

# PARAMETERS FOR A TYPOLOGY FOR REVIVAL LANGUAGES

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As language revival and revitalisation rapidly become the primary modes of community-based work in Aboriginal Australia, the need for a theoretical foundation for the linguistic scenarios which emerge is becoming increasingly evident. While linguists and communities have been developing approaches and solutions for commonly-encountered issues, the various outcomes and stages for the languages themselves are as yet insufficiently understood in the wider academic arena as well as by communities starting out. A detailed explication of the range of characteristics of revival languages would be of considerable benefit, at once theorising and thereby validating this emergent type of language, while on the practical side providing communities and linguists with a readily accessible view of the likely road ahead (Eira In press).

An initial investigation of the possible parameters for such a typology indicates a range of potentially productive contributing sources. Research into other emerging languages such as pidgins, creoles and hybrid languages offers fruitful comparisons, while related areas of theory including language change and contact effects clearly have useful insights to contribute (Aikhenvald 2007, Goodfellow & Alfred 2002, Langlois 2004, Zuckermann 2006). The analyses and perspectives of linguists working in language revival, available both through publications (Amery 2000, Ash et al 2003, Walsh 2005) and through early responses to a survey being conducted as part of the present project, set out major salient factors which distinguish these languages from related types. An intensive period of community interviewing completes the picture, providing a user-centric indication of how revival languages are implemented on the ground.

This paper will discuss the justification for developing a typology of revival languages, the need for and effects of incorporating community input at this level, and emerging parameters for a typology of revival languages. At this point it seems that, in order to fully account for the languages now in use and in process, the usual scope of a 'typology' will need to be expanded to include dimensions more commonly assigned to sociolinguistic and applied linguistics. The pathways of revival, its media and participants, the goals and limits of its implementation, the nature of its starting resources, and the language attitudes of those involved, all play a significant part in determining specific linguistic aspects of the languages as spoken and written.

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