

Working with communities on language revitalisation: some Australian experiences

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Outline

- Some background concepts
 - Language documentation?
 - Language revitalisation?
 - Models of linguistic research
 - Case studies
 - Diyari community
 - Yinggarda dictionary
 - Baiyungu-Parks & Wildlife project
 - Conclusions and lessons learnt
-

Background

Language documentation 1

- Term widely used in late 19th and early 20th century to refer to the study of indigenous languages in the Boasian tradition, characterised by:
 - brief summer fieldwork
 - collection of texts, vocabulary and grammatical forms
 - part of broad anthropological enterprise to 'save' disappearing cultures
 - training and engagement of informants as data producers and co-authors
 - use of latest technology



- goal: production of 'Boasian trilogy': text collection, grammar, dictionary
- (much material ends up in archives but not as a goal)

Language documentation 2

- “concerned with the **methods, tools, and theoretical underpinnings** for compiling a **representative and lasting multipurpose** record of a natural language or one of its varieties” (Himmelman 1998)
- Features:
 - *Focus on primary data*
 - *Accountability*
 - *Long-term storage and preservation of primary data*
 - *Interdisciplinary teams*
 - *Cooperation with and direct involvement of the speech community*
- Outcome is **annotated and translated corpus** of archived representative materials on a language, cf. DoBeS, ELAR
- Woodbury (2003, 2011) ‘transparent records of a language’

Drivers

- developed since 1995 in response to the urgent need perceived by researchers to make an enduring record of the world's many endangered languages and to support speakers of these languages in their desire to maintain them, fuelled also by developments in information, media and communication technologies
- concerned with roles of language speakers and communities and their rights and needs

Language revitalisation

- efforts to increase **language vitality** by taking action to:
 - increase the domains of use of a language and/or
 - Increase the number of speakers (often in the context of reversing language shift)
- older than language documentation (serious work began in 1970s and 1980s among Maori, Native American groups and others)
- Speech/language community members are often more interested in revitalisation than documentation
- Often assumed revitalisation = formal language learning (school lessons, immersion)

What does revitalisation involve?

- Usually driven by ‘the community’ (who are they?)
- ‘Speakers create opportunities to use the language, and address the social attitudes that triggered the abandonment of the language.’ (Anderson & Harrison 2007)
- Usually involves second language learning
- and ‘the ability to shift the language into new domains of language activity’ (Williams 1992)
 - These are ideologically-based assumptions - may be challenged!
- Is it bottom-up or top-down?

1. “Language nests”

- Translation of Māori ‘Te Kōhanga Reo’
 - originated in New Zealand in 1980s
 - Pre-schools in endangered languages
 - “Totally immerses children in Māori language and culture in an effort to promote learning within a context/situation that is relevant to the children and which draws on Māori styles of learning and teaching” (<http://www.kohanga-reo.co.nz/>)
 - A replacement for family transmission?
 - Tries to engage entire community (*whānau*)
 - e.g. cultural events, adult learning
-



Ho'okahi leo,
ua lawa.

Pehea ke anila?

ka
'alemanaka

O ka la 4 keia o Malaki

ka Po'alahi keia

ka mahahiki 2013

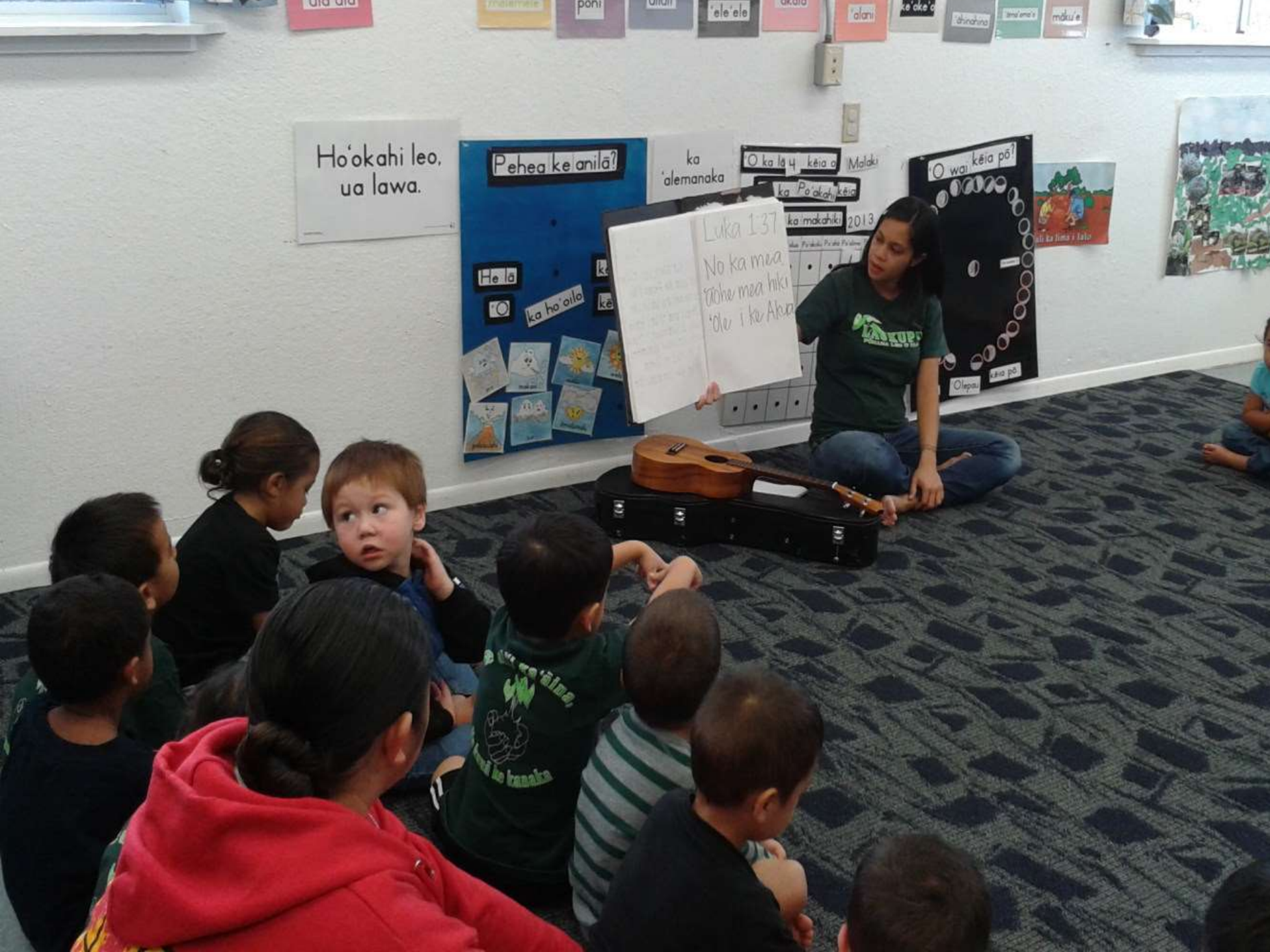
O wai keia pō?

Olepa

kaia pō

Luka 1:37

No ka mea
ʻōlehe mea hiki
'ole i ke Akua



2. Master (mentor)-Apprentice programmes

- Pioneered by Native American groups in California (Hinton 1997)
- Fluent speakers are paired with learners or latent speakers
- 'Learning through doing': activity-based
- Useful practice for learners
 - may have passive exposure but little productive competence
- Helps older users stay fluent
 - language with a useful social purpose
- Can be combined with documentation
 - learners record sessions
- Simple in principle
 - requires little funding or bureaucracy
 - in America funded programs recompense participants for time
 - training needed for both partners
- Emissaries now visit other groups to help set up programs

3. Increasing visibility ('linguistic landscape')



Jsis dé lé Vallé me!
ouécque té dé ?



Frameworks for language research



Ethical
research

Advocacy
research

Collaborative
research

Empowering
research

Ethical research – research **on**

- “... there is a wholly proper concern to minimize damage and offset inconvenience to the researched, and to acknowledge their contributions. ... But the underlying model is one of ‘research on’ social subjects. Human subjects deserve special ethical consideration, but they no more set the researcher’s agenda than the bottle of sulphuric acid sets the chemist’s agenda.”

(Cameron, Frazer, Harvey, Rampton, and Richardson 1992, p. 14-15)

Advocacy research – research **for**

- “... characterized by a commitment on the part of the researcher not just to do research on subjects but research on and for subjects. Such a commitment formalizes what is actually a rather common development in field situations, where a researcher is asked to use her skills or her authority as an ‘expert’ to defend subjects’ interests, getting involved in their campaigns for healthcare or education, cultural autonomy or political and land rights, and speaking on their behalf.”

(Cameron, Frazer, Harvey, Rampton, and Richardson 1992,
p. 15)

Collaborative research – research **with**

- the use of interactive or dialogic research methods, as opposed to the distancing or objectifying strategies positivists use. Community members participate as agents working together with researchers.

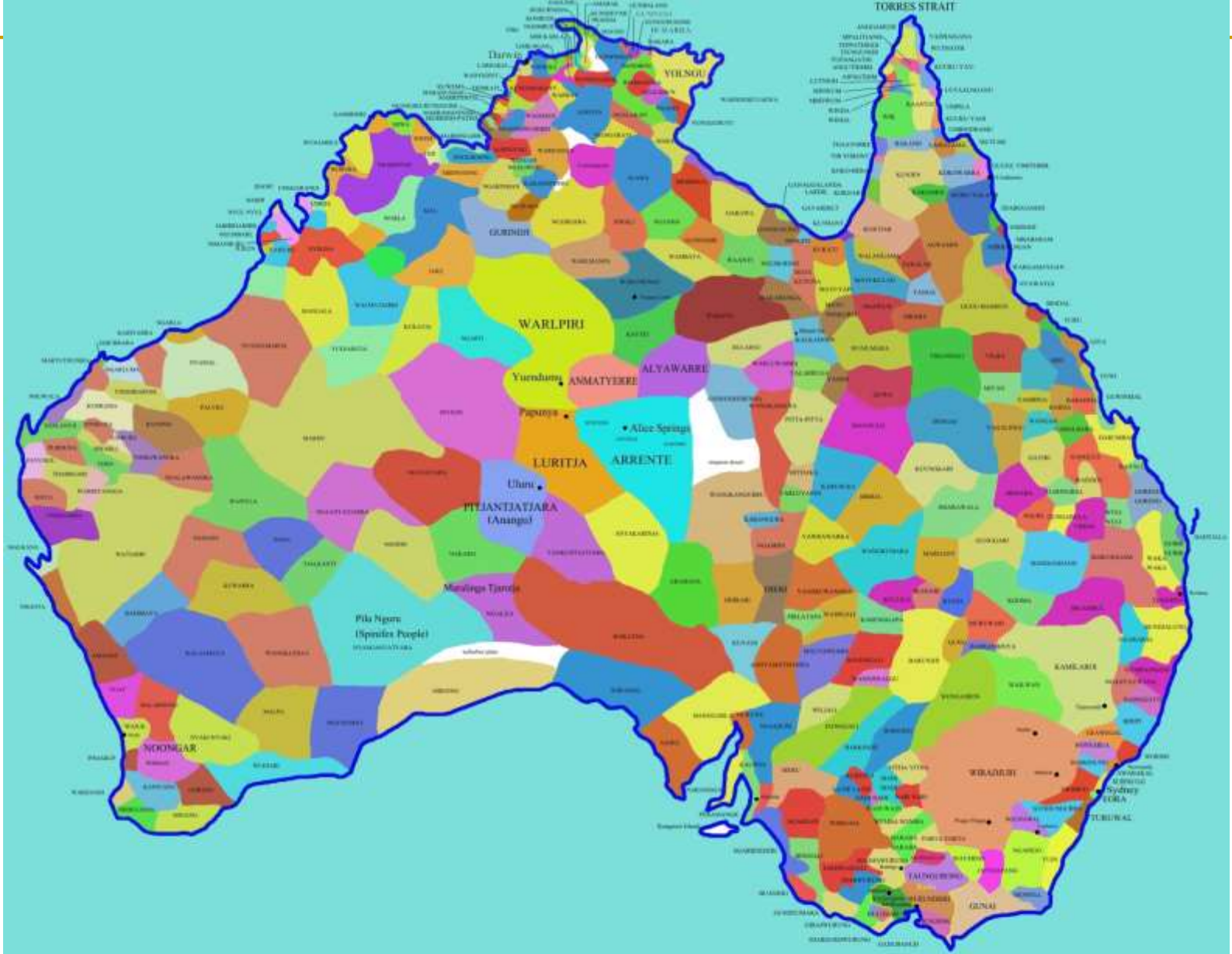
(Cameron, Frazer, Harvey, Rampton, and Richardson 1992, p. 22)

Empowering research – research **by**

“In this model: (a) ‘people are not objects and should not be treated as objects.’ (b) ‘Community members have their own agendas and research should try to address them’ (c) ‘If knowledge is worth having, it is worth sharing.’”

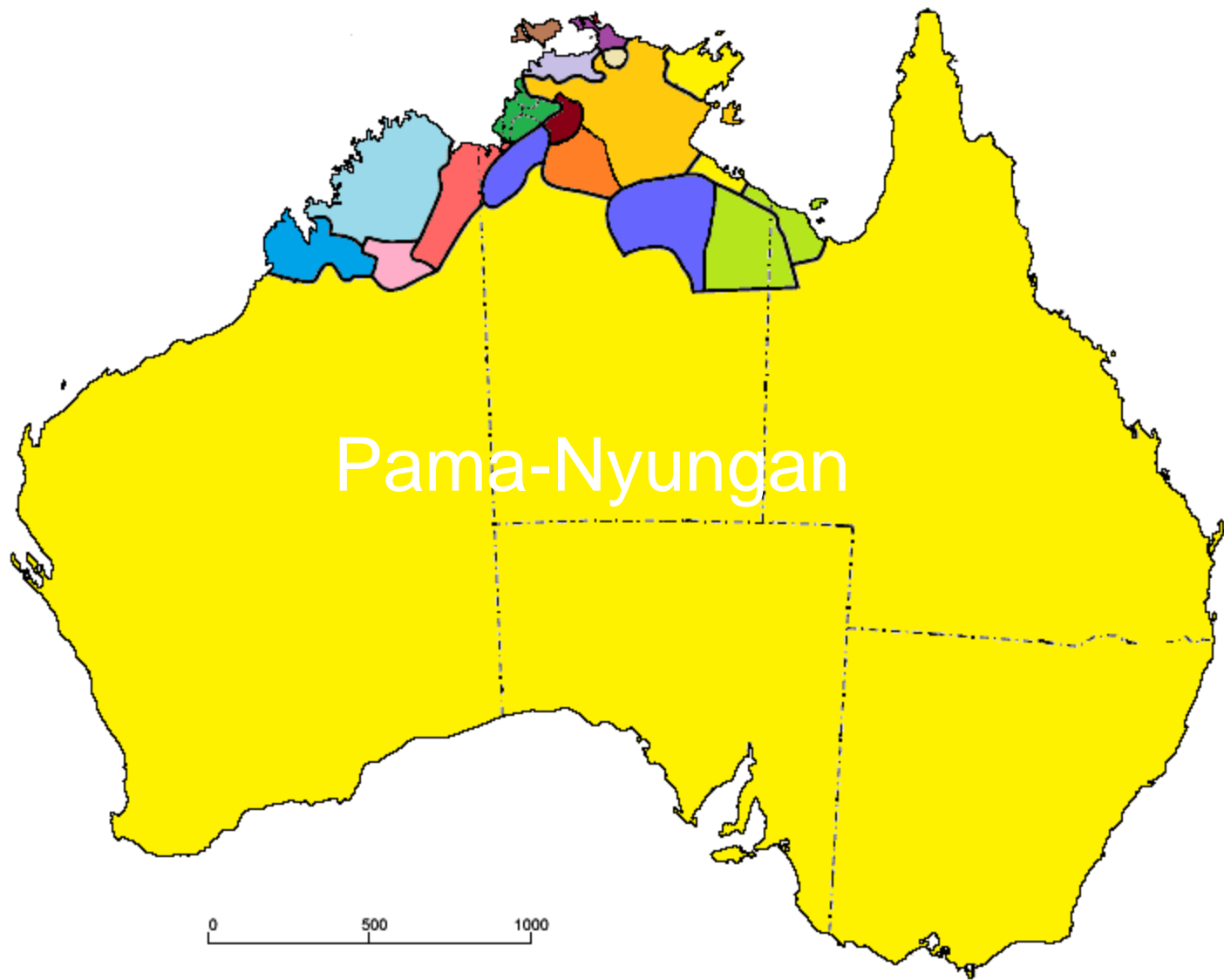
(Cameron, Frazer, Harvey, Rampton, and Richardson
1992, p. 24)

Case studies



In 18th century

- 600 different groups occupied the whole continent
 - each group had their own land, laws, beliefs, Dreamings, songs, stories and ways of speaking
 - 350 different languages
 - people grew up multilingual due to marriage exogamy
 - languages can be classified into 17 families (cf. Indo-European vs. Turkic) – these may or may not all be distantly related
-



Structurally complex

nganhi yurangu yathayi 'I speak to you'

nganhi	yura-ngu	yatha-yi
I.nomin	you.plural-loc	speak-present

yudla-ngu
you.dual-loc

yingka-ngu
you.singular-loc

Structurally complex

‘We speak to him’

ngaldra	nhungka-ngu	yatha-yi
we.dual.incl.no	he-loc	speak-present

ngali
we.dual.excl.nom

ngayina
we.plural.incl.nom

ngayini
we.plural.excl.nom

kupa tharki-pi-pa-lu-mayi
child stand-cause-benefit-you.dual-emphatic

karna-li nganha kirri-nganka-yi
man-trans.subj me.trans.obj clever-caus-pres

yatha-lha

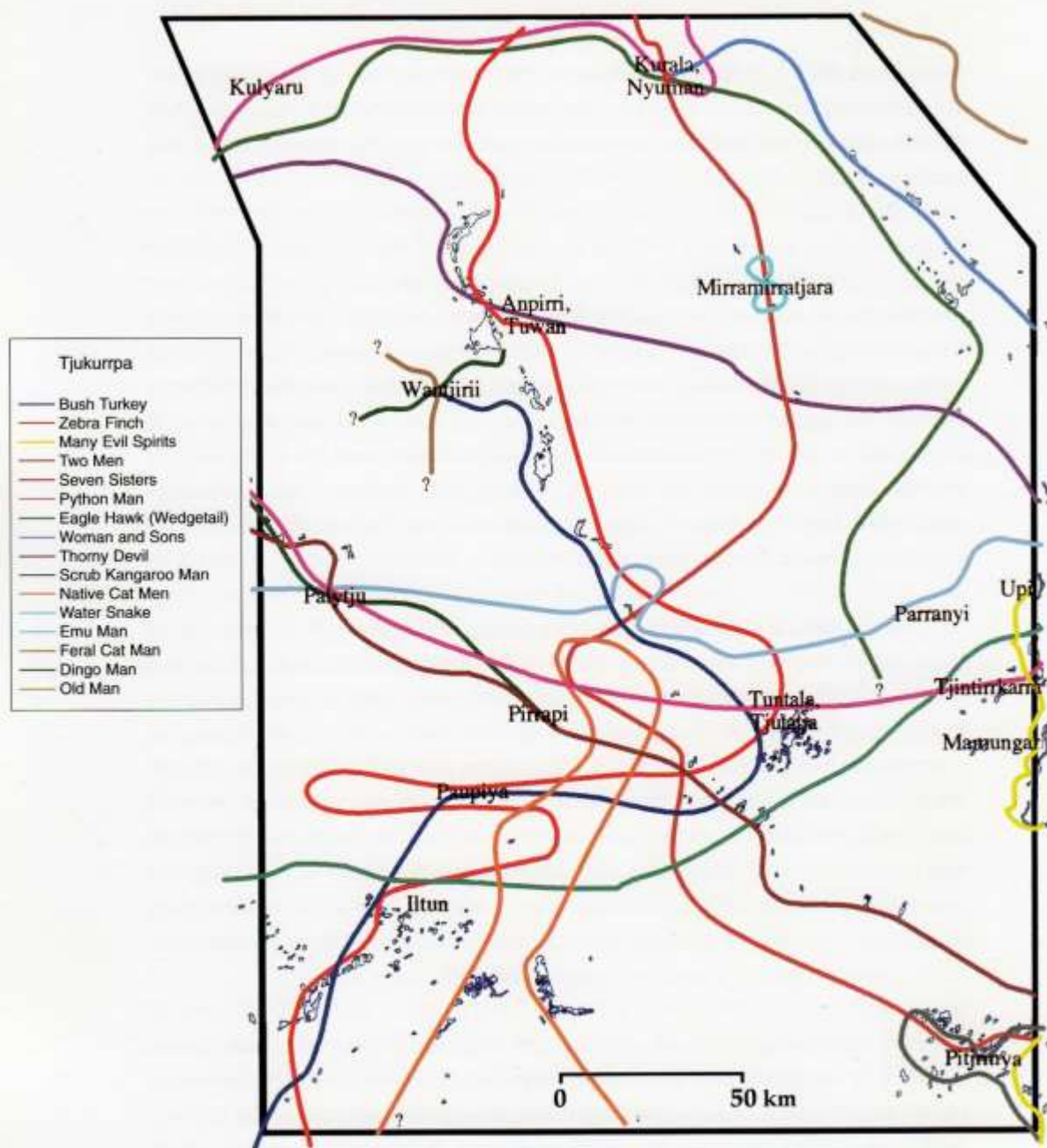
speak-purpose.same.subject

yatha-rnanthu

speak-
purpose.different.subject

Intimate connections

- People – Land – Dreamtime (creation)
 - Songs and stories celebrate the ancestral beings and their travels across the land
 - Landscape is covered in dreaming tracks of the ancestral beings
 - These can be represented in sand drawings or, in modern times, by paintings that map the land, the ancestors and the people
-



The Geography of Spinifex Tjukurrpa.

Loren Pennington



Walawarru (Wedge-tailed Eagle - shown in black) is hunting the chicks and eggs of *Ngunamurra* (Mallee Fowl - shown in red). An Eagle man and his wife set off to hunt the Mallee Fowl. The Mallee Fowl knows it is being followed and tries to lead the eagles away from his nest

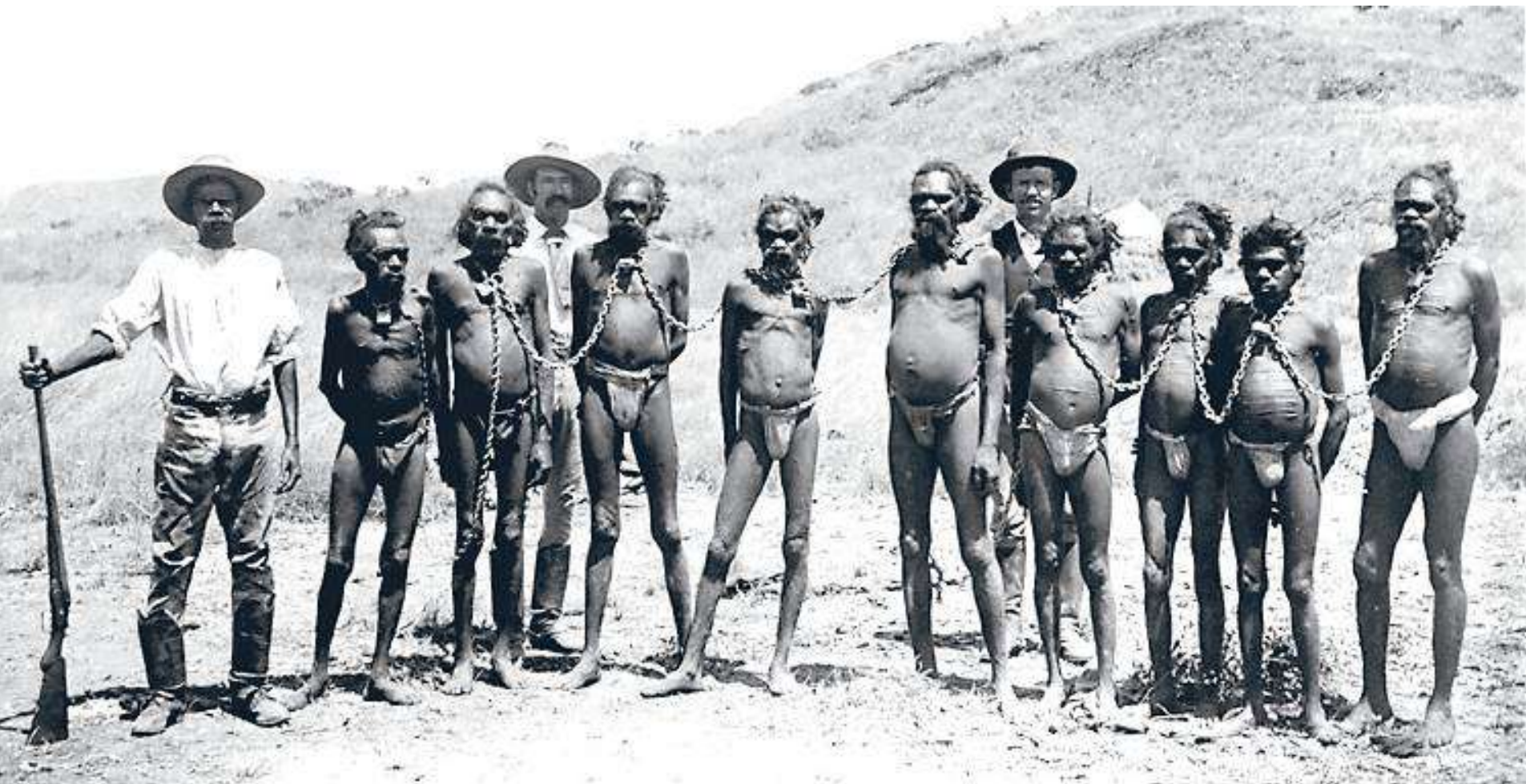
Then, one fateful day in 1788

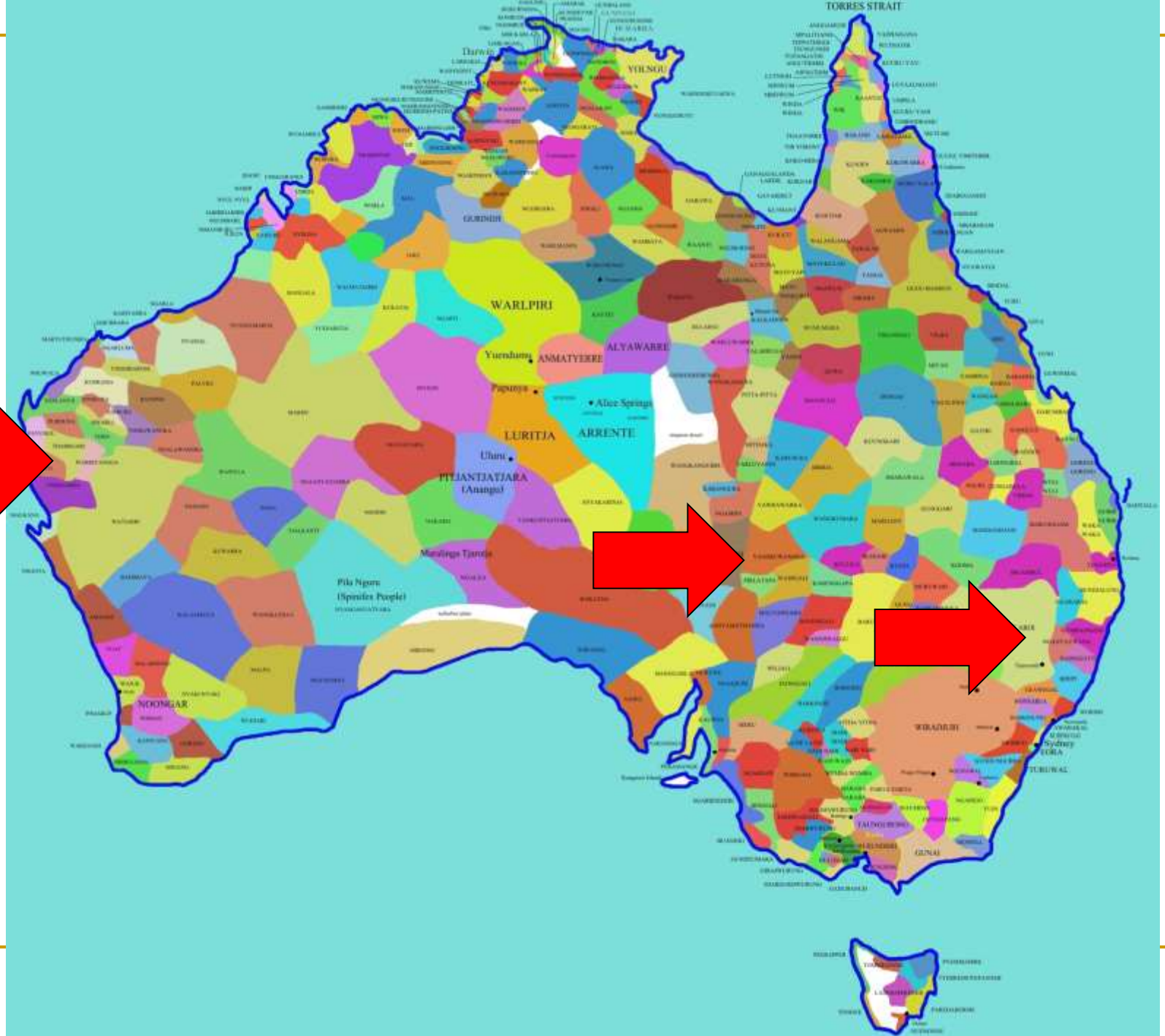
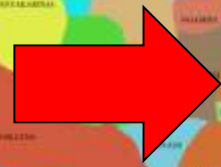
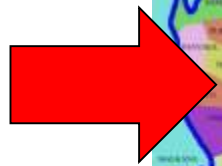


Settlers take the lands

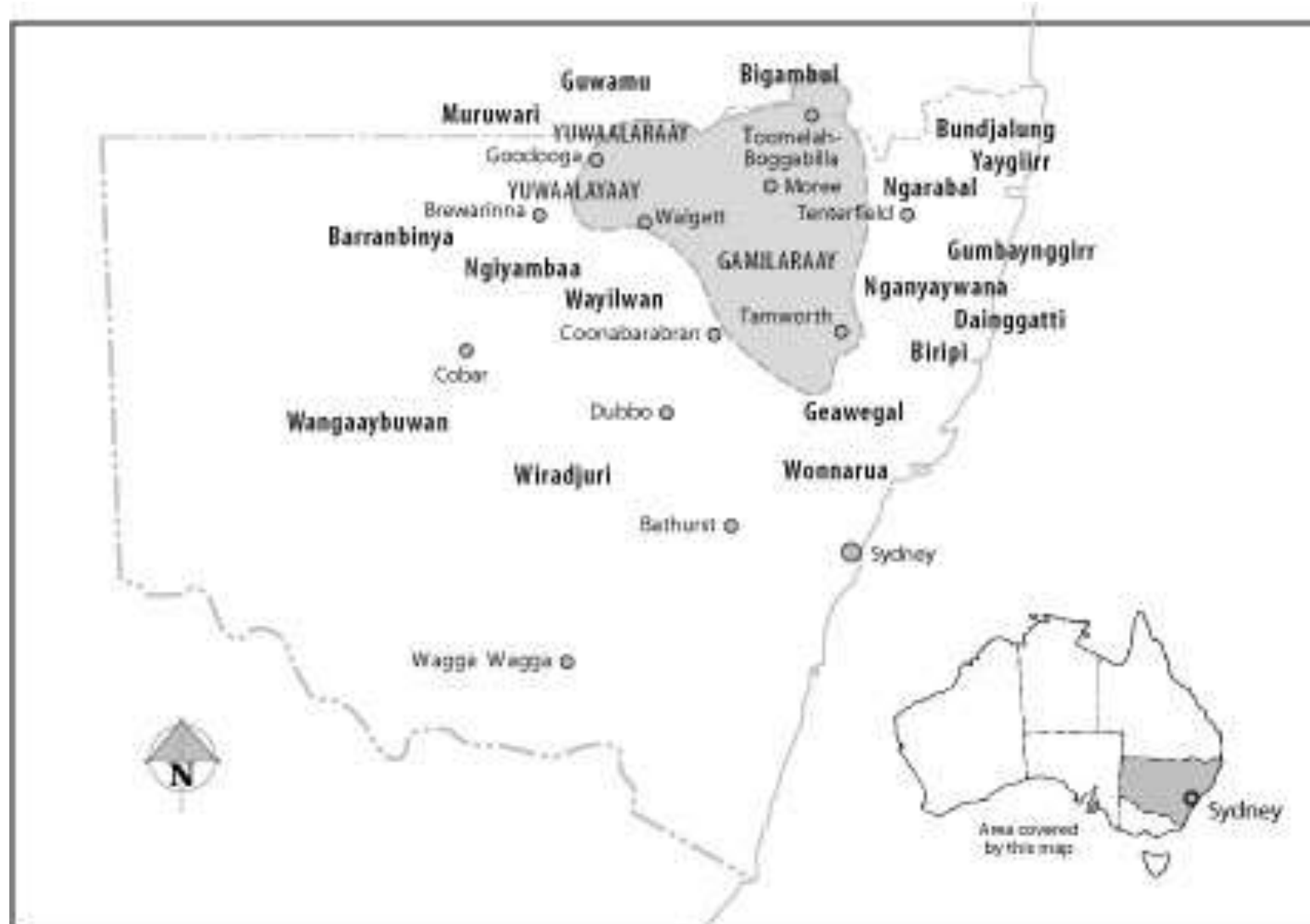


Those who survived





Field site 1: New South Wales



Field site 1: 'research on'

Gamilaraay, north-west New South Wales (1972-74)

- moribund language, rememberers
 - published dictionary
 - subsequent research by Giacon and community work, collaboration with educators, language now taught in schools and ANU and Sydney University
-

Field site 2: South Australia

Nganhi nhingkirda tharkayi
yurangu yathayatharna
diyari karnaya yawarra

I am standing here speaking to you all
in the language of the Dieri people

Pinarrali widlhapinali nganha
kiringankarna wanthiyi
thanarni yawarra yatharnanthu

The old men and old women taught me
to speak their language long ago

Karari ngathu ngantyayi
yura ngakangu waparnanthu
diyari karnaya mithanhi

Now I want you all to go with me to the
Dieri people's country

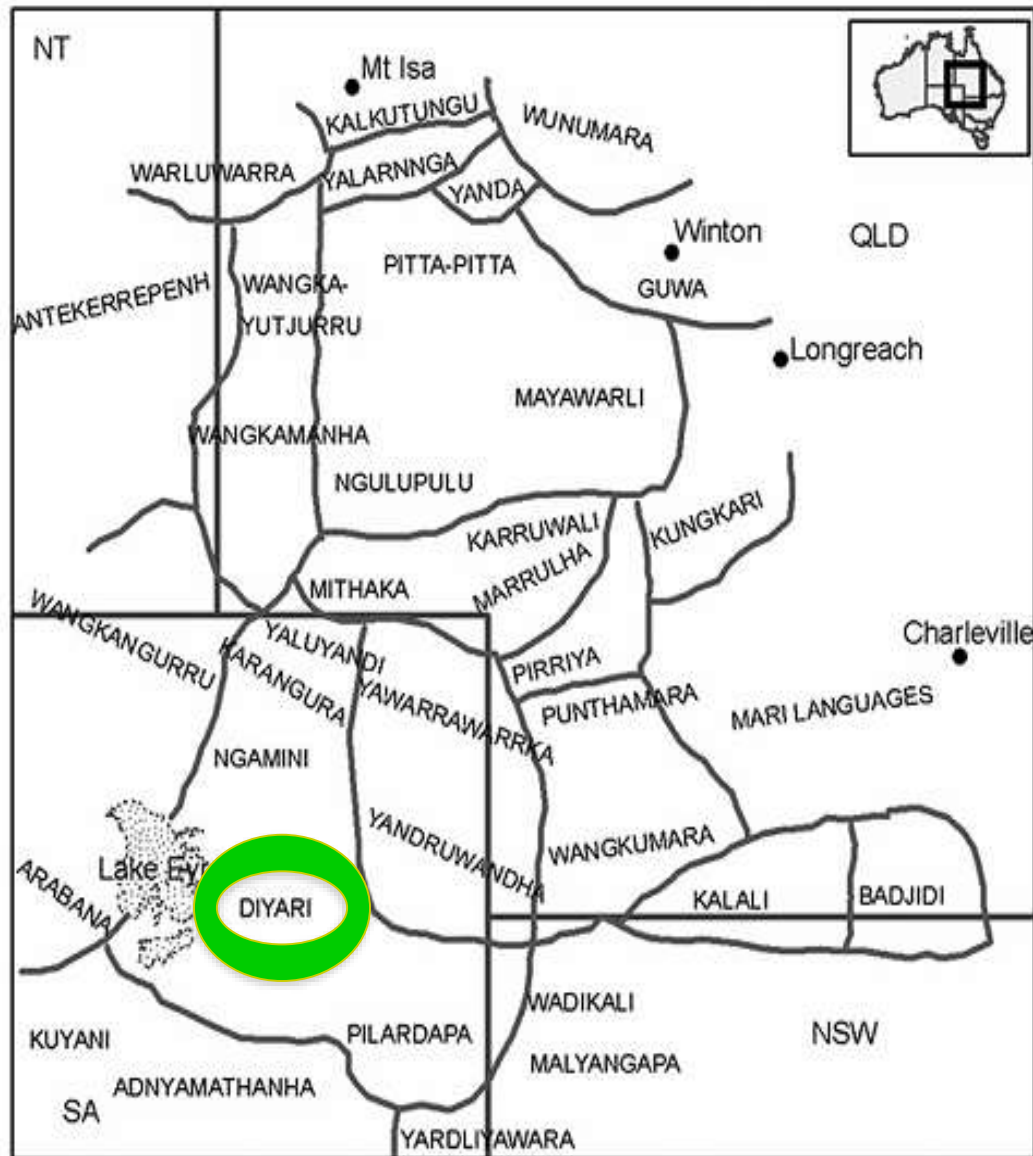








Eastern Lake Eyre languages



Field site 2: from 'research on' to 'research for and with'

Diyari, northern South Australia (1974-77)

- Reference grammar, historical analysis, texts, dictionary (in progress)
- Collaboration with historians, anthropologists, musicians, community scholars, language teachers
- Community-based workshops for language and culture revitalisation and awareness (2013-)

Diyari workshop February 2013



March 2013 workshop, 4 generations



Dictionary

kanungka

kanungka *Variant: kadnungka. n.*
spectacled hare wallaby.
Lagorchestes conspicillatus.
Category: Mammals.



kanya *n.* ash of fire.

kanyangarri *n.* jail.

kanyangarriyanganka-rna *utr.*
make go to jail.

kaparra *n.* boss, root.
Category: Plants.
See: mayatha.

kaparramaranha *n.* Kopperamanna.
Category: Placenames.

kaparrawu *int.* come here!
Category: Interjections and particles.

kapawu *int.* look out!
Category: Interjections and particles.

kapi *n.* egg. *Category: Birds.* miri
kagiyamayi warlaya, kapi
manilha "Climb up above to the
nest to get the eggs!"

kapirri *n.* goanna. *Varanus gouldii.*
Category: reptiles. ya
kardiyali wama ya kapirri ya
kadni nandrayi And the
brother-in-law killed carpet
snake, and goanna, and frill-
necked lizard.



kararru

kapitha *n.* bandicoot.
Peramelomorphia.
Category: Mammals.



kapurra *n.* ampit. *Category: Body parts and products.*

kara *part.* perhaps, maybe.
Category: Interjections and particles. yini kara wapa^lha
nganayi nhingki yara
ngalantha nhingki yara
waparnanhi Maybe you go that
way and we go this way.

karakaga *n.* close, nearby. nhayirna
karakaga first thurru nhulu
pularni, wardayari pula
thura^garna parikarnanhi,
thupu nhayirna
thangkuthangkuparna At first
(he) saw their fire close by where
they were sleeping as they went
along, watching the smoke in the
morning. Pula waka^gayi
nhantuyali, thana mankarra
pikirnanhi pakarna
karakara^ldramatha. They
came on horseback, right close to
where the girls were playing.

karaji *n.* today, now, soon.
See: thangkuparna;
waldrawirti. walya
karikamayⁱ, karaji wama
thayil^ha "Wait a while to eat
carpet snake (later) today."

kararru *n.* moiety name, matrilineal
moiety inherited from mother.
See: mathari.

Writing songs



*ngapa-ngapa pirna ngariyi
ngarrimatha wakarayi
thalara pirna kurdayi
ngayanarni mithanhi
daku pirna thana
matya ngayana pankiyilha
ngapa pirna ngakayi
parru pirna pakarna*



Lots of water is coming down
A flood is coming
Lots of rain is falling
In our country
There are big sandhills
So we are happy now
Lots of water is flowing
And big fish (are coming) too

Another important song



Ngathu traina ngar_uayi yara wakar_uarnanhi

Ngathu wata dityi nhayirna warayi

Jailanhi nganha kurrarna Folsom Prisonanhi

Ya traina wapayilha San Antonaya.

The Dieri language blog

- An experiment in writing
- Multimedia information about the ILS project
- Language lessons
- Dialogues with sound files and explanations – see

<http://dieriyawarra.wordpress.com/2013/10/20/paya-pirtanhi-ngamay/>

Field site 3: Western Australia

INDIAN
OCEAN

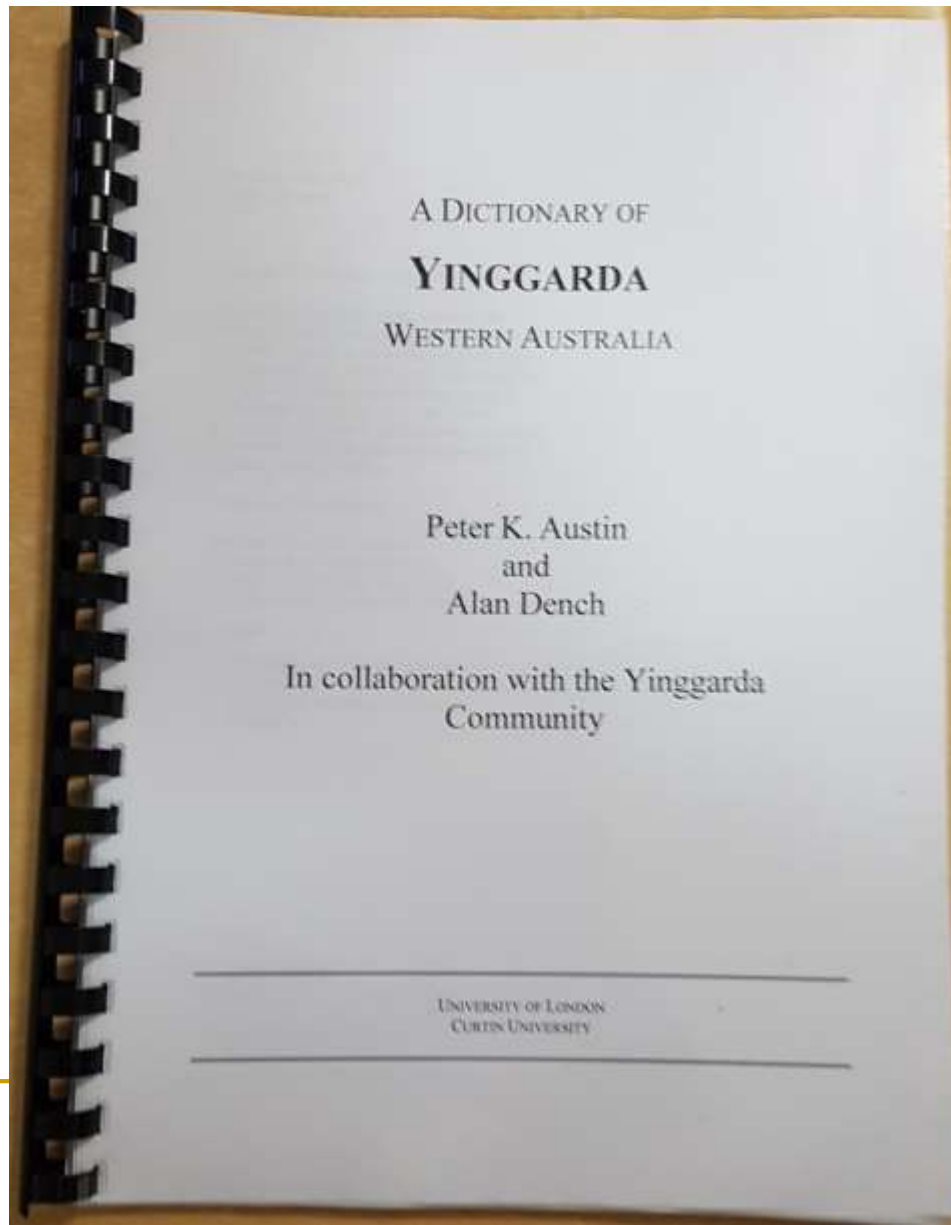


Field site 3: from 'research on' to 'research for, with and by'

Kanyara, Mantharta and Kartu languages, northern Western Australia (1978-)

- Reference grammars, historical analysis, texts, dictionaries (published, revised versions in progress)
 - Blog
 - Grant from AIATSIS Foundation for dictionary
 - Collaboration with local artists and photographers, community scholars, school teachers
 - Community-based language and culture revitalisation and awareness (2018-)
-

September 2019 dictionary project



September 2019



September 2019



Consultancy with
Baiyungu Aboriginal
Corporation (traditional
owners) and WA Parks
and Wildlife Service to
help develop a language
and culture component
of joint the management
plan for Ningaloo marine
park coastal reserves

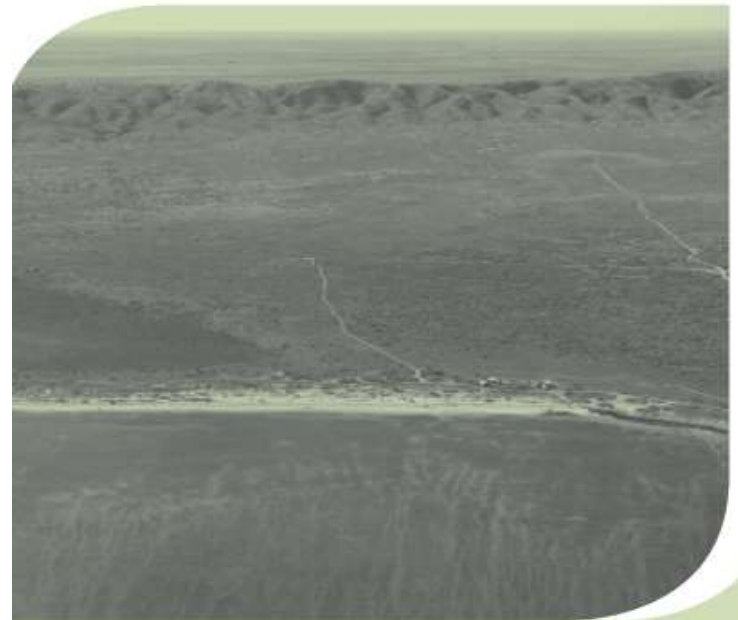


Nyinggulu (Ningaloo)
coastal reserves

Red Bluff to Winderabandi

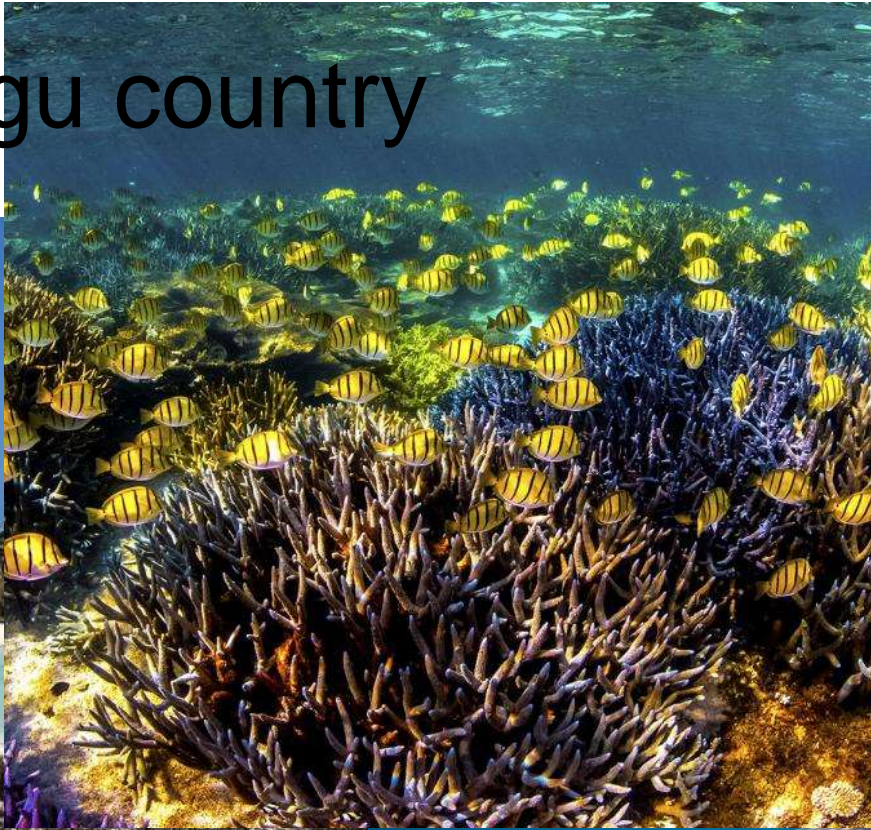
draft joint management plan

2019



Conservation and Parks Commission
Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions

Bayungu country



September 2019





September 2019









To Do:

- (A) Digitise Cassette Tapes - WAV file
 - ① Peter send Tom a catalogue of Baiyungo Specific Tapes - PA
 - ② Suss out. Gumbeton Language Centre, Do they do this - PA
 - Wangka Maya - other? 47?
- (B) Status of Baiyungo Publications from Wangka Maya - PA
- (C) Canvas options, avenues to use Language/
stories w/in DBCA Signage, Displays & publications HWTN
- (D) Android smart phone App - 2020 TN PA HW
 - Via Database, Dependent on ① Wangka Maya issues.
- (E) Draft up Project Plan for 2020
 - Travel & logistics
 - funding + Applications?
 - Goals
 - staff Rostering
 - strategic objectives: Knowledge Transfer
 - public Awareness/education
- (F) QR Code Development: WLC message from Signage
 - ① - ③ - ④ - ... ⑤ custom written & recorded
- (G) Database Management: IP, copy right, Access

Conclusions and lesson learnt

What did I learn?

- Moving from ‘research on’ to ‘research for’ and ‘research with’ can be extremely rewarding and generate insights into language structure and use, both within the community and in the wider academic world
- Revitalisation is only possible if there is a solid documentary and descriptive basis for the work – the size of the corpus is not a determining factor but can impact on possible outcomes
- Revitalisation work involves substantial challenges, including personal, academic, social and political
- It is easy to fall into simplistic “solutions” that do not work, either linguistically or socio-politically (see Wilkins, Amery)



Search



[Redacted name]



Yesterday at 18:13 • [Redacted]

**Isn't it a shame
that a white
person is reviving
the language.
I had a good
teacher, my
mother!**



8

What did I learn?

- Be ready to listen and try to understand what people mean by what they say
 - Leave your own politics at the door
 - Look for solutions and sustainable outcomes through open and equitable discussions in a realistic context
 - Develop concrete outcomes but be careful not to promise too much and raise expectations that cannot be fulfilled and that will lead to disappointment
 - Sometimes you just need to shut up and be patient – timing and personalities can be the most important variables
 - Be even more patient 😊
-

Thank you!
