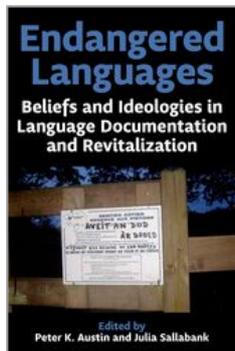


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Endangered Languages: Beliefs and Ideologies in Language Documentation and Revitalization

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Going, Going, Gone? The Ideologies and Politics of Gamilaraay-Yuwaalaraay Endangerment and Revitalization*

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[–] Abstract and Keywords

The history of indigenous Aboriginal languages in eastern Australia for the 200 years following first European settlement in 1788 has been one of loss and extinction. By 1988 it appears that none of the approximately 70 languages originally spoken in what is now New South Wales and Victoria had fully fluent speakers who had acquired them as a first language as children. However, the last 25 years have seen the development of language revitalization projects in a number of communities across this region that have achieved remarkable outcomes, and have introduced Aboriginal languages into schools and other domains. This chapter is an exploration of the social, cultural, political, and attitudinal factors that relate to these developments, drawing on a case study of Gamilaraay-Yuwaalaraay from north-west New South Wales. The importance of local, regional, and national politics is also explored.

Keywords: language ideology, Australian Aboriginal languages, language revitalization, Gamilaraay, Yuwaalaraay, New South Wales

6.1 Background: The Linguistic Ecology of Eastern Australia

AT LEAST 35 LANGUAGES (including 120 dialects) were spoken in what is now New South Wales (NSW) in the eighteenth century when Europeans first settled in Sydney (Wafer and Lissarrague 2008: 4). A similar number of languages were to be found in what is now Victoria (Clark 2005). The nineteenth and twentieth centuries have seen massive language shift to English as Aboriginal groups were dispossessed of their lands and forced onto mission or government settlements, farms, or the fringes of country towns (and, in the twentieth century, increasingly into urban centres such as Sydney and Melbourne), and in some cases taken away

from their families (what are known as the ‘Stolen Generations’). The social and cultural disruption that affected the region resulted in Aboriginal languages being restricted to home and family domains, and rapidly becoming moribund (with only a handful of older speakers) or extinct. Cultural practices such as initiation and other ceremonies mostly ceased to be practised by the first quarter of the twentieth century, and children grew up speaking English and learning just a few words and expressions of the indigenous languages. The Gamilaraay and Yuwaalaraay languages of north-west New South Wales (see the map in Figure 6.1) present a well-documented case study that illustrates this (see section 6.2, for an outline of the history of research on these languages; see Austin (2008) and Wafer and Lissarrague (2008: 215-37) for more details on data sources).

(p.110) The last 25 years have seen a remarkable turnaround in the fortunes of these languages and the ideologies and politics that affect them (Walsh 2003). Until the mid-1980s, Aboriginal languages of south-eastern Australia were subject at best to benign neglect on the part of the non-Aboriginal population and of state and federal governments, and at worst to outright discouragement and suppression. This changed due to several political and social developments. Since the 1990s, language and culture revitalization programmes have been developed for a large number of languages from this area. Wafer and Lissarrague (2008: 4) identify at least 19 NSW languages that are currently being revived (see also Hobson et al. 2010; Lowe and Walsh 2004). In addition, the NSW state government introduced Aboriginal language programmes in 2002 and the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs established an Aboriginal Languages Research and Resource Centre.¹ The Aboriginal Education Board of Studies NSW has part of its website dedicated to Aboriginal languages.² The Federal Government Indigenous Languages Support scheme (and its predecessor the Maintenance of Indigenous Languages and Records (MILR) programme) has also funded a number of initiatives in NSW.³ The Koori Centre and the Department of Linguistics at the University of Sydney have introduced the teaching of NSW Aboriginal languages at tertiary level and have supported several local efforts. Social media sites such as YouTube have also been used to promote NSW languages (see further discussion later in this chapter).

6.2 Gamilaraay and Yuwaalaraay

At the time of first settlement in the nineteenth century, Gamilaraay (also commonly known as Kamilaroi) was associated with a vast area of north-central NSW (covering some 75,000 square kilometres), from the Upper Hunter Valley around Jerry’s Plains, north to Boggabilla on the Barwon River, and west to the area where Mungindi, Collarenebri, and Walgett are now located (see Figure 6.1).⁴ To the north-west, Yuwaalaraay and Yuwaalayaay (also spelled Euhlayi) were spoken, covering a smaller area near present-day Goodooga, Lightning Ridge, and Walgett. The three languages are closely related (Austin, Williams, **(p.111)**

and Wurm (1980: 177) consider them to be 'dialects of a single language') and they share cognates and many grammatical features with central NSW languages to their south, namely Wangaaybuwan and Wayilwan (closely related and known collectively as Ngiyambaa) and Wiradjuri (Austin 1997; Austin, Williams, and Wurm 1980). Wafer and Lissarrague (2008) refer to the larger grouping as Central Inland NSW languages.

The Presbyterian missionary Reverend William Ridley came to the Gamilaraay area in 1852 and began to learn the language, later publishing a range of materials on it (see Austin 2008 for a list and assessment).

It appears at that time to have been widely spoken, and the first language of many

thousands of people (the exact population numbers will probably never be known, however O'Rourke (2009: 2) estimates '10,000 or more'). Around 50 years later (roughly two generations), when surveyor and amateur linguist and anthropologist R. H. Matthews collected vocabulary and sentences (see Austin 2008), it appears that extensive language shift had already taken place and that Gamilaraay was spoken only by middle-aged and older people. The causes of language shift probably included the mixing of populations in settlements and towns, intermarriage, and negative beliefs about Aboriginal people, cultures, and languages on the part of the non-Aboriginal population, which led to forbidding the use of indigenous languages in public. At this time Aboriginal people's lives were tightly controlled, especially those of people living on properties managed by the (p.112) Aborigines Welfare Board, and managers, staff, and schoolteachers were openly opposed to the expression of Aboriginal languages and cultures.

In 1938, anthropologist Norman Tindale collected vocabulary and a short traditional narrative text from two old speakers, noting that they no longer used the language regularly and had to work hard to produce the text, indicating that it was by now critically endangered.⁵ By 1944, when Marie Reay did a sociological study of the Aboriginal community near Walgett (Reay 1945), it appears that some vocabulary items (she mentions kinship terminology, section names, and some plant names) and traditional songs were in wide use, but most people were speaking English only. In 1955 linguist Stephen Wurm was able to find and record just one fluent speaker of Gamilaraay, and five of Yuwaalaraay-Yuwaalayaay. In 1972-5 I found that there were no fluent speakers or semispeakers of Gamilaraay, only those who could recall words and expressions (in what was often referred to as 'lingo') used by their parents and grandparents (as noted in Austin 2008, I recorded 212 cross-checked vocabulary items and half a dozen sentences). However, a limited number of lexical items were in wide use by people of all ages (terms for body parts, some animals and plants, food, and a handful of verbs) embedded within English sentences and often altered in pronunciation from their traditional form (Austin 1986). This vocabulary included taboo terms (for genitalia, bodily excretions, and sexual intercourse) as

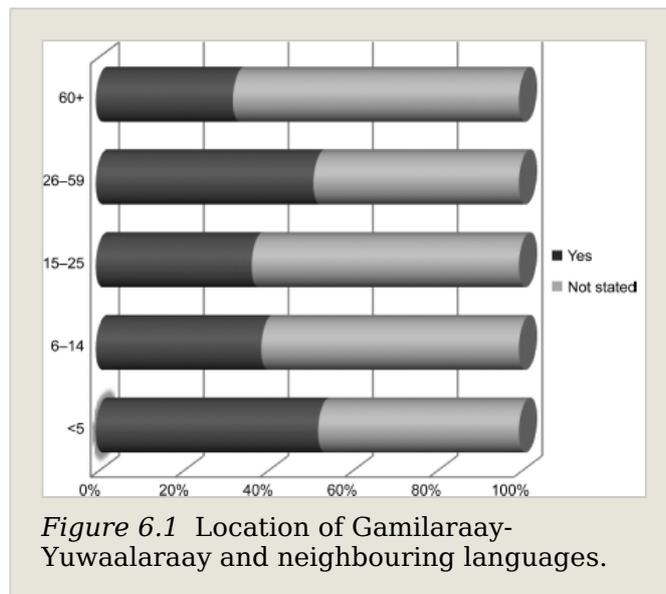


Figure 6.1 Location of Gamilaraay-Yuwaalaraay and neighbouring languages.

well as terms for police, and its continued use seems to have served as a kind of identity marker and 'secret code', expressing resistance to the dominance of non-Aboriginal authority.⁶ Such resistance is reminiscent of Reay's discussion of Aboriginal expression of defiance in the 1940s to what they saw as unjust laws, that were in place until the 1960s, that made it unlawful for them to possess or drink alcohol. Reay (1945: 300-1) reports:

If an aborigine having liquor in his possession knows that the police are near by, he drinks quickly and this hastens and exaggerates the intoxicating effects of the liquor. In any case, if an aborigine who is sober is caught with liquor in his possession, consciously and through years of habit he assumes drunkenness, for drunkenness is to him a symbol of defiance. It is the outward proof that he has been successful in flouting an unjust law. Imprisonment does not worry him, for there is no shame attached. Continual drunkenness increases his prestige among his fellows; it is a matter for boasting.

In 1976 Corinne Williams was able to elicit a range of grammatical materials and some brief texts from Fred Reece and Arthur Dodd, who were fluent, but rusty, (p.113)

Table 6.1 Historical development of the vitality of Gamilaraay-Yuwaalaraay-Yuwaaliyaay.

Date	Probable vitality	Source
1852	Fluent speakers, all ages	Ridley
1902	Some middle-aged and older fluent speakers	Matthews
1938	Few fluent older speakers, no intergenerational transmission	Tindale
1955	Very few older speakers, no intergenerational transmission	Wurm
1972-6	Rememberers of Gamilaraay, two old rusty speakers of Yuwaalaraay	Austin, Williams
1994-	Rememberers of Yuwaalaraay-Yuwaaliyaay, handful of items recalled for Gamilaraay	Giacon

speakers of Yuwaalaraay-Yuwaalayaay (Williams 1980). Starting in 1994, John Giacon worked with rememberers in Walgett (especially Uncle Ted Fields) and collected 1,000 items of Yuwaalaraay vocabulary (Ash, Giacon, and Lissarrague 2003: 4; Giacon 2010: 409), but no grammatical information. Table 6.1 summarizes this historical development in the vitality of the three languages.

6.3 Language Revitalization

The seeds of language revitalization for Gamilaraay can be identified with the publication of two small dictionaries (Austin 1992, 1993), the second of which was adapted for Internet publication as the first fully hypertextual dictionary on the World Wide Web (Austin and Nathan 1996); and for Yuwaalaraay-Yuwaalayaay with Giacom's work in the Catholic Education service at Walgett, starting in 1994. There were also significant political developments in Australia around this time, which can be seen as having shifted the ground on relationships and perceptions and ideologies between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, and opened up the possibility of Aboriginal people and languages being accorded the respect they had been denied for so long:

- the passing in September 1991 of the *Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Act* by the Australian Federal parliament, that established a 'formal process of reconciliation between Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders and other Australians' in order to 'address progressively Aboriginal disadvantage and aspirations in relation to land, housing, law and justice, cultural heritage, education, employment, health, infrastructure, economic development and any other relevant matters in the decade leading to the centenary of Federation, 2001'.⁷

(p.114) • the 1992 Mabo decision of the High Court of Australia recognizing Aboriginal prior occupation and ownership of unalienated Crown land.⁸

- the Redfern Park speech on 10 December 1992 by Prime Minister Keating that included an admission of culpability on the part of non-Aboriginal settlers and boosted Reconciliation: 'We took the traditional lands and smashed the original way of life. We brought the diseases. The alcohol. We committed the murders. We took the children from their mothers. We practised discrimination and exclusion. It was our ignorance and our prejudice.'⁹

The hundreds of orders received from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people for my small reference dictionary of Gamilaraay (Austin 1993), which had to be reprinted three times, surprised me at the time, but were perhaps symptomatic of the changed attitudes, changed level of interest, and a shift away from the ideology of the wider community that Aboriginal languages and cultures were 'doomed' (see McGregor (1993) for the origins and lack of empirical support for the 'Doomed Race' ideology) to an ideology of reconciliation.

Local developments took up support for the language in an educational context. As Giacom (2010: 403) describes:

In 1996, after consultation with Aboriginal people at the school, a Yuwaalaraay language program began at St Joseph's Primary [in Walgett] After further community meetings the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) funded resource production and training as part of setting up a Year 7 GY program at Walgett High School. A language program also began in Gudooga around 1998. The model employed in the school programs included a linguist (myself) with Uncle Ted generally teaching the teachers.

Also in 1998, 'Marianne Betts (a teacher at Walgett High School) and I [John Giacom] prepared a 100-hour high school Gamilaraay-Yuwaalaraay (GY) course, with Marianne designing the programme and going through the time-consuming process of getting Board of Studies approval

for the course' (Giacon 2010: 404). The official approval was to teach GY as a Language Other than English (LOTE) and hence as an alternative to the other foreign language courses required of school students in NSW. The status of the indigenous languages had now been changed to that of equivalent to Japanese, Indonesian, or French. The non-Aboriginal ideology that real languages are codified in books was no doubt a driving force that now led to the creation of GY reference materials, including the massive dictionary of Ash et al. (2003); (for a detailed account of its development see Giacom 2010: 405-15).

(p.115) Giacom (2010: 403) suggests that there was at that time 'a hunger for language among many GY people. Most knew a few words but few knew many. And no-one knew how to put words into sentences and to string sentences together.' This desire to extend their knowledge led to a number of community-based meetings between 1999 and 2001 in Walgett, Moree, Boggabilla, Lightning Ridge, and other centres, and the production of a widely distributed community newsletter entitled *Yaama Maliyaa*, or 'Hello Friend' (also the title of the textbooks by Betts and Giacom (2002) and Giacom and Betts (1999), and the name of a youth group at Walgett Community College that won several national awards in the Young Achievers Australia competition in 2005).¹⁰

Aboriginal people began expressing their belief that, in the words of Aunty Rose Fernando, Walgett elder and Gamilaraay language rememberer, 'language is our soul'.¹¹ Lobbying at the state government level led in November 2001 to the NSW Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Dr Andrew Refshauge, announcing that work had begun on developing a New South Wales Aboriginal languages policy, because 'Aboriginal communities have identified the maintenance of Aboriginal language as a priority for Aboriginal people'.¹² The reasons presented for this by the Minister are a mixture of practical and ideological:

[A]necdotal evidence from schools currently teaching Aboriginal languages strongly suggests that Aboriginal children learning their language improves their general literacy significantly. Especially for young Aboriginal people, it helps them feel valued for their diversity, it maintains their cultural identity, and it improves their educational achievement.

Local institutionalization of the view that language (and culture) now has a significant role to play in Aboriginal people's lives is seen in documents such as Walgett Gamilaroi Community Working Party (2005: 5), which identifies 'our great culture and heritage, our history, our identity, our kinship and language' as components of 'What makes us happy and proud to be Aboriginal in Walgett' This document also expresses a wish to have '[o]ur culture: taught in schools, respected and acknowledged, seen as an essential part of the whole community' through '[s]upport and maintenance of traditional languages, art and craft and culture (songs, stories, dances, radio and other media)' (ibid: 18).

Schools were seen as essential loci for language revitalization, and the focus of teaching at this stage was vocabulary (see Giacom 2001; Yuwaalaraay and Gamilaraay Language Program 2002, 2006), reflecting the widespread view of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people that languages are collections of words.

(p.116) Also important were songs, with a number of familiar nursery songs translated from English and professionally produced, recorded, and distributed (Yuwaalar-aay and Gamilaraay Language Programme 2003).¹³ Songs have been an important vehicle for revitalization elsewhere in Australia (Amery 2004: 83).

In 2004 the supporters of Gamilaraay and Yuwaalaraay received a further boost with the introduction of an Aboriginal Languages course for high school students by the NSW state government. This has given indigenous languages a new status in the eyes both of the Aboriginal and the non-Aboriginal community. The provision of government funds from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and the federal Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, as well as continuing support from the Catholic Schools Office, has also assisted with materials development. Yuwaalaraay and Gamilaraay Language Programme (2006) is a highly professional picture dictionary for children, and Chandler and Giacon (2006) is a resource book for language teachers and includes a CD-ROM. A website (<http://www.yuwaalaraay.org/>) was set up in 2008 and includes material on courses, lessons, resources and new words, a picture gallery, and a story collection. This latter collection, called *Guwaabal: Yuwaalaraay and Gamilaraay Stories*, contains 12 traditional narratives read by Giacon. These materials and more, together with a fully interactive version of Ash et al. (2003) and recordings of all the vocabulary and sentence examples in it, were published as Giacon and Nathan (2009). Since 2009, online courses have been available from New England Institute of TAFE Coonabarabran Campus.¹⁴

Wider political developments have accompanied and supported these local initiatives. The National Indigenous Languages Survey Report was published in 2005.¹⁵ Following this, the Australian Federal Government announced its National Indigenous Languages Policy with a goal 'to coordinate action among the agencies involved in the maintenance and revival of Indigenous languages, including government, Indigenous languages organizations and educational and research institutions'.¹⁶ The MILR (Maintenance of Indigenous Languages and Records) programme was established and provided funding for a range of activities in Gamilaraay and Yuwaalaraay, as shown in Table 6.2 (in 2011 MILR changed its name to ILS (Indigenous Languages Support) programme).

As Table 6.2 shows, activities have been concentrated in schools and sponsored by a limited number of organizations **(p.117)**

Table 6.2 MILR/ILS funding.

Organization	Topic	2008-9	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Armidale Roman Catholic Church	Deliver the Yuwaalaraay language programme to young people at St Joseph's Primary and community members in Walgett	\$89,929				
	To support the revival of the Gamilaraay-Yuwaalaraay language in Dubbo		\$90,000	\$70,000		
	To develop online resources to provide access to the <i>Gayarragi Winangali</i> languages electronic collection.		\$11,000			
Boggabilla Central School	Re-establish a Gamilaraay language programme	\$40,600				

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Organization	Topic	2008-9	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Barriekneal Housing and Community	Provide support for teaching Gamilaraay-Yuwaalaraay for all K-6 students at Lightning Ridge Central School	\$39,000				
	To deliver a Gamilaraay-Yuwaalaraay language programme for youth		\$40,200			
	To conduct community-based Aboriginal language programmes and provide language support services for indigenous communities in the Lightning Ridge region			\$30,000	\$30,000	\$35,000
Dharriwaa Elders Group	Increase the use of the Yuwaalaraay-Gamilaraay languages in the Walgett community	\$96,000				

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Organization	Topic	2008-9	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
	To develop a language programme to increase use of indigenous languages in Walgett		\$90,000			
Murdi Paaki Regional Enterprise Corporation Limited	To develop a committee that will oversee future development and continuation of the Gamilaraay-Yuwaalaraay language			\$13,200	\$12,000	
	To develop web-based teaching resources and information for Gamilaraay-Yuwaalaraay learning, both for community and higher education study					\$15,000
	To provide a series of language awareness and learning activities for the Walgett community					\$20,000

(p.118)

6.4 Attitudes, Beliefs, and Ideologies about Revived Language Use

The focus of language teaching and learning in the school programmes has been on the iconic use of language for greetings and talking about family (a version of what Amery (2004) calls 'The Formulaic Method of Language Reclamation', and one that is commonly used in second language learning classes). Thus, one primary school student essay I have seen begins:

Yaama. Gayrr ngay Barran. Ngay milan banay buligaa. Ngaya wilay-la-nha Walgett-ga.
Gulibaa buwadhaa ngay.

We can analyse and translate this as follows:

Yaama. gayrrngay Barran Ngay milan banay buligaa Ngaya

hello name my boomerang my near ten four I

wilay-la-nha Walgett-ga Gulibaa buwadhaa ngay

sit-continuous-present Walgett-locative three older.sister my

'Hello. My name is Barran [boomerang]. I am almost 14. I live in Walgett. I have three older sisters.'

Walgett teacher John Brown is quoted as follows on the NSW Aboriginal Board of Education website:¹⁷

One of the most positive things for me is the language itself with the students and how they indulge in learning it. It's used in basic everyday activities at the school and outside the school. If I run into one of my students down the street they don't say 'Hello JB' or 'How you going JB'. I'm greeted in the traditional Aboriginal way of it, saying, 'Yaama JB'. And if I say 'Gabagaba nyinda?' they'll say, 'Gaba' back to me. So basically I think that's really great.

Also important are ritual speeches, such as 'Welcome to Country', that are performed at the beginning of significant public events within the region and are increasingly expected to be presented in the local indigenous language (see Couzens and Eira, this volume).¹⁸ These are often memorized as a whole and repeated as set sequences, raising interesting issues of 'fluency' and the extent to which language learners fully comprehend such speeches and can analyse and modify them at will. According to local indigenous community ideology, the ability to perform iconic greetings and speeches does represent fluency, though this runs up against a rather different viewpoint that may be taken by non-Aboriginal language professionals, an issue explored in some detail in Hobson (2010).

(p.119) Another development, which appears to be relatively recent, is the use of Aboriginal languages in other official contexts, out of the indigenous home country, to display Aboriginal identity and authority to speak about matters relevant to Aboriginal people. Again, the use of a few words or sentences, with less-than-complex syntax, seems to suffice. An example of this

occurs in a speech given by Anne Dennis, Councillor for the North West Region of the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council, at the meeting of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Geneva, 9–13 July 2012.¹⁹ The speech begins:²⁰

Thank you Mr Chair

Yaama Maliyaa. Anne Dennis ngayaa. Gamilaraay ngayaa. Australia-dhi ngayaa. Nginda ngayaa wingangay-lay-nha. Dhaymaarr ngayaa wingangay-lay-nha. Guuguu ngayaa wingangay-lay-nha.

We can analyse and translate the Gamilaraay material as follows:

Yaama maliyaa.	Anne Dennis ngayaa	Gamilaraay ngayaa	
hello friend	I	I	
Australia-dhi	ngayaa. Nginda	ngayaa	winangay-lay-nha
Australia-ablative I	you	I	listen-continuous-present
Guuguu ngayaa	winangay-lay-nha		
dead relative I	listen-continuous-present		

‘Hello friend(s). I am Anne Dennis. I am Gamilaraay. I am from Australia. I am showing respect to you (singular) [or possibly you (singular) are showing respect to me?]. I am showing respect to the land. I am showing respect to the ancestors.’²¹

Note that there are some forms here that could be seen as errors in terms of traditional language forms and structures (as recorded in the work by Wurm and Williams, for example). The verb to ‘hear, listen’ is *winanga-*, not ‘winganga’ given in the text, and both *nginda* and *ngayaa* in the fifth sentence are nominative case forms used for the subject of a sentence.²² If the speaker intended ‘I am showing respect to you’ then the Gamilaraay would be *nginunha ngayaa winangalanha* and if ‘You are showing respect to me’ then we would expect **(p.120)** *nginda nganha winangalanha*. The parallel structure of the following two sentences suggests that *nginunha ngayaa winangalanha* (‘I am showing respect to you’) was intended, but note that this is second person singular in Gamilara—if a plural addressee was intended then the form should be *ngindaaynya*. Interestingly, although the speaker identifies as a Gamilaraay person, she uses the Yuwaalaraay term for ‘earth’—in Gamilaraay this is *dhawun*.

One issue that does not seem to have surfaced yet in discussions about the revival of NSW languages is the extent to which people adopt an ideology that the revived language use is meant to reflect ‘traditional’ language forms (phonology, morphology, syntax, as well as lexicon) or an ideology of ‘modernization’ and ‘adaptation’ to changed norms (cf. Couzens and Eira, this volume), especially given that there are no living first language speakers who can serve as models, and the recordings we have from the 1970s show various phonological mergers and grammatical changes (Austin 1986). Reid (2011: 18) notes that

contestations over authenticity have been discussed in the language revitalisation literature with respect to Hawai'ian (Wong 1999), Californian languages (Hinton [and Ahlers] 1999), and Māori (Crombie and Houia-Roberts 2001), but have received little discussion in Australia to date.

Recently, Zuckermann and Walsh (2011) have been promoting an adaptation approach modelled on Zuckerman's account of the development and revitalization of modern Israeli Hebrew. It remains to be seen to what extent this adaptationist ideology is accepted by Gamilaraay and Yuwaalaraay revitalization practitioners.

6.5 Insiders and Outsiders

The attitudes of Gamilaraay and Yuwaalaraay people towards 'outsiders' learning their languages are quite open and receptive. Thus, David Nathan found during local consultations in Moree and Boggabilla with Gamilaraay people in 1995, before the public launch of the online Gamilaraay dictionary (Austin and Nathan 1996), that they were keen to see their language represented on the Internet, and thus available for interested users from across the world to access. This is a rather different situation from that reported for some other indigenous groups in Australia. Thus, Amery (2004: 96) writes that for Kurna of the Adelaide plains, South Australia:

Kurna people themselves have been reluctant to post much Kurna language on the web and have generally disapproved of others doing so. Consequently, course material I have posted is password protected and, theoretically, only available to students of Kurna and Kurna people themselves.

(p.121) The production and distribution of textbooks and CDs of Gamilaraay and Yuwaalaraay through bookstores and the IAD Press means that information on the languages is openly available to all who wish to purchase the materials.

NSW indigenous people and languages are becoming increasingly represented on the Internet and on social media, especially YouTube, with a few short videos in Gamilaraay-Yuwaalaraay, and many more in other NSW languages, such as Wiradjuri. Some of these videos explore the non-linguistic benefits of language study, including increased evaluation of self-worth and self-esteem, and reaffirmation of knowledge acquired within a family context, rather than school (see also King, this volume), expressing positive and affirming messages about language learning and the use of indigenous languages as a badge of group membership. Thus, Karen Flick, community language teacher from Walgett, says the following in a video on the Aboriginal Education Board of Studies website:²³

I think every Aboriginal person has got the ability to learn language. You've got it and soon as you just touch on a few words, 'oh yeah but Nan used to say that before' and then you just keep going with it and just try to build your vocab up. Everyone 'got it within and it' not that hard to rattle it out and just say it. It' not. And it' only three years since I've had the job and now I'm doing Year 6 classes. Like three weeks with training and plus I had to do my own personal training and three weeks and I'm doing classes.

This has been taken up in the rhetoric of the Australian Federal Government. Thus, the National Indigenous Languages Policy website (<http://arts.gov.au/indigenous/languages> (accessed 9 October 2012)) refers to: 'the centrality of language to strong Indigenous culture, and the broader social benefits of functional and resilient families and communities'. Several of the chapters in Hobson et al. (2010) also point to perceived non-linguistic benefits of language revitalization, such as increasing children's self-esteem, reducing truancy from school, and improving employment opportunities (see King, this volume); however, Thieberger (2012: 129) is quite sceptical and notes that '[t]hese claims may be true, but no evidence is supplied to substantiate them'.

A recent development has been the extension of teaching GY into university-level courses, and the involvement of students who have no personal connection with the languages or the local area. In January 2007, John Giacon taught a Gamilaraay summer school at the University of Sydney that was attended by 15 students from throughout the metropolitan area. This has been followed by units like KOCR2605 Speaking Gamilaraay 1, offered through the University's Koori **(p.122)** Studies Centre.²⁴ The language has thus moved well beyond its homeland to be embraced by interested Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people more broadly.

6.6 Conclusions

The situation of Gamilaraay and Yuwaalaraay presents some interesting historical and contemporary data about beliefs and ideologies of language endangerment and revitalization in northern NSW, and eastern Australia more generally. Firstly, as for the case of Kurna in South Australia (Amery 2004), we find an example of virtually extinct languages being revived as one expression of Aboriginal identity at both local and state government levels. This case also shows there is an essential role for good language documentation in order to provide resources and a framework for revitalization. It further demonstrates the need for clear goals and functions for the indigenous language, and clear politics and ideology: in this case the iconic use of language to express cultural identity and distinctiveness, within a politics of resistance and reconciliation. Actual use of language is for talk about family and domestic situations and for symbolic speeches. We have also seen the need for both local grass-roots community-based activity alongside government recognition and support (and consequently resources), and the leading role taken by schoolteachers, especially indigenous teachers. This case study also emphasizes the importance of collaboration between linguists, teachers, information-technology professionals, indigenous specialists, and local custodians of knowledge to lead to concrete outcomes, including outcomes that are non-linguistic and relate rather to perceived improvements in social well-being.

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Notes:

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⁽¹⁾ See <<http://www.alrrc.nsw.gov.au/>> (accessed 9 October 2012).

⁽²⁾ See <<http://ab-ed.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/go/aboriginal-languages>> (accessed 9 October 2012). See also <<http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/secondary/languages/>>

languages/aboriginal/abl_qt/index.htm> (accessed 9 October 2012), for materials on the Quality Teaching Framework for Teachers of Aboriginal Languages established in 2010.

(³) <<http://arts.gov.au/indigenous/ils>> (accessed 9 October 2012).

(⁴) The name of the people and the language consists of *gamil* ('no') plus the affix *-araay* ('having'), that is, those who have *gamil* for 'no', a common naming practice in what is now New South Wales and Victoria. The misspelling 'Kamilaroi' derives from early written sources.

(⁵) Tindale NSW Notebook p. 39ff, and Kinship sheet 53; the text was published as Austin and Tindale (1986) with attempted phonemicization and analysis by Austin.

(⁶) Several of my consultants noted that a reason often given for prohibiting the speaking of Gamilaraay and other languages by the police and other authorities was that 'you might be saying bad things or swearing at us'. It is precisely the taboo vocabulary for doing so that continued to be passed on.

(⁷) <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/num_act/cfara1991338/> (accessed 9 October 2012).

(⁸) See <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mabo_v_Queensland\(No_2\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mabo_v_Queensland(No_2))> (accessed 9 October 2012).

(⁹) The full text is at <http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Redfern_Speech> (accessed 9 October 2012). For a local example of the reconciliation process see Buckhorn (1997).

(¹⁰) See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walgett,_New_South_Wales> (accessed 9 October 2012).

(¹¹) Quoted at <<http://www.ourlanguages.net.au/languages/background-information/item/26-importance-of-indigenous-languages-quotes.html>>, see also <<http://www.alrrc.nsw.gov.au/>> (accessed 9 October 2012).

(¹²) See <<http://www.daa.nsw.gov.au/landandculture/statement.html>> (accessed 9 October 2012).

(¹³) Reay (1945) mentions women singing traditional songs during her fieldwork.

(¹⁴) See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G1hH_aX3gKo> (accessed 9 October 2012).

(¹⁵) See <<http://arts.gov.au/sites/default/files/pdfs/nils-report-2005.pdf>> (accessed 9 October 2012).

(¹⁶) See <<http://arts.gov.au/indigenous/languages>> (accessed 9 October 2012).

(¹⁷) See <<http://ab-ed.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/go/aboriginal-languages/learning/walgett/>> (accessed 9 October 2012).

(¹⁸) For a Wiradjuri example, see <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=veTusGR2IM4>> (accessed 9 October 2010). See also Amery (2004: 87–9).

(¹⁹) See <http://indigenouspeoplesissues.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=15675:new-south-wales-statement-on-the-role-of-languages-and-culture-in-the-promotion-and-protection-of-the-rights-and-identity-of-indigenous-peoples-5th-session-emrip&catid=24&Itemid=57> (accessed 10 October 2012).

(²⁰) The translation was provided by John Giacon (personal communication).

(²¹) In Yuwaalaraay (and possibly Gamilaraay) *guuguu* is a noun used to substitute for the name of a deceased relative to observe a taboo on the mentioning of dead people's names. It appears to be being used here to refer to 'ancestors'.

(²²) According to Giacon (personal communication) the verb *winanga-* is now used with the meaning 'show respect' (where it traditionally meant 'to hear, listen').

(²³) See <<http://ab-ed.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/go/aboriginal-languages>> (accessed 9 October 2012). Notice that Flick is here highlighting her belief about 'the ability to learn language'. Some indigenous groups take an ideological (and political) position that their languages are 'sleeping' rather than 'extinct', and can be 'woken up' by revitalization.

(²⁴) See <http://sydney.edu.au/koori/studying/aborig_studies.shtml> (accessed 9 October 2012).



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