

For almost 40 years, Michael Walsh has been working alongside Indigenous people: documenting language, music and other traditional knowledge, acting on behalf of claimants to land in the Northern Territory, and making crucial contributions to the revitalisation of Aboriginal languages in NSW. This volume, with contributions from his colleagues and students, celebrates his abiding interest in and commitment to Indigenous society with papers in two broad themes. 'Language, identity and country' addresses the often complex relations between Aboriginal social groups and countries, and linguistic identity. In 'Language plays in maintaining action' authors discuss the role that language plays in maintaining social identities in the realms of conversation, story-telling, music, language games, and in education. 'Indigenous language and social identity' will be of interest to students of linguistics, Indigenous studies, anthropology, and sociology.

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INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL IDENTITY

papers in honour of Michael Walsh

edited by
Brett Baker, Ilana Mushin,
Mark Harvey and Rod Gardner

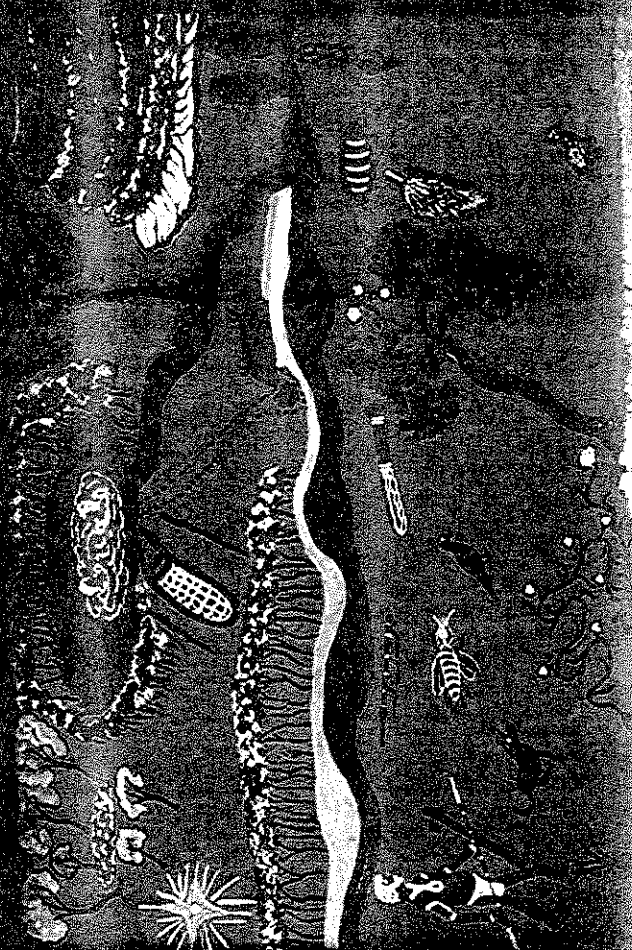


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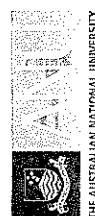
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Pacific Linguistics 615



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Pacific Linguistics is a publisher specialising in grammars and linguistic descriptions, dictionaries and other materials on languages of the Pacific, Taiwan, the Philippines, Indonesia, East Timor, southeast and south Asia, and Australia.

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and Rod Gardner



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Ku Thithay Sugarbag Dreaming by Lawrence Kolumboort.

The people left the place Mawurt because two women drowned as they tried to recover their dilly bags of cycad nuts that they had been soaking. The cycad nuts are poisonous if they are not prepared and cooked properly.

The ancestors travelled throughout the country forming hills, creeks and waterholes. The ancestors settled in different places.

Ku Thithay (Native Bee) and Ku Nguluyguy (Echidna) continued to the hill known as Bathuk and they settled there.

Nguluyguy said, "I am going up to the top of the hill and I will stay there."

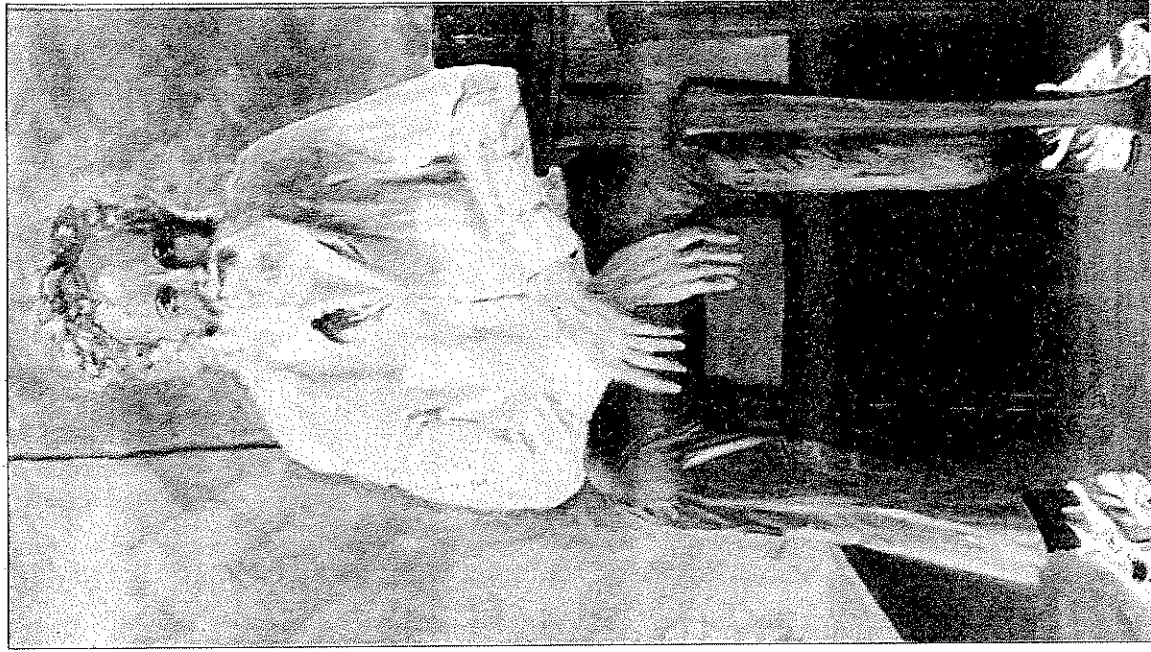
Thithay said, "I am too tired and my legs are too short for me to climb up there, I will stay here at the bottom."

Ku Thithay stays in the stone arrangement at the base of the hill.

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Cover art: Ku Thithay Sugarbag Dreaming by Lawrence Kolumboort.

© Collection of Kanamkek Yile-Ngala Museum, Wadeye Northern Territory, commissioned in 1995. Courtesy the artist's family

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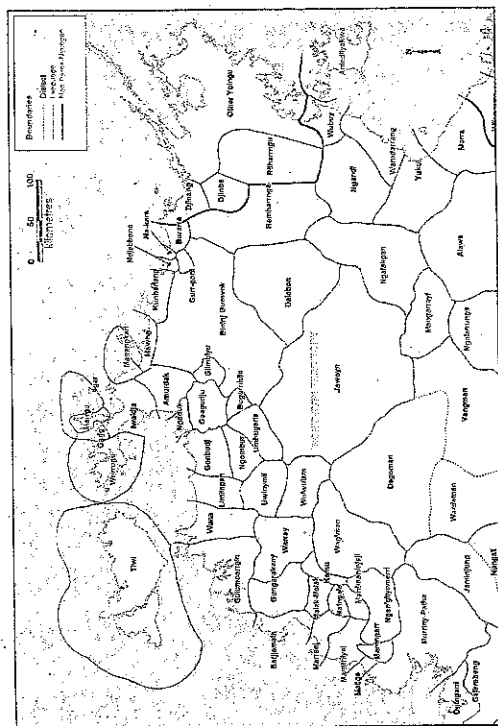
Michael Walsh
Painting by Ros Fraser

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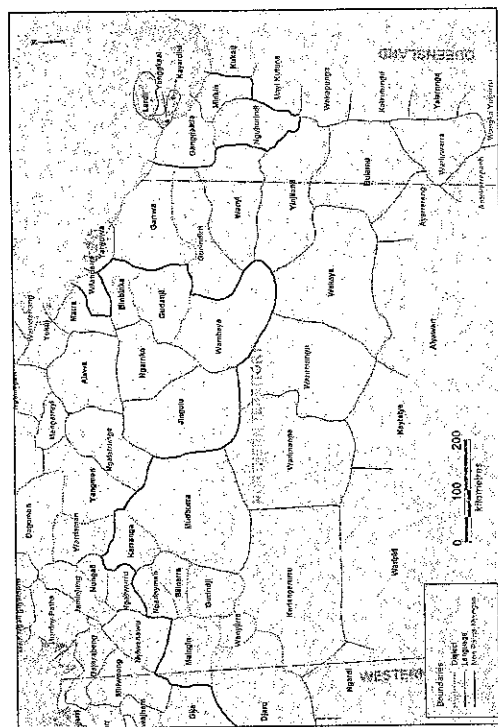
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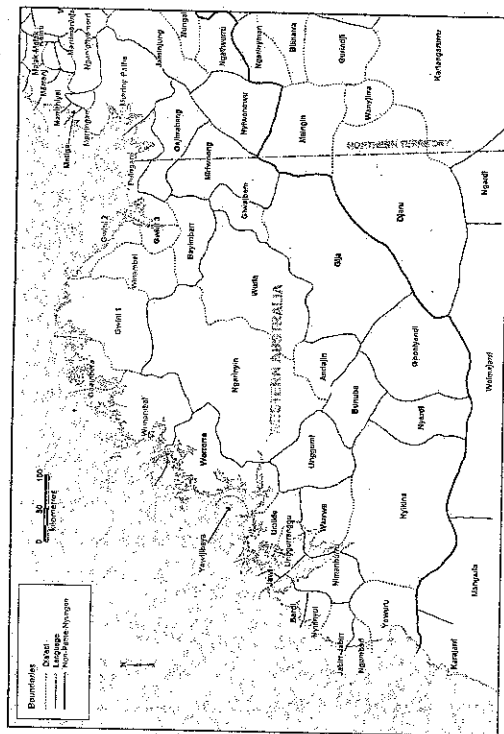
Maps



Map 1: Top End Northern Territory languages



Map 2: Mid Northern Territory languages



Map 3: Kimberley languages

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The editors are grateful for the assistance of the following individuals and institutions:

Ros Fraser, who undertook missions of discovery for photos of Michael, and who lived with a terrible secret

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1 Introduction

ROD GARDNER, MARK HARVEY, ILANA MUSHIN AND BRETT BAKER

1.1 General introduction

In this chapter we aim to give a necessarily brief overview of Michael Walsh's major contributions to the field, as well as a synopsis of the chapters to follow.

1.2 Michael's work

Michael is inimitably unique. We won't talk here of his seemingly unshakable good humour, his dedication to the welfare of students, and his compassion for the downtrodden more generally. We will instead focus on his contributions to scholarship and public life, which have been both extraordinarily broad and also far reaching.

Apart from his broad interests within linguistics itself, in historical linguistics, lexical semantics, discourse and pragmatics, and morphosyntax, his wide-ranging mind has led him into fields such as anthropology, education, history, native title and forensic linguistics, song, and digital technology and archiving. Language, though, has remained at the core, and his passion for language is evident throughout his work.

Michael's PhD, awarded in 1976 (Walsh 1976), started him on what has become a lifelong association with Murinypata (as he spelled it then). This is a language whose complexities are widely acknowledged to be truly fiendish, spoken at Wadeye in the Daly River region of the Northern Territory, south of Darwin. His association with the community of Wadeye continues to the present day. His grammar of Murriny-Patha (as it is now known) was the first detailed description of an Australian language with a multiple classifier system, and revealed much of the interesting behaviour of these systems (Walsh 1997). Based on his fieldwork, Michael published a number of other studies of Murriny-Patha which broke new ground in Australian linguistics: on impersonal constructions (1987b), on body part incorporation (1995), on the 'category squish' of 'vouns and nerbs' (Walsh 1996), and more recently on Murrinh-Patha song (Walsh, Barwick, Maret, Ford, & Reid 2005).

But Michael didn't stop at Murriny-Patha. His first post-PhD professional job was as Linguistic Research Officer at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (now AIATSIS), from 1975-1981. Here, he started a one-man publishing tradition of overviews of Australian languages (e.g. 1979, 1981, 1984, 1987a, 1991c, and especially his book Walsh & Yallop 1993/2005). He also produced the first practical guides for budding fieldworkers, on the lexicon and grammar (Walsh & Sutton 1979a, 1979b), and on recording and archiving materials (Walsh 1983), and thus influenced a generation of Australian linguists.

In addition to being an outstanding descriptive fieldworker, there has always been a strong applied aspect to his work. Most prominently, he has for a long time been dedicated to the fight for Aboriginal land rights. He was centrally involved throughout the difficult Kenbi land claim, which ran for nearly three decades, during which he wrote numerous reports and made numerous appearances as an expert witness. He also made important contributions to other land claims for the Northern Land Council, for example in the Wadeye region (Walsh 1991b). And he wrote a significant submission on Aboriginal identity for the Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1991d). These efforts marked him out early on as a person who was truly committed to the betterment of Aboriginal people.

Based partly on his experiences in land claims, he pioneered (with a handful of other Australian linguists such as Diana Eades) the now burgeoning field of study of Indigenous interaction, and in particular the differences in conversational style between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians (e.g. Walsh 1991a, 1994). His work has highlighted the extent to which misunderstandings can arise between Aboriginal witnesses and white lawyers and judges. His (1999) paper, for example, demonstrated how courtroom transcriptions can seriously misrepresent what Aboriginal witnesses say in court, with potentially serious consequences for land claims.

Arguably Michael's most important and long-lasting contribution came in the late nineties, when he turned his energies to another major project: language revitalisation in New South Wales. Starting with an (in)famous roadtrip through regional NSW with colleagues Jaky Troy and Tony Lonsdale (described in the contribution by Michael's partner *Ros Fraser* in Ch. 2), Michael began an intense and fruitful engagement with Aboriginal groups throughout the state. One of the many positive results that stemmed from this initial effort was the K-10 Aboriginal Languages Syllabus for NSW, so that for the first time Indigenous languages are now being taught seriously in many NSW schools. The K-10 Syllabus, and other initiatives, have led to a renaissance in the study of traditional languages by Indigenous people in NSW (described in Walsh 2001). This flowering of Indigenous scholarship is still unfolding. The impact has reached politicians, educationalists and language planners, as well as linguists interested in language endangerment and language revival, as demonstrated by a major survey contribution to the *Annual Review of Anthropology* (Walsh 2005), 'Will Indigenous languages survive?'

Most recently, Michael has been working with a team of linguists and ethnomusicologists on Aboriginal song, for a long time a seriously neglected field of Aboriginal studies. His article on Aboriginal song language (2007), subtitled 'So many questions, so little to work with', raises a host of crucial questions that will stimulate scholars in this emerging field of studies.

Michael's research cannot be measured merely by his publications in journals and books, impressive as these are. He has been an inveterate speaker at conferences, disseminating his thoughtful and often unconventional ideas to diverse audiences; he has gained the trust of Indigenous Australians with his long-term commitments; and he has written numerous reports that have had a significant impact on land claims, courtroom procedures, and education, and ultimately on the day-to-day lives of Indigenous Australians.

1.3 Contributions to the volume

The range of contributions to this volume reflects many of Michael Walsh's interests over the years, as set out in the previous section.

The first half of the volume focuses on the relationship between people, language and country. The complexity of this relationship, both historically and today, has been a central focus of Michael's research and his professional activities in land claims. In particular, he has been concerned with the effects of colonisation, dispossession and catastrophic population decline on the relationship between Aboriginal people and their land.

Rigsby and Hajner consider in their chapter the notions of place, land, country, and property, specifically for the Lamalama people around Yinjinjga (Port Stewart) in Cape York. They summarise the history of contact with Europeans, with land appropriations and the exclusion of the Indigenous people, and the later transfer back to the Lamalama people under freehold tenure. This arose out of recognition and protection of traditional customary Lamalama property rights and interests at Yinjinjga through several forms of tenure under Queensland law in cooperation since about 1986 between the Lamalama people and the state and commonwealth governments. The authors argue that this result could not have been attained through litigation.

Sutton, who has known Michael since their undergraduate days, takes a journey back to Tindale's work in the Western Desert region, spanning the middle part of the last century. He shows how linguistic identities in this region proved difficult to establish, probably because this region was settled only a few centuries ago. Thus, there was still flux in social organisation, due also to the environmental extremes, including lack of rainfall. As Sutton puts it, 'Desert people were still culturally in migratory expansion mode', resulting in less rigid linguistic identities.

Dixon's chapter is based on her work with the Walmajarri people in Western Australia. She reports on a dictionary project of Juwalny, a dialect of Walmajarri, in which she compares the lexis and morphology of the two varieties. She finds major differences in the lexicon, but generally similar nominal and verbal morphology, and also some phonological differences. For Juwalny speakers, these differences are sufficient for them to want their own language materials.

Baker's chapter uses historical records, together with modern recollections in the community, to trace the trajectory of the name 'Yukul' from its probable origins as a language name to its current use as a collective term for Roper River people. The Yukul land-owning group were greatly affected by systematic massacres in the early colonial period, and by 1900 there appear to have been very few Yukul land owners and Yukul speakers. Understandings of Yukul identity were very attenuated during the 20th century. The associations of this identity became highly variable, and it acquired generic uses which were not characteristic of pre-colonial society. However, certain kinds of more specific links between totems, social groups, country, and semi-moieties appear to have survived the devastating impacts of European colonisation.

Harvey's chapter reflects on another aspect of Michael's work. This is the interaction between Aboriginal and European conceptions of land tenure. Harvey focuses on the problems that arise from the fact that European conceptions offer a binary owner vs non-owner choice whereas Aboriginal conceptions normatively involve a range of degrees of ownership. He discusses an area in which Michael has been very active, and one where the effects of colonisation have been very significant: Darwin and its hinterland.

Koch also delves into history in his discussion of the languages of the Canberra region, using primarily word lists and a sketch grammar of Ngunawal which are available for these

no-longer-spoken languages. He sifts through the linguistic evidence to argue for a reassessment of the relationships between the languages.

Wajer and Lissarrague undertake a similar project, drawing on Walsh's 'Language map of south-eastern Australia and Tasmania' (Walsh 1981), and his knowledge of NSW languages more generally, as a starting point for their synthesis of currently available knowledge of the languages of the Central Coast of NSW. They focus on 'Kuringgai', a name given variously to a language or a group of closely related languages spoken around Sydney. They conclude that most likely there were at least five distinct languages, belonging to three distinct language groups. Therefore, Fraser's (1892) proposal that the name 'Kuringgai' refers to a single 'super-language' lacks support.

Nash's contribution investigates the evidence, from historical records of the Sydney Language, for the operation of an unusual phonological process whereby nasal-stop clusters in the inland variety correspond to nasals in the coastal variety. Nash names the pattern 'Dawes' Law' after Lt William Dawes, to whom we owe the relatively rich record we have of this language. Nash speculates that the pattern may have been a marker of linguistic identity.

Stirling addresses the cross-linguistic diversity of systems for referring to space, drawing on narrative data from the Torres Strait language Kala Lagaw Ya (KLY). She asks what the significance of the environment is in shaping the system of spatial reference in this language, which uses the parameters of wind direction (leeward/windward), and land and sea (up/down), as well as ego-centred deictics. KLY is one of the few languages that have linguistic evidence pairing the future with a metaphorical 'behind ego' and the past with metaphorical 'in front of ego'. Stirling suggests some reasons why wind direction, rather than topographical reference, might be better suited as a metaphorical basis for time reference, and for the particular pairing we observe between these two reference systems.

In the second half of the volume, we see a diversity of papers addressing the general theme of language as a basis for identity through social action of various kinds. One of Michael's pioneering and enduring interests in this area has been the discourse level, which has in recent years attracted greater interest in studies of Australian languages. Two chapters consider conversational style, and in particular the differences between Aboriginal and Australian white middle class ways of talking.

Mushin and Gardner use Conversation Analysis to explore a different aspect of conversational interaction, taking up Michael's challenge to investigate aspects of conversational style, in this case turn-taking practices in Garrawa as they relate to what Michael calls 'non-dyadic' and 'continuous' conversational style. Whilst they find a similar underlying architecture to turn-taking to Anglo-Australian norms, they also note some potentially widespread differences in how silences, overlapping talk and response tokens are used.

Blythe's chapter concentrates on the language which has been a focus of Michael's linguistic career: Murriny-Patha. Using a Conversation Analysis method, Blythe analyses narrative storytelling, and specifically the use of prosody and rhythm to achieve particular interactional objectives.

Hill also focuses on narratives, in this case on repetition across speakers in collaborative storytelling. This chapter focuses on two Cape York languages – Umpila and Kuuku Ya'u – to illustrate what is considered the canonical mode of multi-party storytelling in these communities. Hill distinguishes between primary and secondary narrator roles, and finds that repetition of turns spoken by the secondary narrator are most typically elements previously told, and have the function of emphasising important themes in the story.

Black also deals with Cape York narratives in his chapter. Drawing on Michael's observation that in traditional Aboriginal narratives co-construction is the norm, he presents a story that is delivered by two narrators, from the Koko-Bera people.

Evans has a different take on narrative, picking up on foundational work by Michael and others on Aboriginal multilingual verbal arts. He takes up Sutton's (1997) seven propositions, which note, amongst other observations, that languages are owned by speakers, and tied to specific places. Polyglot narrative texts reflect complex linguistic practices and relationships, harnessing multiple languages for aesthetic purposes, for example indexing country affiliations and characterisation, or the location of an event, or accommodating the audience's languages. He ends by raising some questions for future attention, notably 'What makes a "good story" good?'

With *Turpin and Green's* chapter, we come to another of Michael's interests: song. The Arandic languages form a closely related group of varieties spoken close to the geographic centre of Australia. Whilst language and country are strongly connected, Turpin and Green find that in Arandic songs, there are often words, verses and even whole songs that use a neighbouring variety, a phenomenon also found elsewhere in Australia. This pattern is also found with respect registers. Turpin and Green suggest that the role of language in song and respect is different from its role in other domains. In everyday life, the choice of particular words is strongly influenced by considerations of land tenure. Particular words and particular areas of country are directly linked, and the use of a particular word evokes its country. In song and respect registers, the choice of particular words is not so focused on evoking country. Rather, the choice of distinctive song or respect forms serves to distinguish the register from everyday registers.

Reid's chapter is also on song, this time back to where Michael began his Australianist journey: Wadeye and Murriny-Patha. Reid examines the Djamba song repertory, and the ways in which it has served to reinforce social identities but also to create a co-dependence between social groups in Wadeye since colonisation. He proposes that the central function of the repertory is to overtly mark the links between the worlds of the living and the dead. The performance of Djamba helps maintain links at significant points of change in the life cycle, such as funerals and circumcisions, when these two worlds come into contact.

Martin and Rose again address the discourse level, focusing on 'cultural frontiers' in the story genre. They argue that the maintenance and restoration of Indigenous language and culture not only needs a record of the phonology, morphology, syntax and lexis of language; it also requires community members to be involved in passing on cultural practices. As schools have become the main institution for cultural reproduction, it is necessary for members of the community to be involved in schools to tell their stories and talk about cultural activities, and for cultural traditions to be incorporated into school curricula.

In her paper, *Borowsky* examines a language game played by Pijinijatjara teenagers, and used as a means of reinforcing in-group identity. Borowsky proposes an account of this language, which involves truncation of an initial syllable, within an Optimality Theory analysis using crucial re-ranking of constraints in the ordinary language, together with Correspondence relations between the varieties. This is a little-examined area of language, which is nevertheless important in understanding the extent to which humans can consciously manipulate linguistic structure in order to achieve social goals.

Riemer's chapter picks up Michael's abiding interest in lexical semantics, in a reconsideration of the basis for claims of polyseny. One prominent analysis is guided by the lexicalist-generativist position, which proposes that polyseny maps directly to syntax, and specifically to alternative verb subcategorisations. Riemer argues that this model is

unworkable if cases are found in which differences in syntax are not accompanied by differences in meaning. He presents examples (mainly from English, but also from Indigenous Australian languages) of just such cases.

Whilst a number of chapters in the volume allude to education, the one by *Simpson, Caffery and McConwell* is a strongly focused and argued contribution on the role of bilingual education in maintaining Indigenous languages. In particular, they pay tribute to Michael's efforts in putting local languages into the curriculum in many New South Wales schools. They run through the overwhelming evidence, both Australian and international, pointing to the educational, cognitive, social and health benefits of including children's first languages in school education, and make a plea for education policy to recognise these benefits at a time when, if anything, the trend is retrogressive. The chapter also provides a valuable contribution to the history of bilingual education, focusing on the Northern Territory.

In sum, this volume perhaps succeeds in something that many would consider next to impossible: covering close to the entire range of Michael's interests in language in Australian Indigenous societies. We therefore hope that it would constitute a book that he would enjoy reading, notwithstanding his characteristic hesitation in offering an opinion.

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22 *Maintaining Languages, Maintaining Identities: What Bilingual Education Offers*

JANE SIMPSON, JO CAFFERY AND PATRICK MCCONVELL

22.1 Introduction

Michael Walsh has devoted much energy to the support and maintenance of Indigenous languages in Australia.¹ He has called attention to their perilous state and the need for effective action to halt their slide into oblivion. Beyond this kind of advocacy, based on evidence and reasoned argument, he has been involved with Indigenous people in a mighty effort to put the languages of New South Wales, already counted as 'lost' by many, back on the map, back in use and back in schools.

This effort has been based on two key strategies: (1) there must be a policy ratified by the government (the state of New South Wales in this case) to recognise and support the Indigenous languages; (2) there must be a formally recognised program and curriculum in the schools through which students can learn the languages and their cultural and historical background.

In this paper we argue for the importance of language policy and formal language curricula for children of speakers of Indigenous languages across Australia. We use the history of the Northern Territory Indigenous bilingual education programs as an example of why language policy and formal curricula are vital. We focus on children who are first-language speakers of traditional languages. The paper builds on and expands our earlier discussion paper (Simpson et al. 2009).

While some Indigenous languages are no longer spoken, or are highly endangered, a number are still strong – spoken by all generations including children. For some of these

¹ It is an honour to present this paper in honour of Michael Walsh, who has done so much for speakers of Indigenous languages and for linguists working on these languages. We wish also to thank the many people who have provided information and contributed to our understandings of the topics discussed in this paper and its predecessor (Simpson et al. 2009). These include anonymous referees, the Friends of Bilingual Learning, many members of the Northern Territory Education Department who must remain anonymous, Denise Angelo, Frank and Wendy Baarda, Margaret Carew, Sarah Cuffield, Brian Devlin, Greg Dickson, Cressida Ffonde, Mary Langren, David Nash, Kazuko Obata, Carmel O'Shannessy, Gillian Wigglesworth, David Wilkins, Aidan Wilson, participants at the 2009 AIATSIS Symposium on bilingual education, the 2009 National Assessment Workshop and the 2009 Kioloa Australian Indigenous Languages Workshop, and the Four Corners team who produced a documentary on bilingual education (Whitmont 2009).

languages the federal government of Australia introduced bilingual education in 1974, following the O'Grady-Hale report (O'Grady & Hale 1975). Themes of this report were that the success of education programs depended on their integration into the community, and that it was imperative to train and involve Indigenous community members as teachers (Hoogenraad 2001). Since their introduction, bilingual education programs have become an integral part of some communities in the Northern Territory, which have rallied to defend them from attacks by governments.

It is not just the school programs which are on the line here but the survival of Indigenous languages in Australia, which are in grave danger of disappearing. Bilingual education programs give official status to Indigenous languages, encourage children to strengthen their first language, and give bilingual educators an honoured place in schools.

At the same time, by creating a strong link between the community, its culture and the school, bilingual education programs decrease the alienation felt by Indigenous students in English-only schools. For children who are first-language speakers of Indigenous languages, well-run bilingual programs support their learning of the dominant language, English, as well as encouraging the development of their first language. They have no detrimental effect on the learning of English and mainstream subjects, but may in fact enhance it (Bialystok 2001, Lea et al. 2008).

In this paper we show how policy on Indigenous languages is shaped by the mainstream political environment, and by myths about the necessity of children learning only in English rather than their first language. Australia needs a coherent and stable policy at the federal level and in all states and territories based on careful consideration of national and international evidence. We suggest that official recognition of Australia's Indigenous languages would raise the level of understanding about Indigenous languages in the wider community, and would act as a brake on policies that have had consequences for speakers of Indigenous languages.

Over the last 20 years or so, a strong consensus has grown around the importance of maintaining languages and of multilingualism. Mother-tongue instruction improves education (Dutcher & Tucker 1994). UNESCO has come out strongly in favour of both multilingualism and mother tongue instruction (UNESCO 2003), while also arguing that it is essential for the children to have access to the wider society through learning the dominant language in that society, and through learning those things that are necessary for access, such as arithmetic, how the society functions, and how to read and write in the dominant language.

This paper addresses the question of what happens when these principles of the value of multilingualism, the value of the mother tongue in education, and the need for children to learn the dominant language are perceived to conflict, as has happened in the recent decision by the Northern Territory Government to abolish bilingual education. We start with a short summary of the advantages of multilingualism and bilingual education.

22.2 On multilingualism and bilingual education

There seems little question of the value of multilingualism for the encouragement of modern, linguistically diverse and tolerant societies (UNESCO 2003, Principle 11). There are social reasons: recognising the importance of the maintenance of minority languages as a way of maintaining the traditions, self esteem and identity of the minority group, and as a means of improving cross-cultural communication, of connecting with other groups both within and outside the society. Bilingualism also enriches people intellectually,

educationally and culturally. It enables children and adults to communicate across cultures; contributes to improved health (see below); and enhances employment and career prospects. It provides a child with a sense of belonging and identity.

Some cognitive advantages have been claimed for bilingualism (Bialystok 2001), such as better meta-linguistic awareness, and the promotion of classification skills, concept formation, analogical reasoning, visual-spatial skills, and creativity (Purdie et al. 2008), and development of a theory of mind (Mecelli et al. 2004) found 'an increase in the correlates of bilingualism; a recent study (Mecelli et al. 2004) found 'an increase in the density of grey matter in the left inferior parietal cortex of bilinguals, and ... the monolinguals, which is more pronounced in early rather than late bilinguals, and ... the density in this region increases with second-language proficiency but decreases as the age of acquisition increases'.

The advantages to a society of multilingualism have led to the recognition of the importance of bilingual education on several fronts. One key role is in promoting language and cultural maintenance. Equally important is the role of bilingual education for children who do not speak the dominant language. It has been seen as a way of helping them to learn the dominant language effectively, and so to have access to the mainstream society, without at the same time diminishing their ability to live and work in their own community. This is acknowledged in the *Northern Territory Curriculum Framework for English as a Second Language*:

Developing first language competence is important not only for reasons of identity and community but also for developing the cognitive, linguistic and cultural understandings learners need to be able to learn another language (DET 2009:97)

The importance of bilingual education and its role in Indigenous language maintenance have long been recognised. International reports include *Overcoming Inequality: why governance matters*. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009* (UNESCO 2008), and other UNESCO reports (Kosonen 2005, Kosonen et al. 2007). Australian reports include *The National Indigenous Languages Survey 2005* (NILS report) (AIATSIS & FATSIL 2005), *Culture and Heritage: Indigenous languages, Australia* (Henderson & Nash 1997), *Language and Culture: A matter of Survival* (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs 1992), *The Land Still Speaks*, (McKay 1996), and *Indigenous Language Programs in Schools: A way forward* (Purdie et al. 2008).

The alienation felt by many Indigenous people can be ameliorated by connection to their heritage via language programs of various kinds. It is also fundamental to developing the existing linguistic and cultural resources for Indigenous languages (Purdie et al. 2008:192). Improved education is associated with lower levels of child mortality and better nutrition and health (UNESCO 2008:32). The NILS Report (AIATSIS & FATSIL 2005) states that Australian health studies also find that 'language is a key aspect in the care of the young and in social relationships which are the bedrock of good health and safe and happy lives' (p. 42) and that traditional languages are important in the 'relationship between carer and child and its impact on mental and physical health' (p. 101). Thus education which values the minority language is important as it helps to improve child and maternal health, individual incomes, environmental sustainability and economic growth.

The other important aspect of bilingual education relates to the common sense principle that initial school instruction in the mother tongue is good because it builds on what the

children already know (UNESCO 2003, Principle 1). Indeed, a comprehensive research review carried out for the World Bank (Dutcher & Tucker 1994:36) concluded that:

The most important conclusion from the research and experience reviewed in this paper is that when learning is the goal, including that of learning a second language, the child's first language (authors: i.e. his or her mother tongue) should be used as the medium of instruction in the early years of schooling. ... The first language is essential for the initial teaching of reading, and for comprehension of subject matter. It is the necessary foundation for the cognitive development upon which acquisition of the second language is based.

Establishing literacy in the child's first language before developing literacy in English helps to break children's initial learning tasks into two: first they learn to read and write in their first language, while learning to understand and speak English. Then they begin to learn to read and write English. Splitting the learning task into two allows a child, and their teacher, to focus on one major task at a time, that of grasping the idea of reading. If literacy is established in a child's first language, it is easier to switch to another language (Crawford 1997) and the child will also gain a sense of satisfaction, rather than frustration, at being able to read and express himself orally and in writing initially in his first language and later in English (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs 1992:39). Bilingualism in fact can assist acquisition of literacy (Bialystok et al. 2005).

These social, educational, health and cognitive benefits are sound educational reasons for mother tongue instruction, at least in the early years. (UNESCO 2007/2008:131). The right to such education has been recognised internationally - Article 14 section 3 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (which Australia has adopted) states that children have a right to education in their own language. This right has been enshrined in the 2008 Education Act in the Canadian Territory of Nunavut, which, with its small, remote, and predominantly Inuit population, is a close parallel with the Northern Territory of Australia.

But common sense also tells us that it is essential for the children to have access to the wider society through learning the dominant language in that society, and through learning those things that are necessary for access, such as arithmetic, how the society functions, and how to read and write in the dominant language. A growing body of research evidence shows that well-designed bilingual programs are academically effective and support students' acquisition of the dominant second language (UNESCO 2007/2008:120). In Australia, for example, a Victorian primary school, Richmond West, has been running bilingual programs for more than 20 years. In 2008, 86% of the students came from families where the home language was not English (Chinese or Vietnamese), and many were classified as economically and socially disadvantaged. Their 2008 results on the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) were strong in years 3 and 5. In 2009 the school initiated an evaluation by an external researcher. It was found that 'their achievements in language learning have not come at the expense of English-language development' (Beck 2009).

While it is vital that the language of instruction for Indigenous children is through their first language, certain factors may affect the success of the education program. Simply having a bilingual education program does not inevitably lead to the outcome of the children learning the dominant language well, and having access to the wider society. They won't learn effectively in a poorly implemented bilingual education program, or in a bilingual education program which is not supported by the language community, or in a

bilingual education program in a community where parents do not support and require them to attend school.

Thus, when examining the perceived or reported 'failure' of bilingual education in a community, it is important to establish quickly why it has failed - would any program have failed in that community given the lack of resources, the poor implementation, or the lack of community support? But it is also important to scrutinise carefully the reasons for saying that a particular program has failed. Any bilingual education program must have clear and reasonable testable objectives (Baker 2006). It is not reasonable to expect Year-3 ESL background children to have achieved the same mastery of reading and writing English as their monolingual English counterparts.² So what should we expect them to have achieved in English? And, just as important, what should we have expected them to achieve in their first language? It is essential to have standards of first language achievement, and ways of measuring achievement, alongside national benchmarking in the dominant language (Marika 1998).

Failure in the individual case may lead to public condemnation of bilingual education programs, if the general population is uninformed about bilingual education, or indifferent to the advantages of it. Members of the wider society are often hostile to bilingual education, especially if they are mostly monolingual, because they don't see the long-term advantages to a society of multilingualism, instead focusing on the immediate costs of bilingual education. Thus, advocates of bilingual education have long argued that the introduction of bilingual education programs must be accompanied by education of the general population about what bilingual education is (O'Grady & Hale 1975, recommendations 24 and 25). If this does not happen, then the monolingual majority may find it hard to accept the importance to minorities of maintaining their languages, because of a 'monolingual mindset' that it is impossible to maintain a minority language and be a fully participating member of the dominant society. Their hostility may be increased if the graduates of bilingual education programs are not perceived as being proficient in the dominant language.

We turn now to the attacks on the Northern Territory bilingual education programs, which exemplify the public lack of appreciation for multilingualism and lack of understanding of what bilingual education is, and which also show the need for evidence-based policy and for recognition of language rights.

22.3 History of Northern Territory bilingual programs

In the 1960s and 1970s a significant number of children in Western Australia, Northern Territory, Queensland and South Australia who spoke only an Aboriginal language were taught in English by non-Indigenous teachers. Often these teachers had little or no knowledge of the local Indigenous language or culture, and this is still very often the case (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs 1992:38).

In 1972 the then Federal Education Minister, Mr Kim Beazley senior, visited the Hermannsburg Lutheran mission school and saw children being taught in their first language. He noticed that they were not distracted by his presence and that class

² Yet this is precisely what the current Chief Minister of the Northern Territory and the head of his Education Department are now requiring (ABC Four Corners 14th September 2009).

attendance seemed to be high. This was in contrast with most of the other schools he visited where the language of instruction was in English, the class numbers were small and the children were quite distracted. Beazley, and the then Prime Minister, stated that children learn best in their first language and announced a campaign to have Aboriginal children living in Indigenous communities given their primary education in their first language. In December 1972 the federal government launched its policy of self-determination for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders which included a campaign to have children living in communities given primary education in community languages. By 1973 a program of bilingual education was launched in a number of schools in the Northern Territory (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs 1992:38-39).

To support bilingual education programs for Indigenous people in the Northern Territory, the federal government established the School for Australian Linguistics (SAL). The establishment of SAL, while inspired by the late Geoffrey O'Grady and Ken Hale (Black & Breen 2001:161), was a direct result of the Australian Federal Government's self-determination and self-management policy for Indigenous Australians (Caffery 2008:39). At that time SAL's aims included (Black 1984, summary):

- making Indigenous Australians 'self-sufficient in linguistically-related spheres';
- linguistically training Indigenous people so they could 'assist the development of bilingual education, and for other practical scholarly purposes';
- developing creative language skills among Indigenous people; and
- training Indigenous translators and interpreters.

The number of bilingual schools across Australia grew to 25 in the 1980s and 1990s. The Northern Territory had 21, and Western Australia had four (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs 1992:39). Indigenous adults across northern Australia enrolled in SAL courses to gain the necessary skills to support the bilingual programs in the communities.

However, from as early as 1976 there were rumours of the Northern Territory Department of Education closing the program. And from 1980 the Department of Education drastically reduced the support for the program, including reducing support staff – regional linguists, support and professional development for teachers and administrative staff funding for resources including employing local speakers. As Hoogenraad (2001) points out, this resulted in many nominally bilingual classrooms actually being English-only classrooms.

In 1998 opposition to bilingual education won out. There was much distress in Indigenous communities when, on the 1st December 1998, the Minister for Education and Training in the Country-Liberal Party-run government of the Northern Territory announced that 'the bilingual program will progressively make way for the development of ESL (English as a second language) programs' (Media Release, 'English a high priority in bush schools') (Hoogenraad 2001).

The Northern Territory Government also announced its decision to shift \$3 million away from the bilingual programs to a Territory-wide program teaching English as a second language. There was no consultation with Aboriginal educators, the bilingual schools or the Aboriginal communities. There was a swift response from protesters, and a

petition to Parliament with over 3,000 signatures. A leading Yolngu educator, the late Dr R. Marika, made a strong case that critics of bilingual education had failed to consider 'the fact that our children are learning in and through two languages, and learning about two knowledge systems or traditions' (Marika 1998).

The arguments in favour of bilingual education were based on respect for Indigenous languages as part of Indigenous identity, (including pride in passing on language, and importance placed on language in socialisation (Nicholls 2005)), on educational grounds (bilingual education is more effective than monolingual education for children whose first language is not the majority language, i.e. moving from the 'known, the child's first language, to the unknown), on language endangerment grounds (Indigenous languages are endangered, and removing them from schools further endangers them), and finally on human rights grounds (if Indigenous people wish their children to receive education in the Indigenous language, then this should be accepted as a basic right).

The protests resulted in two enquiries being held. The Northern Territory Government engaged Bob Collins to prepare a report, and the Human Rights and Equality Opportunity Commission also conducted an enquiry. These reports highlighted the problems with bilingual education but recommended that the programs continue, and provided recommendations on how to improve the programs.

The Collins report (1999) noted that many people were concerned to retain bilingual programs. While it recognised the diversity of programs labelled 'bilingual education', it did not recommend closing them down. Instead, it recommended renaming them as 'Two-Way learning', making the support from the Department of Education explicit, and including research into using language in the classroom, assessing the programs rigorously, and extending such programs to any community that wanted such programs.

At the same time, serious problems with education of Aboriginal children in remote communities were being identified. The Desert Schools report (Clayton 1999) identified the inadequacy of ESL teaching in seven communities in eastern WA, northern SA and southern NT. Clayton observed that on the one hand Indigenous teachers did not feel confident in ESL methods, and on the other hand non-Indigenous teachers often had too little understanding of the children they were teaching in order to be able to teach effectively by drawing on the students' strengths. Most teachers had inadequate preparation for teaching in Indigenous communities and in ESL methods. The report also noted with concern the mixed results from sending students away from communities to boarding schools.

In the north, Ngukurr was the subject of a study (Senior 2000) which concluded that the school was not doing an adequate job of teaching the children. The school had been fairly stable for 15 years, with Aboriginal principals and many Aboriginal teachers running an unofficial bilingual program with Kriol. But the lack of support and resourcing led in 1998 to a series of non-Aboriginal principals, to a mode of teaching which resulted in Aboriginal teachers leaving the school, and to an apparent large drop in attendance. The school's failure to understand local concerns led to the withdrawal of community participation in the school. Senior's assessment demonstrates again the many reasons for this – chronic ear disease and the staff's inability to use the hearing amplification system, hunger, health issues, and inadequate funding, staffing, and literacy materials. But she highlights the community's deep concern both to maintain their languages and use Kriol in the school and to have their children learn English.

As a result of these reports and protests from Indigenous communities and human rights organisations – locally, nationally and internationally – the Northern Territory Government softened its position. Bilingual programs were allowed to continue but, apart from the

targeted attendance, and the need for children, parents and communities to take responsibility, but did not discuss the fact that many students are second-language learners of English, and that this affects how quickly they learn in schools, and how quickly they master reading and writing in a second language.

Later CIS reports (Hughes 2008) drew attention to the poor results in Indigenous schools, but targeted bilingual education as a major cause for failure in education. Hughes's attack on bilingual education conflated the distinction between schools with explicit bilingual education programs, and those with English programs taught by second-language speakers of English, as in many Arnhem Land schools. The CIS reports were given widespread distribution through *The Australian* newspaper. Their views accorded with those of the Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Mal Brough, and in part with those of the Queensland Aboriginal leader, Noel Pearson, who, while arguing strongly for official recognition of Indigenous languages (Pearson 2007), downplayed their importance in schools (perhaps because in his home state the Department of Education had not encouraged bilingual education).

By 2008 only eight full bilingual programs remained for children whose first language was a traditional Indigenous language.

On 12th September 2008, the Summary Report of the first National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) (MCEETYA 2008) was released.³ The national benchmarks for reading and writing were mainly determined for students who speak English as their first language (DET 2008), and so second-language learners of English were compared with native speakers of English. The questions suggest that little thought was given as to whether the questions tested literacy or knowledge of mainstream culture (Wigglesworth & Simpson 2009). Crucially, the tests do not include achievement in the first language, which, as Marika (1998) argued, is essential for evaluating whether or not the bilingual schools are doing a good job of educating the children.

The 2008 test results confirmed that across the board Indigenous children in remote schools were not achieving acceptable standards of literacy in English and numeracy, that they were doing worse than second-language learners of English from other language backgrounds generally, and that this was particularly obvious in the Northern Territory. There was a quick response from the Northern Territory Education Minister, Marion Sorymgour, implying that remoteness, attendance and ESL problems were the main causes of the poor results. She indicated that the government was investing in Indigenous education, and specifically would be recruiting an extra 200 teachers for remote schools, and implementing programs to work closely with families (Sorymgour 2008a). Undoubtedly there was pressure on the Minister to appear to be doing something.

22.4 The decision to abolish bilingual education

On 13th October 2008, a review of the Northern Territory Intervention was published (Yu et al. 2008). It observed that there was a 'major education crisis in many Northern Territory Aboriginal communities', and repeated the complaint that the recommendations of the Collins review had not been implemented. The authors also stated that bilingual

³ The Second Stage report was not publicly released until just before Christmas (19/12/2008), and it showed quite clearly how poorly children were doing in very remote communities. Unfortunately the results did not include clear comparisons of Indigenous ESL background and so it was impossible to tell if the NT results were worse in very remote areas because they had a greater percentage of ESL students.

name change to 'Two-Way learning', the government did not implement the changes and improvements recommended by the above reports. Several bilingual programs closed even though there was support by communities for the Two-Way learning programs.

The next 10 years saw a flurry of conflicting reports and changes in government and attitudes. In general, Two-Way programs used the traditional language as the medium of instruction, and, to a greater or lesser extent, had initial literacy taught in that language, while children simultaneously learned oral English, before moving to English-medium instruction and English literacy. Most of the teachers who were first-language speakers of Indigenous languages worked in these schools. The programs were watered-down versions of the earlier bilingual programs, and suffered from neglect, marginalisation and reduction in support (DEET & Ramsey 2003, DEET & Glasby 2005, Nicholls 2005). Despite this, students in the programs were reported as doing marginally better on outcomes than students in comparable non-bilingual schools (DEET & Glasby 2005:xii). And of course, unlike the students in the non-bilingual schools, their grasp on their traditional language was being consolidated at school.

Opposition to the bilingual/Two-Way programs continued. The 2003 Ramsey report (DEET & Ramsey 2003:175) challenged the educational reasons for supporting them, taking as the basis for the challenge reported concerns by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people about children's abilities to read and write in English, and doubts about the value of learning to read and write in traditional languages. The need for strong ESL support for the students was discussed. It expressed respect for the identity reasons for supporting languages, but asserted that '[language, maintenance of traditions and renewal activities] need to be established as activities distinct from the core responsibilities of schools' (DEET & Ramsey 2003:174), despite the argument that community-based programs and school-based programs were complementary activities which benefit from collaboration (McConnell et al. 2002).

In contrast to the negative assessment of the Ramsey report, in 2005, the then Northern Territory Minister of Education reassessed the bilingual situation and stated in a parliamentary address that the government intended:

to strongly support whole-of-school approaches to literacy and numeracy teaching over the next four years ... including ... revitalising bilingual education as a whole-of-school approach to improving literacy and numeracy outcomes, and maintaining the focus on preparing teachers to provide high quality teaching to students who do not have English as their first language (Stirling 2005:3)

He then went on to highlight the importance of bilingual education and stated that there is some 'evidence that results from bilingual schools appear generally better than other like schools'. Around the same time, reports began to emerge from the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands in South Australia that the abandonment of Pitjantjatjara bilingual education in the 1990s had not achieved the hoped-for improvement in English language and literacy (Eickelkamp 2006). Neither the claim that bilingual schools performed better, nor the claim that monolingual education had not worked for the Pitjantjatjara, were thoroughly investigated.

Meanwhile, the political climate was changing away from supporting Indigenous peoples' rights to self-determination, towards concern about the many social problems in Indigenous communities. Opinion pieces on the state of Aboriginal education in remote communities were produced by members of the Centre for Independent Studies (CIS) who had no training or experience in education (Storry 2006, Storry 2007). Early papers

education was an uncontested 'success factor' in education achievement, which, along with some other success factors, were lacking in NT schools, largely due to failure by the government to invest in the schools.

On 14th October 2008, the Northern Territory Minister for Education and Training, without warning or consultation, announced 'a restructure of the Department of Education and Training, that would have a greater focus on teaching English'. There was no accompanying material explaining how this restructure was to take place, or indicating what resources would be put in place to improve attendance, literacy and numeracy. The only specific initiative announced was that:

....the first four hours of education in all Northern Territory schools will be conducted in English. I am absolutely committed to making the changes needed to improve attendance rates and lift the literacy and numeracy results in our remote Indigenous schools. (Smyngour 2008b)

Reducing the use of an Indigenous language to the last hour or so of the day meant the dismantling of the bilingual education programs, and overturned part of the Indigenous Languages and Culture section of the *Northern Territory Curriculum Framework*, in which, while the terms 'bilingual' or 'two-way' were avoided, it was stated that

Language Maintenance programs are for first language speakers of an Indigenous language. Their purpose is to extend and develop learners' first language skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing. In most [Language Maintenance] programs, children will learn initial literacy through their first language and use literacy as a tool for their first language study throughout their schooling. (DET 2009:484)

The Minister acknowledged 'as valid the criticism that there have not been enough teachers sent to remote and Indigenous communities where English is a second or third language, who have qualifications in teaching English as a Second Language' (Smyngour 2008c), but did not indicate specific measures to improve this. Her public statements showed that she thought of bilingual education only as a means for maintaining Indigenous languages, and not as a means for helping children understand what was happening in the classroom. It also appeared that she (or her department) were concerned about the cost of having two teachers in bilingual classrooms, one a speaker of the Indigenous language, and one a speaker of English. Remarks she made suggested that she did not understand what it means to come to school as a second-language learner of English, or what the role of the first language is in a well-functioning bilingual school. In a later meeting (February 2009) with 'Friends of bilingual learning', a lobby group for bilingual education, she indicated that she believed that bilingual education could work only if the class was taught by one fully bilingual teacher, and that many Indigenous teachers were not fully bilingual.

The Minister said that she understood the importance of maintaining Indigenous languages and cultures, and that the decision would be controversial. The resulting controversy did indeed divert attention from the Yu report's findings on education, which received little media attention.

The lack of detail as to what the Minister planned, and as to the basis for her decision, created shock, fear and outrage among community members, school councils and professionals involved in education and language, the Council of Government School Organisations, the Australian Council of TESOL Associations, the Australian Educational Union, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Tom Calma, and the NT Opposition party. (For more details see Simpson et al 2009.)

After criticism the Minister agreed to a transition year for implementing the policy. In fact in most schools the policy was implemented from early in 2009. In February 2009, Marion Smyngour lost the Education portfolio in a Cabinet reshuffle, and then abruptly resigned all her portfolios on health grounds. Meanwhile, the principals of the bilingual schools mostly agreed to scrap their bilingual education programs, sometimes against the wishes of the remote Indigenous community. It is not clear whether the principals received advice from specialists in teaching English as a second language. Little detail was given as to how the transition was to be managed, or as to why it was believed that that teaching in English will be more successful than the previous programs.

By September 2009 the Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs was able to announce that 97 extra teachers had been employed in the NT (Macklin 2009). She did not mention how many were local Indigenous teachers. While figures are not available on turnover and training, informal feedback⁴ suggests that the first batches of these teachers received training in literacy teaching (Accelerated Literacy) but not in ESL methods. It also suggests that some of the first recruits did not last long in state schools.

In September 2009 the summary NAPLAN results for the Northern Territory were released. These showed an increase in participation (which reflected intense efforts by schools to get children to take the tests), but no significant changes in any of the results for any year. This is not surprising, since the average levels of the new participants may have been lower, and also because there appeared to be no clear direction from the Department as to how the children's education was to be improved.

On 14th September 2009 Four Corners aired a documentary on bilingual education, focusing on Lajamanu (Whitmont 2009). The reporter, Debbie Whitmont, asked the Chief Minister who was also Education Minister:

"DEBBIE WHITMONT (to Paul Henderson): Is it fair to expect that children who are trying to learn in a second language should meet the same benchmarks at the same time as children in other parts of the country who are learning in their first language?"

PAUL HENDERSON: Absolutely."

It seems clear that he had no understanding of how difficult this would be. Whitmont also interviewed the new CEO of the Department of Education, Gary Barnes. On the program he was quoted as saying:

"GARY BARNES: We absolutely want our young Indigenous people to become proficient in the use of English language... It's the language of learning, it's the language of living, and it's the language of the main culture in Australia. Um so it's being explicit around the importance of that."

In an extended interview published on the website, Barnes said that the Department valued Indigenous languages, and that Indigenous teaching assistants would be supporting other teachers in teaching English, by explaining ideas through their own languages. He did not discuss how this would be done, and how it would be supported systematically.

Barnes also argued that the bilingual programs had failed because the results were no better than other programs, because the attendance was no better, and because there was high teacher turnover. He did not compare these with attendance and teacher turnover in

⁴ Friends of Bilingual Learning website: September 12-21 2009. Discussion http://groups.google.com.au/group/fohlmail/browse_thread/thread/539e2b39e839bd6

other remote schools. Instead, he said that these last two points indicated that neither the communities nor the teachers were passionately behind the programs. This was in contrast with the strong support for 'Two-Way' bilingual programs expressed by Djuwalpi Marika, Chairman of Yambirpa School Council, in an extended interview on the program's website. The interviews left little hope for a change of mind by the NT Department of Education.

22.5 Why bilingual education seemingly failed

There is no question that the students in the remote bilingual schools performed poorly on the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests in 2008 and 2009. This was not unexpected, since the tests are designed for first-language speakers of English, and for people who are familiar with city dwelling life, with artefacts such as letter boxes and newspaper boys (Wigglesworth & Simpson 2009). What was asserted by the government was that the remote bilingual school students performed significantly worse than their counterparts in comparable English-only schools (i.e. schools with large enrolments of first-language speakers of Indigenous languages) on these tests. Material was put up by the government purporting to compare the performance of bilingual schools with allegedly comparable non-bilingual schools. Devlin discusses several flaws in the comparison. He concludes:

The evidence put forward on November 26 [2008] in support is deficient in at least three main ways since it is based on: (1) a poorly selected sample, thereby threatening the external validity of the findings; (2) an incomplete data set and (3) incorrect data treatment, which naturally leads to questions about the reliability of the analysis. (Devlin 2009:13)

A fourth deficiency is that at least three of the allegedly comparable schools (Alekrenge, Borroloola, Ngukurr) are in communities where the children's first language is mostly an English-based creole. Children in those communities have a head start on English vocabulary.⁵

No explanation was given as to why bilingual education should have failed (if it failed) in the NT, when it has well established social, education, health and cognitive benefits listed in the first section of this paper, and when there are sound educational reasons for establishing literacy in a child's first language before developing literacy in English, at least in the early years (UNESCO 2008:78). But while it is vital that the language of instruction for Indigenous children is through their first language, certain factors may affect the success of the education program.

As argued above, schools in these communities face similar problems to those of other remote Indigenous schools: high teacher turnover; declining numbers of Indigenous teachers and teaching assistants; poor attendance by pupils; health problems, hunger, poverty (Senior 2000), chronic ear problems and insufficient English to understand what was being said (Lowell & Devlin 1998/1999, Moses & Wigglesworth 2008), coupled with the lack of ESL-trained teachers in many schools (Clayton 1999, DEET & Ramsey 2003). Circumstances such as cultural commitments, a high rate of mobility, alcoholism, violence, poverty, poor health, the lack of recognition of Indigenous languages, lack of vernacular

⁵ This is not to deny the likelihood that the children face other, perhaps more intractable, problems in learning standard English.

resources, especially written vernacular materials, the lack of appropriately trained teachers, and poverty are all factors that severely affect or prevent Indigenous people's education (Caffery 2008:153, King & Schielmann 2004, UNESCO 2008). Here we discuss just a few of these constraining factors but details on the other constraining factors can be found in the numerous reports mentioned in this paper.

Hampden-Thompson and Johnston (2006) examined data collected from 20 high-income countries as part of the 2003 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), and found that:

In the majority of countries included in the study, 15-year old students who spoke the language of the test at home had higher mathematics literacy achievement scores, on average, than students who did not speak the language of the test at home (Hampden-Thompson & Johnston 2006:2)

Students who don't speak standard English need extra help to overcome the language barrier. However it is not unusual in Australian remote area schools for teachers to lack ESL or cross-cultural training. This is despite the many recommendations for teachers to have appropriate training prior to working in a remote area school which have been made since at least 1990 in Australia. For example, the *Matter of Survival* report, recommendations 12 to 14, argues that all teachers should 'be adequately prepared by pre-service training to appreciate the special needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs 1992:53), and

Teachers should receive cross-cultural training and be aware of the sociolinguistic differences between Indigenous peoples. More specialised training should be provided to teachers before they are posted to traditional communities particularly in the methods of English as a Second Language (ESL). Teaching assistants should also be trained in this area. All teachers should also be provided with in-service training to provide further specialist skills. (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs 1992:54).

The training opportunities for remote Indigenous teachers and teaching assistants have been drastically reduced over the past decades. As noted above, SAL (now the Centre for Australian Languages and Linguistics (CALL), a centre in Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (Batchelor)), was established in 1974 to provide training for remote Indigenous people to learn the necessary skills to support bilingual schools. However, Batchelor, like most other educational institutions, is under pressure to develop higher-level courses because the higher the level of the course the more funding the institution receives from the funding bodies. But higher-level courses required higher literacy skills (Caffery 2008:127-128). Unfortunately, many remote Indigenous adults who speak a traditional language have had little opportunities during their childhood to attend school (Kral & Schwab 2003:7) and therefore they often do not have the literacy skills to be accepted into the courses.

Another factor that constrains bilingual education in some areas is the lack of vernacular literacy materials, and the support and funding to produce the materials. The *National Indigenous Languages Survey 2005* (AIATSIS & FATSIL 2005) clearly provides recommendations on how this can be achieved, stating that the support for language and cultural materials needed to implement sound bilingual programs can be sourced through supporting Regional Indigenous Language Centres (AIATSIS & FATSIL 2005:133). The

Regional Indigenous Language Centres could, working through a National Indigenous Language Centre (if implemented as recommended in the AIATSIS and FATSIL 2005 report), supported by, and supporting, state and territory education departments, provide valuable language materials and could also direct financial support to community language projects and language policy and priorities.

Bilingual education has not been as successful as some initially thought it would be, because the barriers to success are complex and interconnected. These barriers include, but are not limited to:

- lack of ESL teachers;
- lack of consultation with parents in remote Indigenous communities;
- lack of supporting resources including funding;
- poor health;
- poverty;
- failure by governments to spend equitably on Indigenous communities; and
- failure to develop benchmarks for success in the first language and as second language learners of English

Australian governments need to consider the educational evidence for and against using the Indigenous language as a medium of instruction. They need to consider the many causes underlying Indigenous children's knowledge of spoken and written English. Fixing one issue will not fix the overall problem. It is vital that all the issues are addressed simultaneously, not in isolation, to make a real difference. It is also vital that action occurs as soon as possible, as Indigenous children's futures depend on it.

We have just touched on a few of the issues communities delivering bilingual education programs face. The issues spread across many disciplines, from curriculum development, literacy, community and government policy, and extend to the influence of the wider community of Australia. Governments need to develop and implement policies on effective education programs specifically designed for children who do not speak English as a first language and the documentation and maintenance of Indigenous languages. Legislative action may be needed to ensure that governments must look at the evidence, before dismantling programs or introducing policies that damage the rights of speakers of Indigenous languages (Nicholls 2002).

22.6 Language policy and bilingual education

Shannon (1999) argues that the lack of a language policy in the USA made it easy for the Secretary of Education during the Reagan administration, William Bennett, to move towards a policy of English monolingualism, by casting bilingual education only as a matter of identity, and casting it as detrimental to language proficiency in the dominant language. Bennett said 'a sense of cultural pride cannot come at the price of proficiency in English, our common language' (Bennett 1985 [1992]:363 cited in Shannon 1999:182).

The lack of a language policy in Australia has had similar detrimental effects. The new policy of conducting the first four hours of school in the English language will severely affect first-language speakers of Indigenous languages. It has been adopted with little consultation, without providing solid justification for its adoption, and without indication as to how it would be implemented. This is an instructive example as to why Australia

needs policy which is made consultatively and based on evidence, as opposed to reactively. It is also an example of why we need a guarantee of language rights – which would mean that changes in policy which affect language rights must take language rights into consideration.

A partial model for developing Indigenous language policy is provided in NSW. As a direct result of Michael Walsh's advocacy for putting NSW languages back on the map and back in use, NSW broke new ground in supporting Aboriginal language curriculum across schools. The NSW State Government is implementing Indigenous language and culture curriculum and this work is closely linked with the NSW Aboriginal Language Research and Resource Centre. Language programs are also being supported in some South Australian and Western Australian schools, but they generally rely on meagre funding, such as the Languages Other Than English (LOTE) programs and Australian Government programs directed towards local Indigenous education (AIATSIS & FATSIL 2005:35).

Other Australian states and territories now need to follow the NSW example and offer relevant and appropriate education in remote Indigenous schools. The evidence provided in this paper suggests that good bilingual programs can and do achieve good literacy outcomes and improve a child's health and socio economic status. We strongly support the idea that when a government develops educational policy it should not only consider the evidence, it should also consider what effect the policy will have on speakers of Indigenous languages.

The following fundamental three rights were signed by Australia this year, when the government signed the UN *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples*. They are the right to appropriate education, the right for communities to have a say in how their children are educated, and the right to maintain Indigenous languages.

22.6.1 The right to appropriate education

What we mean by 'appropriate' here is a recognition that children who do not speak English are disadvantaged in classrooms where they are taught only in English (UNESCO 2003:14). They need a lot of support in learning English. Mother tongue-medium instruction programs as in the NT bilingual education programs are a way of overcoming this.

At the same time we must also recognise that bilingual education programs are not a magic bullet. They can fail for the same reasons that any school program fails. They can also fail if English is not taught adequately in the schools, or if there are not enough qualified Indigenous teachers to teach the program properly in the school. But none of these are inherent problems with the model of bilingual education.

Since international research supports bilingual education and since internationally no other type of program has gained equal respect and recognition, it follows that if a bilingual education program fails, the evaluators must look hard at all the factors involved rather than concluding that bilingual education as a model is the problem.

22.6.2 The right for communities to have a say in how their children are educated

Article 14.1 of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples* passed by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2007 recognises the right of Indigenous people to run their own education systems in their own languages. Stronger protection is offered

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by Article 14.3, which not only allows Indigenous people to run schools in their own languages, but also requires the state to help them 'when possible'.

There are good practical reasons for this; the education that children receive is likely to be better if their family can see that the benefit of the education outweighs the cost to the family, and if they are involved in helping them achieve that education. When the mother tongue is seen to be valued at school, children and their parents are more likely to feel positive about learning English. In any case, experience suggests that if governments make decisions on education which do not involve the communities concerned, these decisions are likely to lead to long-term failure.

22.6.3 The right to maintain Indigenous languages

The right of communities, especially Indigenous communities, to keep and strengthen their Indigenous languages are protected by the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples*, as well as by Articles 26 and 27 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* and the UNESCO General Conference of the *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*.

While maintaining languages in the family and the community are obviously the key to language maintenance, language programs in schools are recognised as an important part of effective strategies to maintain Indigenous languages. Indigenous people have recognised and supported this role for 'Two-Way' school programs using Indigenous languages since before the introduction of bilingual education in Northern Territory schools in 1974.

22.7 Conclusion

Of course language rights are only as strong as the implementation of relevant policies. However, unless there is explicit protection in law, Indigenous communities have no control over government policies for matters that go to the heart of their children's education and the maintenance of their languages.

The misguided decision by the Northern Territory Government to dismantle bilingual education in 2008 might have been reconsidered and the negative outcomes on Indigenous languages and Indigenous education avoided, had a policy framework mandating attention to evidence and language rights been in place.

Rights and policies are not of course the whole of the story when it comes to providing good education and maintaining languages. But without them enormous advances built up over decades such as bilingual education can be wiped away by the single announcement of a government minister. Walsh (2005:308) rightly argues that 'it takes a tremendous commitment on the part of the Indigenous communities and those who might assist them' to build up such programs. For the sake of Indigenous children, and their heritage, it is most certainly worth the effort.

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