UNFINISHED BUSINESS:
Some issues in need of attention in Australian language revival.

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Unfinished business

- What am I doing here?
- Is revival the goal?
- Is revival possible?
- Is school the answer?
- Is technology the answer?
- Is documentation the answer?
- Are protocols helping?
- Are linguists helping?
- Parting thoughts

What am I doing here?

- 30+ years in Australian languages
  - Community controlled/ responsive contexts
  - Last 10 supporting revival by training teachers
  - Current reclamation focus
- Observed issues (NSW emphasis)
  - Goals, planning, theory, research…
  - Lots of conversations with students/ activists
- Advocate of self-determination
  - Including the right to learn from mistakes
- But informed consent and ethics apply.
  - Watch out for that tree!

Is *revival* the goal?

- Has anyone asked the community?
  - What was that about 'ideological clarification'?
  - It's not too late…
- Is everyone talking about the same thing?
  - 'Wellbeing' versus linguistic outcomes
    - status, cultural revival, reconciliation, self-esteem…
    - first language, transmission, native speaker, domains…
  - Bringing language 'back'/ keeping language 'strong'
  - Does anyone agree on the 're-' words?
  - Remember the AILF!

Remember the AILF!

Australia's Indigenous Languages Framework (AILF) Categories		Defining Characteristics
Language Maintenance (First language maintenance)		All generations are full speakers of the language.
Language Revival (learning the language of their heritage)	Language Revitalisation	Generation of (older) speakers left. Children likely to have a good passive knowledge.
	Language Renewal	Oral tradition but no full speakers. Children likely to have little or no passive knowledge.
	Language Reclamation	No full or partial speakers. The program will rely on historical sources to provide knowledge of the language.
Language Awareness		Non-speakers learn about a language no longer spoken, and for which there are only traces of the spoken language and poor documentation.
Language Learning (learning the language of someone else's heritage)		Non-speakers learning a new language.

Is *revival* the goal?

- Dangers of assumption/ unconditional support
  - Cost/ benefit issues
  - Potential to achieve goals
  - Consequences of 'failure'
- Revernacularisation needs specific action.
  - "When will we have our first native speaker?"
- Awareness is much easier,
  - but is it *revival?*

Is revival possible?

- ## What, do linguists think?

  If successful language revival is taken to mean the full restoration of the language to a state of strong vitality (by re-establishing the broken language transmission link; regaining full conversational language knowledge and fluency; and active use of the language by all generations in wide range of social contexts), the chances of success for threatened Aboriginal languages are, in all probability, fairly remote.

  (Schmidt, 1990 p. 106)

- ## Is there enough language to start with?

- ## Are people able to put in the effort?

  - ### Do they know how much is needed?

- ## Is success conditional on external resourcing?

Is revival possible?

- Reclaimed language is 'new' language.
  - Can the language be changed?
  - How much change will the community accept?
  - What price functionality?
- There is a great need for *language* planning:
  - that distinguishes goals from strategies,
  - sets outs times and responsibilities,
  - and takes account of theory and best practice.
- Yes, we can!
  - The Baldwins and Baird have shown us the way.

Is school the answer?

- Fishman's 'camouflaged failure'
- Most NSW revival is now located in schools.
  - Other states are following this trend.
  - Prestige & employment
  - Resources communities can use
- NSW Aboriginal languages syllabus K-10 (2005)
  - Your language, government standards
- Communities servicing school programs
- Recent establishment of 'language nests'
  - Coordinating centres, *not* immersion preschools
  - Government service delivery

Is technology the answer?

- Self-contained, demonstrable outcomes
- Prestige and apparent modernity
- Naturalness versus simulation
- Skills transfer
- Cost & longevity
- Technical issues
- Useful if it facilitates meaningful communication,
  - otherwise often questionable.
- Talk language to me!

Is documentation the answer?

- It can be very useful,
  - ◦ but, doesn't *cause* learning or speaking.
- Easier and more satisfying
- Tangible output
- Literature and archives give substance.
- It's not revival,
  - ◦ but should be integrated into any program.

Are protocols helping?

- What are the protocols?
  - On and off country
  - Who can speak/ learn/ teach
  - Bureaucracy of borrowing
- Where do they come from?
  - Many can't be historical, so recently created
- Whose interests do they serve?
  - 'Language keepers' or gatekeepers?
- Do they help or hinder?

Are linguists helping?

- Who committed the offences, where and when?
- How useful is stereotyping?
- Who is (was) a linguist?
- How much damage can linguists do,
  - apart from being annoying?
- How much help can linguists be,
  - given most aren't trained in revival or education?
- Are people shooting the messenger?
- Haven't see many around lately…

Parting thoughts

- It's not too late for ideological clarification.
- It's never too late to make plans.
- A good understanding of theory and best practice could save you lots of everything.
- Don't trust schools to revive your language.
- Don't trust technology to revive your language.
- Documentation isn't revival.
- Only accept useful protocols.
- Don't trust linguists, but use them anyway…