Language Recovery of the New South Wales South Coast Aboriginal Languages

Part A
Analysis and Philology

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Chapter A.8 Conclusion and Further Implications

This chapter presents a summary of the purpose of this study and its content, and thoughts on its role in future language reclamation of the South Coast languages (SCLs hereon).

A.8.1 Summary and Significance

This research study aimed to serve a number of purposes:

1. to produce a comprehensive bibliography of, and metadata on, the historic and archival material that is available on the New South Wales SCLs.
2. to provide a collated database of all the language material found in these sources, which can be utilised by communities to add to their existing language knowledge, or as a starting point for language reclamation or revitalisation projects.
3. to provide more elaborate language descriptions on the SCLs than have to date been available, in order to allow Aboriginal communities and schools to teach the languages to a higher proficiency level than had previously been possible.
4. to fill the gap between recently produced language descriptions of Australian Aboriginal Languages (AALs hereon) from other parts of New South Wales and SCLs, and to add to the body of knowledge of AALs overall. To date there has been little information collated on the south-east NSW languages, and the findings in this study will assist in further typological studies of AALs.
5. to provide insight into the stages and processes involved in working exclusively from written archival material. To date very little has been published on the
methodologies of working with historic material in the context of AALs, and the discussion in this study will hopefully evoke public responses and further discussion from other researchers working in similar conditions.

Part A of this work looked at the available language material of the SCLs, the philological aspects of working from/with this material and the analyses of the languages. Chapter A.1 functions as an annotated bibliography, listing all published and unpublished archival materials on the SCLs that have been located and identified to date, i.e. the material that provided the language corpus for this study. The list also contains later work on the SCLs grammars, including audio recordings produced between 1956 and the early 1970s that were not included in the corpus for the analysis in this study, and why. Each annotation to the archival material provided details of informants, where material was collected and any reference made to social and/or linguistic boundaries mentioned in that particular item, if information was given.

Chapter A.2 gave insight into the processes and stages of working with the historic material. Analytical work on languages from archival/historic material requires philological work in order to understand spelling systems that were employed in the old sources, definition of terminology used at the time, and which educational literature was available at the time, that would have influenced the early collectors’ methodologies for their language work or collecting.

The grammatical descriptions of the four SCLs covered in this study (Dharrawal, Dharumba, Dhurga and Djirringanj) were presented in chapters A.3-A.7 These chapters contained analyses that could be authoritatively derived from the historic material, which included the previously unanalysed eleven stories collected and transcribed by Mackenzie (1866, 1877, 1878). As a large part of working with these stories, morphemes were isolated and identified as having a particular function. This was in most cases only possible when several examples showing the use of the
morpheme were identified in the SCLs corpus, and through comparison of the more closely related NSW languages, and AALs from other parts of Australia.

Whereas form and function of nominal suffixes were relatively easy to identify, verbal morphology leaves many questions unanswered at this stage. Mackenzie’s collected stories contain some verb constructions in which several morphemes remained unanalysed as to their function. Further studies and comparative work with the increasingly elaborate language work on AALs in the south east of Australia from archival material is likely to answer some of the questions regarding the form and function of these morphemes.

Finally, Part B presented the heart and soul of this research study: the previously unanalysed texts of Mathews and Mackenzie, as well as all glossed sentences taken from unpublished and published sources. The inclusion of the texts and sentences in the main body of the dissertation may be considered unconventional. Traditionally, grammars are presented with texts and stories as appendices to support the analysis, but here, they were presented as part of the analysis for various reasons.

For many AALs that have not had speakers for many decades, the available language corpus tends to be relatively small and may be limited to elicited material only. The linguistic and contextual features of these stories/narratives therefore supplied the SCL corpus with more than just morphological and lexical data, and are a rare occurrence amongst ‘sleeping’ AALs that are relying on purely archival material for language reclamation purposes.

Since there is no opportunity to verify observations on the function of the languages with speakers, the texts need to be easily accessible for the reader, or future researchers of these languages, to allow cross-referencing. Furthermore, the analysis of these texts took up the majority of time on this research project, and was an arduous

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92 For explanation of this term see further in this chapter in section A.8.2.
process and not merely a matter of adding data into Shoebox/Toolbox and waiting for an interlinear glossing to appear. Due to the inconsistent spellings within each collector’s materials, different spelling systems between collectors and the misrepresentation of individual phones, as well as clustering or breaking up of words, the analyses of texts were not a straightforward task, but demanded (or resulted in) numerous reanalyses of phonemic transcriptions as well as morphological break-downs and identification and labelling of individual morphemes. At the time of writing, the texts are still far from having been completely exploited for their grammatical information, but future and ongoing work with the SCLs as well as the growing number of other NSW AALs being reanalysed will add to the ongoing analysis.

Mackenzie’s collection of Dharrawal and Dharumba texts provide information on narrative styles and features of natural speech such as reduplication, use of onomatopoeic words, ideophones and/or exclamations and other discourse features identified in the direct speech and conversations embedded in the stories. Extracting information on these features allows Aboriginal communities to reclaim and teach their languages that show these aspects of natural languages, rather than reconstituting a carefully constructed language that lacks the features of actively spoken languages.

Since so much information on the SCLs can be gained from the texts and stories, the exclusion of these texts and stories from previous language work on the SCLs seems an oversight, but an understandable oversight given the limited time Eades was given to undertake and publish her language analysis. Eades’ statement:

As with R.H. Mathews’ texts, Mackenzie’s stories are unfortunately not very helpful but they do illustrate some of the grammatical points made in R.H. Mathews’ grammar. (Eades, 1976:11)

probably reflected the then generally held low opinion amongst the Australian linguistic community on language work based on archival material. Previously greater importance was placed on fieldwork linguistics and describing languages that were
still spoken at the time. But defining concepts such as ‘documentary’ versus ‘descriptive’ linguistics, that address the need for change in the methodology of language description of languages that are no longer spoken, has become an increasing topic of discourse amongst linguists (for example see Himmelmann (1998) and (2006), and Bowern (conference presentation in 2009)).

The recent years have also seen a remarkable productivity in language work on the ‘sleeping’ AALs in south-east Australia, see Dhanggati (Lissarrague, 2007), Gathang (Lissarrague, 2010), Gumbaynggirr (Morelli, 2008), Darkinyung (Jones, 2008), Hunter River Lake Macquarie language (Lissarrague, 2006), Gamilaraay/Yuwaalaraay (Ash et al, 2003); Canberra language and neighbouring inland languages (Koch, 2009 and 2011a+b), Sydney language (Steele, 2005), and Gandangara (Besold, 2003). As part of this activity in language work on NSW languages, the Muurrbay Aboriginal Language and Culture Cooperative also published the (long awaited) *Handbook of Aboriginal Languages of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory* (Wafer et al, 2008) which, amongst other things, contains basic information on available source material, wordlists and phonemic inventories of all the presently identified indigenous languages of NSW.

These works are based solely on archival material in some languages, and a combination of archival material and data collected on recordings and/or last remaining speakers in others.

All published grammars referred to above are on coastal and neighbouring NSW languages. Grammars and/or dictionaries/wordlists of NSW languages in central and western regions have been produced more than 10 years ago. These include Paakantji (Hercus, 1982 and 1993), Ngiyampaa (Donaldson, 1980), Wiradjuri (Rudder and Grant, 2005, 2010, and McNicol and Hosking, 1994, McNicol, 1989 unpublished Honours thesis), Muruwari and Barranbinya (Oates, 1988a and 1988b), amongst
others. No extensive formal research has been undertaken or published on the languages of the south-eastern NSW, excluding the continuing work that Rev. John Harris has been conducting since the 1960s with a local Aboriginal group in Batemans Bay (Harris, pc). Although this work has not been published, it has been used extensively in the local Aboriginal church community.93 Eades’ (1976) and Capell’s (n.d.) analyses were very limited, as previously discussed in Chapter A.1. The NSW South Coast languages analyses presented in this study therefore not only tie in in a timely manner with the recently published grammars on other NSW AALs, but also fill the geographical gap of NSW language descriptions.

A.8.2 Language Reclamation

One property that all these recently produced, or re-worked, grammars have in common is that they are written with the intention of supporting language reclamation and revitalisation projects in the appropriate languages. But what exactly is meant by language ‘reclamation’ and ‘revitalisation’? The use of appropriate terminology within this context proves to be of great importance,


- **Revitalisation** where a language still spoken by the older generation needs special support for it to be passed on to the younger generations.
- **Renewal** where a language is no longer spoken ‘right through’ by anyone, but enough knowledge exists to develop a language learning program.

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93 I congratulate Rev. Dr John Harris for having been awarded the prestigious Lambeth Doctor of Divinity by the Archbishop of Canterbury in “recognition of his outstanding contribution as a Bible scholar and translator, his advocacy on behalf of Aboriginal Australians and his unstinting endeavours to raise awareness of indigenous issues within the church and the wider Australian community.” (Archbishop of Canterbury website, visited 16th February 2011)
**Reclamation** where there has been a complete break in the transmission of the spoken language, but there is sufficient evidence (e.g. historical records, related languages) for language reconstruction and learning.

However, the terms stated above under 1 and 3, are now often used interchangeably; both imply the idea of bringing a language that is no longer spoken back into the communities. This concept then differs greatly from language ‘maintenance’; another concept that applies to languages that still have remaining speakers. Grenoble and Whaley (2006:13) point to the distinct difference between ‘language maintenance’ which “supports a language that is truly vital”, and ‘language revitalisation’ that aims to “increase the relative number of speakers of a language and extend the domains where is employed”.

If an appropriate terminology is undeniably important to researchers working with endangered languages, it is equally so for community members. ‘Extinct’ languages are defined as “one with no remaining speakers”, and being “characterized by a lack of intergenerational transmission” (Grenoble and Whaley, 2006:18). But although these definitions may apply to a particular language, the use of the terms ‘dead’ and ‘extinct’ languages has caused disapproval among both researchers and community members. Bradley and Bradley (2002:xii) comment on the use of this terminology by people working in the realms of endangered languages:

Those people who did work in this area [of endangered languages] used terms such as language death and other lugubrious metaphors. (Bradley and Bradley, 2002:xii)

Rob Amery supplies this quote from a Kaurna Elder that expresses the perceived insensitivity of these terms:

Some people have described Kaurna language as a dead language. But Kaurna people don’t believe this. We believe that our language is a living language and that is has only been sleeping... (Cherie Watkins in Warranna Purruna video DECS, 1997 - quoted in Amery, 2000:1)

This sentiment is also prevalent in SCLs communities. For example, in a funding application for a language-teaching project, some community members listed their
language status in the application as ‘endangered’, even though the language would be classified as ‘dead’ or ‘extinct’ according to the conventionally used terms shown above. Many community members refuse to label their traditional language status as ‘extinct’, stating that they still speak their language, not fluently, but that it is used in daily context, even if it is reduced to words such as *djilawa* ‘urinate’, *mirigaan* ‘dog’ or *bindji bindji* ‘pregnant’ and taboo words. The problems with terms such as ‘extinct’ are also experienced in indigenous communities outside Australia (see Leonard (2008), for example, for discussion on the use of the term ‘extinct’ in regards to the Miami language in the USA).

The NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs agrees, and also cautions against the use of these terms and reflects the opinion of communities.

… whilst some [NSW] languages are rarely spoken, there is no such thing as a 'dead' or 'extinct language- that is, given adequate resources, most languages can be revived. (http://www.daa.nsw.gov.au/landandculture/langfacts.html, visited 3rd May 2011)

The increasing emphasis on language reclamation in recent times has led to a rethinking of classifications used in the context of language endangerment and revitalisation (Lewis and Simons (2009)).

Brown and Ogilvie (2009:326) suggest that “even in cases of [language] extinction, there may be a variety of levels of lingering knowledge”. This means that although there may no fluent speakers of the SCLs, some older community members may be classified as ‘language rememberers’. The definition of the term ‘language rememberer’ is given by Knab (1980:232, in Tsunoda, 2005) as a person “who passively remembers fragments of the language”. These fragments can consist of words only or small phrases, songs, and in some cases “entire texts without understanding their meaning” (Brown and Ogilvie, 2009:320).

This concept of ‘rememberer’ was demonstrated during a workshop session with teachers and two Elders in Vincentia. As part of a meeting it was decided to play some
of the early 1960s recordings of local (deceased) community members in elicitation sessions by Janet Mathews and/or Luise Hercus in order to familiarise participants at the meeting with the type of material available for the SCLs. As the CD played a song in the local language, the two women Elders started to giggle and quietly sing along to the lyrics. When asked how they knew the words (even though both had previously claimed not to know any language other than a few words) they replied, “our dad/uncle always used to sing that song”.

Many indigenous languages across the globe face extinction, many of them already are extinct. Within Australia, the estimated number of languages no longer spoken is set at around 160 out of 250 languages that were formerly spoken on the continent (Walsh, 1993:2). The United Nations Indigenous Rights Declaration (2007) addresses the right of Indigenous people to access and speak their languages.

Article 13
1. Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons.
2. States shall take effective measures to ensure that this right is protected and also to ensure that indigenous peoples can understand and be understood in political, legal and administrative proceedings, where necessary through the provision of interpretation or by other appropriate means.

Article 14
1. Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.
2. Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination.
3. States shall, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for indigenous individuals, particularly children, including those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language.

Of course, this declaration does not only apply to Australian indigenous languages. There are indigenous languages in other parts of the world that are in the course of being reclaimed and revitalised by their communities. In northern America, for example, one such language that shares a similar fate to that of the SCLs, is the
Miami-Illinois language formerly spoken by the Miami Tribe that has its homelands “within the boundaries of the states of Indiana, Ohio, Illinois, lower Michigan and lower Wisconsin” (kiiloona myaamiaki site, http://www.miamination.com/mto/about.html, visited 26th April, 2011). The corpus for this language consists of, among other things, a 580 page long Jesuit manuscript from the late 1600s, which is in the process of being translated but “will take many more years to finish” (Myaamia Project site, http://www.myamiaiproject.org/research.html#jesuit, visited 26th April 2011). The language has been labelled a ‘sleeping’ language which also shows the use of this term outside the context of AALs. (The Myaamia Project site, and see Costa (1991) for his account on working from the historic sources of the Miami language).

Language reclamation and revitalisation projects and initiatives have been productive for more than 15 years in south-eastern Australia including around Adelaide, which suffered the same fate of loss of indigenous languages due to being one of the earliest and most severely affected areas of early European colonisation. Without doubt the most significant and best-documented language revival/reclamation program in coastal Australia is the case of Kaurna, the language of the Adelaide Plains in South Australia (Amery, 2000). The Kaurna language recovery was based on archival material, and Amery’s work with the Aboriginal community has been a signpost for similar revival work in other parts of Australia.

In Victoria, the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages (VACL) has been actively involved in helping Victorian Aboriginal communities reclaim their languages since 1994 (http://www.vaclang.org.au/, visited 4th May 2011).

Before 1788, there were more than 70 Aboriginal languages that were spoken across New South Wales. Today, most Aboriginal languages in New South Wales do not have enough speakers to function properly and only ten languages are being significantly revitalised.

The Wiradjuri language (central NSW) has been in the process of being revitalised since 1992\textsuperscript{94} (Restoration House website, http://rosella.apana.org.au/~jtr/profile.html, visited 2\textsuperscript{nd} May 2011). In northern NSW, Gumbaynggirr communities set up the Muurrbay Aboriginal Language and Culture Cooperative in 1986 (http://www.muurrbay.org.au/about_us.html, visited 2\textsuperscript{nd} May 2011) in order to “revive their language and hand it down”. Similarly, Gamilaraay (including its dialects Yuwaalaraay and Yuwalaay) has been taught in schools and to communities for many years now.\textsuperscript{95} See Austin (2008) for the history of the study of the Gamilaraay language and language reclamation work.

A.8.3 Language Reclamation in New South Wales

Article 14§3 in the aforementioned United Nations Declaration on Indigenous languages states that, “states shall, in conjunction with indigenous people, take effective measures…to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and in their own language”. In this respect, the NSW state government was ahead of the United Nations Recommendations. Even though various programs had been running successfully in NSW for some years, and possibly partly because of this, the NSW state government was the first Australian state to draft a Indigenous Languages Policy which was released by the then Minister for Aboriginal Affairs of

\textsuperscript{94} Stan Grant, with the assistance of John Rudder, have been working for many years with archival material as well as working with communities to bring back the Wiradjuri language into communities.

\textsuperscript{95} Steve Morelli and John Giacon have been actively involved in language description and teaching of Gumbaynggirr and GYY respectively for over 10 years (Giacon, pc).
the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs in 2004. But, as Hinton and Hale (2001:28) point out:

[a] policy alone does not guarantee positive results for local languages…the policy must be enforced…and move beyond a pure symbolic role.

(Within the context of Australian languages, see Malcom and Truscott (2010) and McKay (2011) for discussion on the gap between language policy and language maintenance/revitalisation practise.)

The launch of the NSW Indigenous Languages policy alone would therefore have had little impact on the continuation and success of language reclamation in NSW, except that the policy led to the composition (and subsequent implementation) of the K-10 Aboriginal Languages Syllabus by the NSW Board of Studies (2003). The aim of this syllabus was to allow and encourage schools across the state to teach local Aboriginal language in a structured format just like any other LOTE (Languages other than English).

**A.8.4 Language Reclamation on the New South Wales Coast**

Language reclamation of the local languages on the NSW South Coast is not a recent phenomenon. Communities and individuals have been actively collecting and utilising some of the archival source material for decades; although there is little public documentation on these projects apart from one well-documented attempt to teach the local languages in a local primary school. Between 1978 and 1980, Anne Nugent assisted local communities and Jervis Bay Primary School to design and implement a curriculum to teach Dharrawal and Dhurga (language and cultural awareness) on which her thesis *Whose Knowledge, Whose Power and Whose Curriculum* (1986) was...
based. This project resulted in a Dharrawal language kit labelled *Building a curriculum on 300 words* (Nugent, 1981) and ultimately a *Final report to the Schools Commission of the Jervis Bay/Wreck Bay Aboriginal School/Community Project Feb. 1978 to June 1980* (1980, Macquarie). The final report considered the project as having failed in its aim to set up a permanent teaching program. One reason given for the failure was the lack of community consultation.

Very few South Coast community members so far have successfully completed the Masters of Indigenous Languages Education at University of Sydney96 (http://sydney.edu.au/koori/studying/Koori%20Masters%20Brochure.pdf, visited 10th April 2011). This program has given the graduates linguistic knowledge about AALs that has proven to be an advantage for these teachers.

### A.8.5 Realistic Expectation

One of the most important issues that needs to be addressed amongst communities, whose languages only exist in the form of archival and historic material, is ‘what can realistically be achieved with the available language material and analysis?’ (see also Stockley (2010)). The limitations that arise when working from purely archival material need to be pointed out to communities to allow them to set realistic goals for future language reclamation, and communities could achieve their goals by focussing on different approaches for the reclamation of their language(s). It must be acknowledged that not all aspects of an historic language can be recovered. Also, the question of what parts of a language should be, or *need* to be, taught for reclamation

96 This course has prepared students with tools such as knowledge about how AALs function, curriculum and teaching development within Indigenous language teaching. Furthermore, students get the opportunity to work on their own language as part of the course.
purposes in any given community needs to be addressed (see Thieberger (2002) for further discussion).

Despite the length and intensity of this research study, uncertainties remain regarding functions of some identified morphemes, inflectional systems, function and forms of demonstratives and whether there is phonemic vowel length distinction, to name just a few. These gaps will need to be filled if languages are to be taught at a more advanced level, and/or to be used in a daily context within communities. This will allow, and hopefully inspire and encourage, language teaching programs to go beyond teaching small phrases, such as ‘what is this?’ – ‘this is x’ and teaching simple songs like ‘head, shoulders, knees and toes’.97 (See Gale and Mickan (2008) for further discussion on going beyond teaching simple language in language revitalisation.)

There is a danger that language teaching programs/projects do not go beyond being tokenistic if the language taught does not push past the easy stages of learning the sounds and words and the previously mentioned small interactive phrases.

There is no doubt that teaching even low levels of local languages exposes learners (Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal) and communities to the local language and culture, and can “help reduce the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students’ education levels” (Brown, 2010).98 But the need to establish long-term language teaching approaches for successful language reclamation is aptly noted by Grenoble and Whaley (2006:1):

Creating an orthography or producing a television program for children in a local language is a major accomplishment in its own right, but it will not revitalise a language. A longer-term, multifaceted program, one which requires a range of resources and much personal dedication, is needed.

97 The quality of Aboriginal language programs on the NSW South Coast very much depend on the understanding and proficiency of the language teachers. As there are no proficient speakers of the languages as such there, this is a cost and time involving process to train teachers in the language(s), which, to date, has been a struggle for the programs I have been involved with.

98 For further reflections and observations from Dhurga language teachers’ perspectives see Brown (2010) and Lane (2010).
Primarily, there needs to be realistic expectations as to how far language teaching programs/projects can revitalise the local language.99

A.8.6 Language Engineering

One of the most obvious problems is the limitation of the available vocabularies that are restricted to traditional concepts only. This creates a need for language engineering to expand the vocabulary to enable the traditional languages to be appropriated into a contemporary context. This issue can be, and has been, addressed with different approaches (see Amery (2000) for more discussion on “Adapting Kaurna to the 1900s” and filling gaps in the Kaurna lexicon). Gumbaynggirr (Morelli, 2008) for example uses various methods to extend its vocabulary.

1. Extension of meaning of words: minya jalaarla (what inside-LOC) to ‘table of contents’
2. Appropriating English words into the phonemic system of the Aboriginal languages: dumadang ‘tomato’
3. Creation of new words from compounding existing words: marlawgay-bangarr (strike-brain) ‘computer’

Another approach that has been discussed by community members on the South Coast is to use English words in the target language; treating English words the same way as the English vocabulary contains loanwords from German ‘kindergarten’ or French ‘liaison’, which would be a kind of code switching.

Because the sizes of the vocabularies for each of the SCLs vary greatly in number of lexemes, one approach that has been discussed is to fill gaps in any given language with a word (or morpheme) from one of the neighbouring languages, or from

other AALs, rather than the English word, in order to maintain a more ‘pure’ Aboriginal content in the language(s). Although all options could be used successfully, it requires extensive consultation and discussion between the appropriate Aboriginal communities who decide which approach(es) they are most comfortable with, if any.

A.8.7 Problems and Obstacles in Language Reclamation

Language reclamation is an emotion-laden domain and affects all generations; not only for older community members, many of who belong to the Stolen Generation\(^\text{100}\) and who experienced forced detachment from their cultural background. It is also painful for the members of the younger generation, who are desperate to see traditional knowledge and culture, including language, find their way back into everyday life and not just for special occasions such as NAIDOC (National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee) week, or at funerals etc. For many younger people involved in cultural and language reclamation, there is an underlying sense of urgency and determination to get projects off the ground while their grandparents are still alive. This urgency may risk the success of the project if projects are rushed into without the necessary planning.

But it would be counterproductive to criticise failed attempts to revitalise or reclaim the local languages at this still relatively early stage of reclamation in NSW. It is difficult at the best of times to structure a sustainable and successful reclamation

program/project due to different aspects and environment associated with each project. Hinton and Hale (2001:21) stress that “no simple/single framework for language reclamation can exist” because of these variations and that “they will, therefore, need reassessment at all stages of implementing a language revitalisation program”. This need for reassessing never becomes more apparent than when key project/program members leave the project, or when elected key members of a project turn out to be unsuitable for the role they were assigned to.

Some of the observed obstacles can be due to lack of appropriate teaching material, or available language analysis/grammatical description of the languages; initial lack of human resources, or interpersonal problems that make it difficult to maintain and sustain a successful team of members within the teaching program.

Another problem can be, and often is, the lack of funding, either initial funding or continuing support to maintain a program.

Last, but by no means least, political agendas and disagreements between and within local Aboriginal communities are common and often hinder reclamation programs.

Considering all these factors that can have detrimental effects on reclamation projects, it is therefore imperative that the processes of implementation of projects and programs are documented to some degree, so that future revival projects can learn from previous mistakes, and structure and plan accordingly.

Current and recent projects are addressing the need to enable communities to establish productive and successful reclamation programmes (for example see Eira and Couzens (2009); and Eira and Stebbins (2008) for recent discussion on these issues). Eira, Stebbins and Couzens (in progress) are currently undertaking a multiple-year project Meeting point: integrating Aboriginal and linguistics knowledge systems for description of contemporary revival languages in Australia which hopes to establish a
model that will assist Aboriginal communities in their quest to revitalise their languages:

“Practical outcomes will include clearer, more extensive and rigorous information available to Aboriginal communities and the linguists who work with them, and recommendations for optimal pathways for language revival which respond to the priorities and directions of the communities concerned.” (Paragraph taken from Australian Research Council Successful Linkage-Projects 2010, www.arc.gov.au/rtf/LP10_R2/La_Trobe_University.rtf)

A.8.8 Final Words

At the time of writing the final draft of this dissertation, I feel that although throughout the course of this research many questions regarding the function of the South Coast languages were answered, just as many question seemed to arise. Goddard (1996: 124) noted that “the description of a language is a process rather than a single event”, and this seems certainly the case in the description of the SCLs. Although the language corpus is limited, some of the analysis changed numerous times throughout the process of identifying and making sense of the available data. Often progress was made after gathering additional snippets of information from closer related languages, or via personal communication with other linguists working on these languages. Other times it was a case of the illusive penny dropping and patterns emerging in the data all of a sudden.

What this body of work does provide is a comprehensive (although by no means the final) description of four or five coastal languages\textsuperscript{101}, which significantly expanded the previously available analyses proposed by Eades (1976). These grammars can be used to produce standardised teaching material for future language reclamation projects.

\textsuperscript{101} Taking into consideration that I treated Dharumba and Dhurga as separate languages in this study. See Chapter A.1 for further details on this decision.
This study also presents a collective SCL dictionary102 (Appendix 1) that shows the phonemicised lexeme as well as variant spellings in the historic sources. This dictionary will be useful for communities as well as for comparative purposes for other language researchers. It can also be used as a master dictionary that individual communities can build onto for their own purposes. This study is also incorporating the rest of the SCL corpus, i.e. sentences collected by Mackenzie and Mathews (see Part B). This means that the whole of the SCL corpus is available for comparative purposes or to act as further templates for teaching purposes.

Lastly, the previously unanalysed stories collected by Mackenzie and Mathews (see Part B and Chapter A.7) have added an enormous potential for future language reclamation on the NSW South Coast. They have opened a window to natural language use that has been unavailable or overlooked until now. With the insight given here and further more elaborate research of this aspect of the SCLs, the possibilities of incorporating the information derived from their discourse and narrative styles are numerous.

The analysis presented in this study is therefore not only functioning as the basis for language teaching material for current and/or future reclamation work on the South Coast and southern parts of Sydney; its role is also to invite further research on these languages. The future research needs to focus particularly in areas of phonology, discourse and narrative analysis and comparative work between the audio recordings of the 1960s and the early-collected material (between 1830s and 1900) and still existing knowledge of language within the SCL communities.

102 The dictionary should be treated as work in progress. It does not contain all lexemes found in the sources, but will be added in future versions.
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