simple level. Giacon has taught the course *Speaking Gamilaraay 1* around twenty times and so has practised the materials it covers extensively. He has taught *Speaking Gamilaraay 2* only twice, so has very limited practice of the features included in that course. At best, these two courses cover just 200 of the 1,200 or more hours needed for fluency in an L2.[6]

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[6] A number of sources suggest that over 1,000 hours of instruction or guided learning are needed to develop 'Mastery or Proficiency' in an L2 as defined by the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*. The presumably refers to learning a language which is relatively close to the learner's first language. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_European_Framework_of_Reference_for_Languages#Relationship_with_duration_of_learning_process [accessed 2015-08-17]

In most L2 learning, the learner's attempts to master the target language are recognised as steps on the way to a level of proficiency.[7] However in RBL the learner is often expected to be the expert. There are often situations where a GY learner with developing language skills is asked to make public statements in the language or to teach it without on-going professional support. This can result in a highly simplified version being used.

4.3 Goals of language learning

There are generally different purposes for learning an RBL in contrast to an L2. In most cases, the L2 learner desires to develop communicative skills so they are enabled to communicate with other speakers of the L2, even if that might be perhaps at an elementary level. For an RBL learner, the purpose is deeply aspirational, and is political, cultural and social in its focus, given the postcolonial environment of countries like Australia. Any use of an RBL in public, especially in official or cultural contexts, represents an acknowledgement of a people and their rights. Examples of such use include the relatively recent use of Ngunnawal at the opening of Federal Parliament and acknowledgements of, and welcomes to, country. Many in the audience at such events will not understand the language, but they will understand the symbolism. Almost any use of a RBL is powerfully symbolic.

It is also possible to aim for communicative use of an RBL. This may initially consist of a few greetings, but as people develop a good understanding of the language they can construct new utterances to describe everyday situations.

5. The language revitalisation movement in NSW

In this section we discuss three language rebuilding projects which started 20 or more years ago in New South Wales and which are still active: Gumbaynggirr, Gamilaraay-Yuwaalaraay and Wiradjuri. Our description of LRB in NSW will necessarily be incomplete and brief; a more comprehensive examination will certainly help with more effective language learning and teaching in future. The analysis here is largely based on Lowe's wide experience of language work at the Board of Studies NSW, Giacon's personal experience in GY, and his regular contact with the Gumbaynggirr work (via its linguist, Steve Morelli), and less close contact with Wiradjuri language rebuilding.

5.1 Early language rebuilding in NSW

The initial workers in each LRB project included a key individual or small group who were members of the language community and a key individual or group who had expertise in teaching, languages and administration. These were all older,

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[7]   As one reviewer pointed out: 'and of course there is no measure of proficiency without a language description'.

experienced, people. Most remained involved in language work for many years, and through research developed considerable language knowledge. Much of this work was for little or no pay, but did have some support from a variety of funders and academic or educational institutions. Publications were produced and language taught, and the groups also advocated for the languages.

Brother Steve Morelli was an experienced teacher when he began working with a group of Gumbaynggirr elders on their language, spoken on the north coast of NSW. They later set up a centre, the *Muurrbay Aboriginal Language & Culture Cooperative,* which has continued as a base for the language, and is also closely associated with *Many Rivers Language Centre* (MRLC), which works with all the coastal languages from Sydney to the Queensland border. MRLC has produced a number of grammars and is the key organiser for many language activities.

Muurrbay is atypical within NSW, in that it has been the locus of language research and teaching for several decades. It has had permanent employment for language workers and conducts accredited language courses. However, it is not clear that this model is widely applicable.

Wiradjuri language rebuilding was started by Stan Grant, a Wiradjuri man and teacher, and John Rudder, who had worked in Aboriginal areas in the Northern Territory and has a PhD in anthropology. While there was no dedicated Wiradjuri language centre, the influential *Wiradjuri Council of Elders* oversees development of the language. There are long term and highly successful introductory Wiradjuri programs, including community adult courses, school-based programmes (Anderson 2010; Maier 2010), TAFE[8] certificate courses, and a new University program at the Wagga Wagga campus of Charles Sturt University.

The GY situation will be considered in a little more detail.[9] In the early 1990s Peter Austin and David Nathan, working with Auntie Rose Fernando and others, produced an on-line Gamilaraay dictionary (Austin & Nathan, 1996). Giacon, like Morelli, was a teacher and Christian Brother and moved to Walgett in northern New South Wales in 1994, soon beginning a linguistics degree at the University of New England. Uncle Ted Fields was working to keep Yuwaalaraay alive and he and Giacon were quickly involved in language activities. Ted had great local cultural knowledge but his language expertise was largely limited to the many words he knew.

A result of this combination of community advocacy and research was that many GY people became involved in language work, with some of them later teaching in Walgett, Goodooga and other nearby townships. Funding

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[8] Tertiary and Further Education. TAFE offers a range of non-degree courses, many of them vocational or interest-based.

[9]   Austin (2008) gives a history of research on Gamilaraay. For current work the most important previous analysis has been Williams (1980), which greatly expanded the description of Yuwaalaraay, and so of Gamilaraay. It was one of the results of the flowering of research in Australian languages at the Australian National University in the 1970s. Austin (2014) discusses political and ideological factors affecting GY revitalisation from the 1990s onwards.

came from a variety of sources. From 1997 to 2002 a number of significant
GY language meetings were held across the region, largely organised by local
language programs. Of particular note was the establishment in 2006 of a
Gamilaraay course at Sydney University. A number of new language resources
were developed to support these language programs; examples can be accessed
at www.yuwaalaraay.org.

5.2 Later language rebuilding in NSW

Many Aboriginal people across the state had not realised that their languages
were recoverable but activities such as those discussed above showed what was
possible and work began on many other languages from about 2003. Some of
the other major developments involved government, universities and TAFE. The
NSW Government was developing an Aboriginal Languages Policy,[10] and soon
afterwards established an *Aboriginal Languages Centre*, which operated for
some years. Individual government agencies also became involved in language
work, largely it seems as a result of individuals seeing its value. The Board of
Studies, which sets school curricula, had a long-term involvement, including
developing the influential *K-10 Aboriginal Languages Syllabus* and running
many curriculum implementation in-service activities. TAFE continues to offer
language courses around the state. Most recently the state government has set
up five language nests,[11] each helping coordinate work in a particular language.
Government grants have proven to be critical in supporting language research,
employment of staff within language programs and at centres, and supporting
the production of dictionaries, language resources and in some instances lessons
for early learners.

The University of Sydney also began supporting teachers of Aboriginal
languages programs, when it established a *Masters of Indigenous Language
Education* degree, largely on the initiative of John Hobson, and later a
unit on language revival as part of an undergraduate degree program.
Hobson and Giacon also initiated the Gamilaraay language course at
Sydney University (KOCR2605) in 2006. That course is now also offered
at ANU.

It is relatively easy to document publications and funded programs. However,
the ultimate goal of language rebuilding is local use of a language, an outcome
that is much more difficult to document. It is clear that RBLs are being widely
used in formal settings such as welcomes to and acknowledgements of country,

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[10] Previously available at http://www.daa.nsw.gov.au/data/files//languagespolicyFINAL.pdf
[accessed 2004-05-24]; this link is no longer live.

[11] Described at http://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au/aboriginal-language-and-culture-
nests/ [accessed 2015-08-19]. Whereas elsewhere (e.g. Hawai'i, New Zealand) Language
Nests are immersion sites with older, fluent speakers and young children, in NSW the term
has been applied to newly established centres, each with two staff, and with responsibility for
coordinating language work in schools as well as planning the broader rebuilding program for
the language.

and at funerals and weddings. Words in individual languages are also used for children's names. There are songs and other performances in RBLs and simple constructions, particularly greetings, are widely used in homes and other social settings.

Inevitably the language used in these situations reflects the users' aspirations and their knowledge. In many situations merely using some form of a language is a great achievement and a powerful statement of pride and identity. However, if there are to be substantial school programmes in RBLs or extensive use of them in any context, much more knowledge of the languages is needed, as is production of an ever-increasing range of language materials.[12]

A number of school courses have generated, and continue to generate, great interest and enthusiasm. These generally do not go into the particular language in depth. In other instances the limited amount of material available can mean that initial keenness may dissipate. If teachers are not sufficiently trained and provided with a range of resources the teaching of a given language can be quite stressful and so there will be a tendency to avoid it. It is our opinion that until there are university courses in the languages and language teachers attend these courses there will be very little growth in NSW languages.

The next section considers ways in which this situation could be improved.

6. Reviewing approaches to language work

6.1 Current approaches in NSW

Today there are many Aboriginal language activities in NSW, considerable enthusiasm and great hopes. What our long-term involvement in language revitalisation has shown is that there are a number of things that can be done to facilitate their use and continued growth. While the goal of these programs is use of the languages within homes, communities and schools, the foundations are in language research and development, in training for teachers, in quality resources, and in having an administrative framework that facilitates the coordination of all levels of language work. Such administration needs to develop co-operation between the various bodies that are involved in language work and to develop new models for it.

When recent language work began the key people were involved in all aspects: description, teaching, administration, and advocacy. Subsequently, however, others have focussed on the end-point, i.e. use of the language,

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[12] As one anonymous reviewer correctly points out, good school programs presume not only language materials (and trained teachers) but a framework, a syllabus for language teaching. NSW has made a start with a Kindergarten to Year 10 syllabus (Board of Studies 2003), but this is quite general and each language needs a much more detailed document to guide teaching. There is also work on a national framework (ACARA 2011) but again this is far from a language-specific document.

without supporting the necessary foundations for long-term growth. Consequently, there has been little done to ensure ongoing language research and development and professional development of teachers.

As Eira & Couzens (2010: 6) point out, language rebuilding needs a 'meeting of the minds and ways of thinking' between linguists and community. While there are currently a small number of linguists doing personal research into NSW languages, there is minimal employment in this field. Positions need to be created, largely at universities, to employ linguists for such research. These would ideally involve people teaching NSW languages and others doing post-graduate research. For the communities to take their proper role in this field representative structures need to be developed. The language nests mentioned elsewhere may have a role in this.

6.2 Other approaches to language work

Other communities have taken a very different approach from that seen in NSW. Māori is strongly supported by the Māori Language Commission,[13] which coordinates many areas of language work. It operates under the Māori Language Act 1987, has a board of five members, an executive, and substantial funding.[14] Foras na Gaeilge[15] is the body responsible for the promotion of the Irish language throughout Ireland. In Hawaii, the Kawaihuelani Center for Hawai'ian Language at the University of Hawai'i has an extensive staff and organises many activities, including a major biennial event, *The International Conference on Language Documentation and Conservation*.[16]

Overseas, universities have taken a significant role in maintaining and teaching Indigenous languages. One need only observe the number of Māori courses at New Zealand Universities[17] or Hawai'ian language courses at the University of Hawai'i, to see their contribution to language use within the wider community. As yet there are few opportunities in Australia to study Aboriginal languages at university (Giacon & Simpson 2011). The *Masters of Indigenous Language Education* at the University of Sydney has been one of the few places where people could learn about languages. Its graduates can be found in most of the government administrative positions associated with Aboriginal languages, and a small number have found employment in school-based programs.

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[13]   http://www.tetaurawhiri.govt.nz/english [accessed 2015-04-21].

[14]   The 2013-14 appropriation is nearly NZ\$77 million for the promotion of Māori language and culture through direct funding of broadcasting entities (Te Māngai Pāho and Māori Television Services) Te Pūtahi Paoho and Te Taura Whiri I Te Reo (Māori Language Commission); see http://www.parliament.nz/resource/0000000292 [accessed 2015-04-21].

[15]   http://www.gaeilge.ie [accessed 2015-04-21].

[16]   http://sils2014.hawaii-conference.com [accessed 2015-04-21].

[17]   For example, see: http://www.arts.auckland.ac.nz/en/about/subjects-and-courses/maori-studies.html, http://www.otago.ac.nz/courses/subjects/maor.html [both accessed 2015-04-21].

We have much to learn from these examples, where strong leadership, effective management structures, the development of long term strategic planning, and bipartisan political support, all work to give effect to communities' unequivocal aspirations to reclaim and to be supported in the use of their languages.

6.3 Changes needed

The first change needed in NSW is more ongoing research, and for the results of research to be taught. There is currently little research happening and little being done to change that. There is great scope for better use of research that has been carried out. Giacon (2014), for instance, considerably expands the analysis of GY, but relatively little of that is currently taught. Bickerdike (2006) on Wayilwan has also had limited use,[18] while Besold (2013) on the languages of the south coast of NSW is yet to find a substantial place in projects on these languages.

People who want to learn and use their language must have readily available resources and courses in formats that suit their busy lives and their language expectations. They could learn how to say many things from on-line materials and from books. There could be local TAFE courses, but also courses run by trained teachers from the local schools and by others who had done more detailed courses. There could be local language circles, where people would practice and rejoice in language use. The local pre-schools, schools and TAFE will have teachers who have done extensive university courses in the RBLs. They should have regular opportunities to cooperate and share with other teachers. Education bodies recognise that LRB is a demanding task and will need extensive cooperative work, as well as coursework.

There is also a need for language events and language celebrations to support the expanded use of RBLs through activities that include: singing, oratory, performance, poetry, and giving language lessons. These events function to bring language workers together, to maintain the uniformity of a given language, and to generate enthusiasm for it.

Many aspects of language work will not need special funding. An individual family learning an RBL can download resources, join in a circle and learn the language at school. Education bodies, pre-schools, schools, TAFE colleges, and universities can all include language studies as part of their normal function. However, there is a need for a State-wide organisation which coordinates language activities, and this will require on-going funding if it is to facilitate the long-term project of language reclamation.

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[18]   This is an undergraduate Honours thesis largely based on just one of around 90 tapes recorded on Wayilwan. Clearly there is a need for further work on this language.

7. Conclusion

The early stages of New South Wales language rebuilding often involved a small community group and a linguist, with much of the work being voluntary and some funded by one-off grants. This structure functioned well for a number of languages, but it is not proving satisfactory for ongoing development of languages, for quality training of language teachers, or for the production of increasingly sophisticated language resources.

Effective language work needs overall coordination by a body with expertise in many areas including linguistics, language teaching, and project management, but which also draws on the experience of language maintenance and rebuilding. There need to be permanent positions for a number of linguists to research and develop NSW languages and to teach them at university level. These linguists must work closely with the language communities, ideally through a community representative group. School, TAFE and pre-school language teachers all need substantial in-service training, and for most that means courses taught at university level.

When such structures are in place it is much more likely that the tapes that line the offices of scholars like Luise Hercus will be successfully used as the foundations of further language rebuilding programs.

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