Grammar rules, OK?
What works when teaching a highly endangered Aboriginal language versus a stronger language?

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Abstract. This paper examines the pedagogy of teaching an Aboriginal language under revival such as Ngarrindjeri, versus a stronger language, such as Pitjantjatjara—both languages of South Australia. It challenges the current recommended methodologies based on theory inspired by teaching European and Asian languages, which are invariably spoken fluently by language teachers. These communicative and/or functional approaches are often not possible for the revival situation, particularly if there are no fluent speakers or teachers, and the main source of language texts are written. For this reason, the use of the traditional Grammar Translation Method, once used successfully to teach text-based languages such as Latin and Classical Greek, is arguably a very useful approach for the revival situation. The paper explores the different approaches to teaching languages, and challenges teachers' fears of criticism from advisers driven by theory that sees 'eclectic' as a dirty word.

Keywords. language revival, grammar translation method, Ngarrindjeri, Pitjantjatjara, language teaching methodology, language pedagogy

Anthropological linguistics, no less than anthropology itself, is "a child of Western imperialism". […] In effect, anthropology and anthropological linguistics became disciplines in which Westerners studied, published, and built teaching and research careers around the cultural and linguistic wealth of non-Western peoples.

(Ken Hale, 1972)

How do we recognize the shackles that tradition has placed upon us? For if we can recognize them, we are also able to break them.

(Franz Boas, 1938)

1. Introduction

Since 2003 I have been working in South Australia with the Ngarrindjeri community, of the Lower Lakes and Coorong region, in reviving their language. Due to community demand, we began teaching TAFE language classes in 2007, and with the best of intentions have tried to adopt sound language teaching pedagogy—but with mixed success. How do you "make natural texts" and "create dialogues" when there are no fluent speakers, and the Elders only remember 400 words and a couple of sentences? And how do you develop fluency when the old written source documents are lacking, and contain few complex sentences? Since 2010 I have also been attending Pitjantjatjara language classes, taught by a master teacher, Paul Eckert. Pitjantjatjara, spoken in the remote north-west of the state, is the only language in South Australia that is still being acquired as a first language by children.[1] It has been fascinating to compare the various teaching methodologies that do and don't work for these contrasting language situations.

In this paper I will discuss the challenges of teaching adults a language which is being revived and has no fluent speakers, compared to the possible pedagogical practices of teaching a strong language which has fluent speakers, and a fluent teacher. My focus will be the teaching of adult classes, although there are implications for the teaching of languages to children. When I began planning this

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[1] The close dialect Yankunytjatjara is being replaced by Pitjantjatjara, with the younger generation not learning the slight lexical and phonological differences between the two dialects.

paper my intention was to concentrate on the differing **pedagogical** aspects of teaching a strong language versus a language under revival. But as I unpacked the differences it became increasingly evident that it is important to discuss the relevant **linguistic** and **social** aspects of the two contrasting language situations, particularly because they influence the pedagogical choices made.

I also understand that the circumstances of every language program in Aboriginal Australia is different, and each brings its own sets of challenges and rewards, so the conclusions I draw may not apply to every situation. But for the purposes of this paper, I will be drawing from my experiences in South Australia in teaching the newly accredited course, TAFE Certificate III in Learning an Endangered Aboriginal Language, to adult Ngarrindjeri students in 2010-2011. I will contrast this with the Pitjantjatjara adult classes I attended in a Summer School in 2010, offered by the University of South Australia, and the weekly night classes offered by the School of Languages, both taught by Paul Eckert, often alongside Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara tutors.

2. Reflections on language teaching theory

I will begin by first reflecting on two conference presentations I have attended in the last couple of years, each given by experienced and specialist language teachers. Both presentations made observations about the nature of language teaching textbooks in use in schools, and the pedagogical approaches they espoused (see Morgan *et al.* 2011; and Mickan, 2010). They both observed a clear chronological progression in the adopted teaching approaches used over the years in language classrooms, with the assumption that the later approaches were a clear improvement on previous approaches.

Morgan *et al.* (2011), speaking at the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Association (AFMLTA) conference, listed the following progression:

1900s to 1950s: Grammar Translation Method (GTM)

- with a focus on points of grammar with passages for translation;

- and an emphasis on reading and writing.

1950s and 1960s: Audio Lingual Method

- with a focus on listening and speaking tasks;

- and a use of language laboratories.

1960s and 1970s: Notional-Functional Method

- with a focus on notions or ideas, concepts and topics;

- and an emphasis on functions served by the language being learned.

1980s onwards: Communicative Language Learning

- organised around topics, with exercises to promote meaningful understanding for communication.

Present: Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning

- with a focus on language as part of a social and cultural system;

- uses a range of modern approaches.

The first, supposedly archaic, method listed above is the Grammar Translation Method (GTM). Of this method, Morgan *et al.* stated in their presentation: the GTM approach was used up to the 1960s, and had "little consideration of applicability to 'use' in real, lived contexts", and "no consideration of suitable method" for the Australian learner's context. This may be so for the modern language[2] situations about which these scholars are concerned, namely the teaching of Indonesian to school students, and for Mickan, the teaching of German in schools. But, for the situations I am concerned with, I want to declare up-front that I unashamedly use the so-called out-dated Grammar Translation Method (GTM) when teaching the Ngarrindjeri language to people whose language hasn't been used in full grammatical sentences for nearly fifty years. Furthermore, elements of this approach are also used regularly by Paul Eckert, as

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[2] The term "modern language" is used throughout this paper in the same sense as used by the AFMLTA (Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations), which sees languages as either "modern" or "Classical". This usage, however, is contestable and does not adequately recognise the current situation of languages under revival in Australia.

he formally teaches aspects of the Pitjantjatjara language to inquiring adult minds. His translation exercises and grammar explanations greatly assist his adult class as we struggle to understand the (very regular) grammar rules of the strongest Aboriginal language in the state, and the complexity of its grammar, particularly at the discourse level.

The complex pedagogical topic, of when and why there have been changes in approaches over the years for the teaching of languages, is beyond the scope of this paper, but I will digress just briefly here to define and discuss some of the methods mentioned above. I will also indulge by making the general observation that the movement away from the explicit teaching of grammar over the years has been made in the context of teaching modern languages. But the situation we often find ourselves in today in Australia, when we are teaching languages that are being revived, demands that we reassess our chosen methodology. This is because we often find ourselves reviving languages invariably from written sources, and often with no fluent speakers from whom the language can be learnt.

Much of the following explanation of language teaching methods is drawn from Tim Bowen, the much published Slavic language teacher and English-as-a-Foreign Language (EFL) specialist. Like me, Bowen still sees value in the Grammar Translation Method for teaching languages today, but in association with other methods, such as the Communicative Approach. He explains GTM as follows:

> The basic approach is to analyze and study the grammatical rules of the language, usually in an order roughly matching the traditional order of the grammar of Latin, and then to practise manipulating grammatical structures through the means of translation both into and from the mother tongue. The method is very much based on the written word and texts are widely in evidence.

Bowen argues that the principle features of GTM "have been central to language teaching throughout the ages and are still valid today".[3] But the shift away from a focus on grammar in language teaching came in 1972, according to Bowen, with the British linguist D.A. Wilkins's publication that analysed languages in terms of

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[3] See Bowen's article "Teaching approaches: the grammar-translation method" at: http://www.onestopenglish.com/support/methodology/teaching-approaches/teaching-approaches-the-grammar-translation-method/146493.article. [See "One Stop English" site, Macmillan Publishers 2000-2012, accessed 11 May 2012.]

"the communicative meanings that learners would need in order to express themselves and to understand effectively". This was followed in 1976 with his "Notional Syllabuses" with a focus on "how language could be categorized on the basis of notions such as quantity, location and time, and functions such as making requests, making offers and apologizing".[4]

This new approach to describing languages, for language learners, has influenced language teaching methodology ever since. It is methodologies that I believe need to be challenged in the modern context of language revival. Bowen suggests most teachers today would also use aspects of the Communicative Approach, but in the "broader sense", whereby "tasks are completed by means of interaction with other learners", with an emphasis on "completing the task successfully through communication with others rather than on the accurate use of form". Bowen goes on to say the adoption of the Communicative Approach was a progressive development in language teaching as the "emphasis switched from the mechanical practice of language patterns associated with the [earlier] Audiolingual Method" to tasks and activities that "engaged the learner in more meaningful and authentic language use".[5]

Bowen seems to be promoting an integrated approach when teaching modern languages today, advocating a methodology that he calls Task-based Learning (TBL). The Notional Functional philosophy was a precursor to this methodology. With TBL, Bowen explains: "The primary focus of classroom activity is the task […] an activity in which students use language to achieve a specific outcome. The activity reflects real life and learners focus on meaning." [6]

In advocating an integrated approach to language teaching, which I myself wholeheartedly endorse, Bowen writes:

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[4] See Bowen's article "Teaching approaches: functional approaches in EFL/ ESL" at:
http://www.onestopenglish.com/support/methodology/teaching-approaches/teaching-approaches-functional-approaches-in-efl/-esl/146492.article
[5] See Bowen's article "Teaching Approaches: the communicative classroom" at:
http://www.onestopenglish.com/support/methodology/teaching-approaches/teaching-approaches-the-communicative-classroom/146489.article
[6] See Bowen's article "Teaching Approaches: task-based learning" at:
http://www.onestopenglish.com/support/methodology/teaching-approaches/teaching-approaches-task-based-learning/146502.article

> Learners who are used to a more traditional approach based on a grammatical syllabus may find it difficult to come to terms with the apparent randomness of TBL, but if TBL is integrated with a systematic approach to grammar and lexis, the outcome can be a comprehensive, all-round approach that can be adapted to meet the needs of all learners.[7]

Bowen also writes, from the context of teaching modern languages on the other side of the world, that:

> Without a sound knowledge of the grammatical basis of the language it can be argued that the learner is in possession of nothing more than a selection of communicative phrases which are perfectly adequate for basic communication but which will be found wanting when the learner is required to perform any kind of sophisticated linguistic task.[8]

I argue in this paper that the Grammar Translation Method, and variations on this rather traditional method of language teaching, has very special relevance for the learner of Aboriginal languages today, and in a variety of language situations. It is actually very applicable to real life contexts and purposes for Aboriginal people who are reclaiming their languages from old grammars that can only be found in written sources (see Amery 2000:166). One of the main functions being served by Ngarrindjeri (and many of its neighbouring languages that are also being revived) is to name rooms, buildings, streets, parks and organisations, and this can only be done through the Grammar Translation Method. It never ceases to amaze me how much language can be learnt through this process.

3. Some real life teaching examples

I want to make the point up-front here, that much of what I discuss in this paper draws from my experiences of teaching languages to adults. What I imply may not be the most effective way of teaching Aboriginal languages to children. But I am

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[7] See Bowen's article "Teaching Approaches: task-based learning" at:
http://www.onestopenglish.com/support/methodology/teaching-approaches/teaching-approaches-task-based-learning/146502.article
[8] See Bowen's article "Teaching Approaches: the grammar-translation method" at:
http://www.onestopenglish.com/support/methodology/teaching-approaches/teaching-approaches-the-grammar-translation-method/146493.article

advocating an integrated or eclectic approach, and I am sure there are elements of the grammar of Aboriginal languages that could be explicitly explained to students within secondary schools, in an understandable way, within the context of task-based learning.

Recently, our Ngarrindjeri adult class was asked to give a Ngarrindjeri name for the new Nursing and Community Health Centre in Murray Bridge. The students came up with five alternatives, then did a back-translation[9] of each one to see which phrase best encapsulated the true function of the centre. They finally chose the phrase:

Nanaw-amaldar-il	*palak*	*tumbi-warr-ur-ambi*
caring-doers-ERGATIVE	people	alive-make-NOMINALISER-for

'[Place for] carers making people well'

The actual process of coming up with the alternative phrases was led by the more advanced students in the class, and was a very practical exercise, as well as a huge learning exercise about Ngarrindjeri grammar.

Another key function being served by languages under revival is "public performance", particularly in dance and song. The Ngarrindjeri people with whom I have been working over the years have formed a couple of singing groups or choirs. One of the very first songs the initial choir performed in public was the popular and very old and familiar hymn *The Old Rugged Cross*. We often perform this song at public events, particularly at funerals, and we get constant requests for recordings of our songs in language. The way we translated each of the verses of this much loved hymn was by the Grammar Translation Method. The process was slow, but was a very effective tool for learning the language, and through the constant performance of this song the adult students have cemented

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[9] The process of doing a "back translation" is now a key element of our translation activities. We try to look at the text we have translated from English into Ngarrindjeri with fresh eyes, and translate it back into English. If the back translation conveys the original meaning and concept across, we know we have done an adequate job.

in their brains the many words and phrases they came up with in the translation exercise. The hymn begins:

War-itji-war   ngurli-war
high-it-high.on hill-high.on
 'On a hill far away'

Thanggalun   rawul   yapi
stands   old   wood/cross
'Stood an old rugged cross'

Many a time, when we need expressions for other translation exercises, we will find ourselves recalling the Ngarrindjeri lines of this now very familiar hymn, and adapting them for a new purpose.[10]

Yet another request received by our TAFE class recently was to provide a translation of the Ngurunderi Dreaming narrative, which is the creation story of the Murray River and Coorong region, and the many fish that swim its waters. In 2011, the Murray Bridge Council commissioned an artist to produce nine mosaic scenes for an installation which tells the Ngurunderi story. Our class was asked to produce the nine accompanying plaques that were to tell the entire story in the Ngarrindjeri language. So we approached the task by giving each one of our students a plaque each, to be translated from the English version provided.

This taxing exercise demanded that each student work out how to translate many tricky phrases and complex sentences in the language. It required that they grasp constructions such as relative clauses with transitive and intransitive verbs, and the use of nominalised verbs, plus the formation of complex predicates with

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[10] The first line of this hymn was taken in part from one of the many example sentences provided in the quality sketch grammar produced by H. A. E. Meyer in 1843. This resource, which includes a large vocabulary, has proved invaluable for the Ngarrindjeri language revival process. More information on the Ngarrindjeri revival, told from the perspective of the Ngarrindjeri women, can be seen on the website address of the AIATSIS conference in 2009 where the women concluded their presentation by singing *The Old Rugged Cross.* See the paper presentation by M-A. Gale, E. McHughes, P. Williams & V. Koolmatrie called: "Lakun Ngarrindjeri Thunggari: weaving the Ngarrindjeri language back to health", at: http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/research/conf2009/papers/LRE1.html#gale

causative or inchoative verb suffixes. Although the exercise was at times overwhelming, it became an extremely rewarding learning experience.[11] Interestingly, the entire process demonstrated to the students the fact that the Ngarrindjeri language, and its complex grammar, actually lends itself to the grammar constructions required in Dreaming stories. Many of the plaques included constructions demanding the inchoative form, such as: "His canoe became the Milky Way", or "They two became the Pages Island" or "It became a callop fish" etc.

Plaques 5 and 8 below demonstrate the types of challenges the class was faced with:

Plaque 5.
One night Ngurunderi smelt bony bream cooking. This fish was forbidden to women. He was angry and he knew it was from the camp of his two wives who had run away. His two huts became two hills and he stood on them and placed his canoe into the night sky where it became the Milky Way.

Yamalaitji ngendi Ngurunderil pendur thukerar, namurmil. Yikai ma:mi tarnau mi:minar-ambi. Ngurunderi elembi nhraldi, kitji nglelur-itji pulgi-nendi kinawi nginbulur nap-engk-ald. Kinawi tjerang-engk ngurlengk-walembi wunyitji thanggalur kengkun-angk wunyil pinpur kinawi yu:ki ngendi wayirri-ungai kiyau kitji Wayirri Yu:ki-walembi.

Plaque 8.
Ngurunderi heard his wives splashing and laughing near Kings Point. Near Cape Jervis Ngurunderi called out in a voice of thunder for the sea to rise up. His two wives fought the water until they could swim no more and drowned. Their bodies became the Pages Islands.

Ngurunderil kungur kinawi nap-engk plawalun, ka:rnkun-engk mungau Walderineind. Mungau Parrewar-angk Ngurunderi yakai thunggar mantal-luk yarl-ambi "Pingkelar-engun-ungai ba:rekar!" Kinawi nap-engkul mendhun ba:rekar kengk wrukur tarnalo wuny-engk mirpur. Maralangk-walembi-engk.

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[11] Note, this exercise was part of a Certificate III level course for adults, and I acknowledge it could be off-putting for some students, and for those who find grammar overwhelming, but I argue that a knowledge of grammar is necessary for those Aboriginal people leading the revival process. Yes, the presence of a linguist is necessary in the first instance, but I have found there are students up to the challenge, and they are the teachers of the future.

4. The sociolinguistics of the revival situation

I will now outline, in general terms, the contrasting sociolinguistic situations that inevitably influence the approaches adopted when teaching a language in a revival situation, such as Ngarrindjeri, compared to teaching a language still spoken fluently, such as Pitjantjatjara. But I would like to emphasise that there are some approaches that can be used effectively for both situations; in fact some features of Aboriginal languages demand certain common approaches be used when teaching adults. These will be discussed later in this paper. But in discussing the inevitable differences below, some of the points made may seem fairly obvious, for the two contrasting contexts, but I think they are still worth articulating, particularly because the revival situation is relatively new in Australia, and does present considerable challenges for teachers and students alike.

4.1 Teacher not fluent in revival situation

The most obvious pedagogical difference between teaching a language under revival versus a strong language such as Pitjantjatjara, is that the teacher is (usually) a fluent speaker for the strong language. In South Australia, there are only a few languages under revival that potentially have fluent teachers, such as Adnyamathanha, Wirangu and possibly Arabana and Dieri, and these speakers are often not available or well enough to teach. Generally in South Australia, the teacher of a language under revival is not a fluent speaker. This has the obvious implication of students not having the regular opportunity of hearing the language being spoken or modelled by a fluent speaker. The students learning a language under revival cannot ask the teacher how to say or construct certain expressions. The teacher of a revival language is often only one or two steps ahead of the students, and the construction of new and complex sentences have to be worked out together in class with the assistance of written sources.[12]

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[12] The reason why revival programs in South Australia have been able to proceed with some success is largely because of the linguistic legacy of missionaries (particularly the German missionaries from the Evangelical Lutheran Society of Dresden). Teichelmann and Schürmann compiled a quality sketch grammar and vocabulary for the Kaurna language of the Adelaide Plains in 1840, while H.A.E. Meyer compiled the 1843 Ngarrindjeri materials.

4.2 *The clientele or student body is very different*

Those studying a language under revival are generally descendants of that language, and feel a strong sense of "righting a wrong" in having their language repatriated with its people. So successes in class tend to improve students sense of identity and well-being, therefore it is important for students to get a sense of success early on, and to always feel in control of the revival process. This contrasts with adult classes in Pitjantjatjara being offered to people often working as teachers or in government service industries to "Close the Gap" (which is an initiative of the government of South Australia). Others study strong languages to halt Alzheimer disease or just because they like learning languages. When the federal government asked for submissions for an "Inquiry into language learning in Indigenous communities" in 2011, the TAFE class in Murray Bridge was happy to participate. The strong feelings that they hold about learning and reclaiming their language was beautifully articulated by our youngest student Michael Lindsay, who was 20 years old at the time:

> The Ngarrindjeri language TAFE course classes means a lot to me because we get to learn our true language. We have a great class on Friday with extraordinary people to work with. It is also extremely rewarding when we get to sing songs that we have so bravely translated. I am honoured to be a part of this intriguing and rewarding Ngarrindjeri language TAFE course classes. When I read the words in the dictionary it is like my sister says—that it is our old people who gave the words for us to carry it forward, and it is their voices that are speaking through with the words that they provided. I am happy to be working in my own language with a good lot of people who make it an enjoyable and interesting environment to work in. I hope that more people appreciate our language and would want to get involved. I am so pleased to be a part of this and I hope that it continues now and for generations to come. Because it is a sacred (thing) and it needs to be heard. When people hear us sing or speak they will be rocked by the sheer beauty and strength of this language.[13]

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[13] See further TAFE student responses in submission 18 at:
http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/atsia/languages/submissions.htm

4.3 Few recordings of conversations
or discourse level texts in revival languages

In revival contexts there is usually no opportunity for students to immerse themselves in the language, as generally no one knows how to speak longer texts or dialogues, and teachers can't model the language for students. This means it is hard to develop an "ear" for the language, and to get some sense of how the language may have sounded when spoken fluently. It is rare to have any recordings of more than words or brief phrases for languages under revival, despite the admirable efforts of linguists in the past, such as Luise Hercus.[14] By contrast, one can still sit down under a tree today and listen to Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara women (a number of whom now live in Adelaide) as they tell long elaborate narratives, while drawing in the sand with one hand and rhythmically beating a stick with the other. Students can also learn traditional song lines in language from male and female Elders who come regularly to teach at the Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music (CASM) at the University of Adelaide.

4.4 Elders retain the authority in revival situation

For revival languages, whose future survival is a tenuous process, the issue of who has authority to teach and work on the language is not straightforward. In the case of Ngarrindjeri, the language never "went to sleep" (as in the case of the Kaurna language of the Adelaide Plains), so the authority in the Ngarrindjeri language always remained with the Elders. The retrieval of the language and its revival back to health, plus the production of contemporary resources, has been done in close consultation with the Elders. The development of new terms and the construction of dialogues and complex sentences only has credibility if it has the stamp of approval of the Elders. This tends to be the case in South Australia even for languages that were sleeping. This contrasts with Pitjantjatjara classes which are often taught, with approval, by *Walypala tjuta* (white people), often in the absence of *Anangu tjuta* (Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara people). They are actually pleased that people unbeknown to them are interested in learning their

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[14] There are few recordings of whole phrases and sentences in Ngarrindjeri within the many recordings made by Catherine Ellis and Luise Hercus in the 1960s. These are held at AIATSIS and many have been made available to the community. However, there are considerable recordings made of songs in Ngarrindjeri by Norman Tindale held in the South Australian Museum, which are yet to be accessed and used within the language revival context.

language; and the possibility of their language falling asleep and lying dormant in books for years is not conceivable, at this stage.

4.5 The function of the languages under revival is often performance-based rather than conversational

The current function of the Ngarrindjeri language, and other languages such as Kaurna, tend to be public performances, such as: giving welcome speeches, performing songs and dances at events, and singing hymns at funerals. These activities are generally not spontaneous, with the required texts being produced as group activities after much considered conscious thought. The production of spontaneous dialogues and conversations are often limited to greetings, farewells and some practised formulaic sentences which have been constructed during classes. Other functions often served in the revival situation are politically motivated, such as putting up signs or posters in the local language, and the naming of places and things in the public domain. This is not to say that other more spontaneous functions won't emerge for revival languages in the future, as it is hoped they will, but this all takes time and patience.

5. Personal teaching reflections

Despite the differing circumstances discussed above, in my attempts at teaching Ngarrindjeri at TAFE, alongside two Elders each week, I have tried to adopt a lot of the techniques used and demonstrated by Paul Eckert, who is a true master teacher of Pitjantjatjara. He knows that all good teachers aim towards running a student-centred classroom that tries to meet the needs of students. Good teachers also start where the students are at in their language abilities and understandings, and build on them. But good teachers also know and seek to teach the elements of the language that are necessary and can't be learnt intuitively in the classroom setting (for example by giving formal lessons and explanations on the sound system, and by systematically teaching elements of the grammar of the language).

In my opinion, a good teacher is **eclectic** in their approach and uses any effective method or tools that aid student learning. It is impractical and inefficient to be a purist and follow any one method, just because that may be the latest approach

espoused by the department advisers—whether it be scaffolding, genre-based teaching, accelerated literacy or some other trend that will come and go.[15]

For me, using the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) is just one approach within an eclectic approach to teaching languages, and is particularly appropriate for teaching Aboriginal languages, whether they be strong languages or revival languages. I argue that the GTM approach is appropriate for these languages for the following reasons:

1. Just as the phonemic spelling and writing system of Aboriginal languages is regular and predictable, so is their grammar. Relative to English, the grammar of Aboriginal languages (whether they be suffixing languages or complex prefixing languages) is predictable and beautifully regular, with few exceptions.

2. The grammar of Aboriginal languages is complex, and very different to English, so for adult learners it can be much more efficient to explain this complexity in English through formal grammar lessons, rather than students trying to work it out for themselves in their own time.

3. By making the grammatical understandings of a language explicit, rather than implicit, the students are empowered to then teach them to others. Note this is one reason why the many Anangu who live in Adelaide are so reluctant to teach their language formally in class to others. They implicitly know their language and the way the grammar works, but when asked to explain it to others they find it difficult.[16]

4. By formally teaching grammar you also empower students with a metalanguage to talk about their language in an explicit way, and thus enabling them to teach

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[15] One would be surprised at the number of theorists (often working in universities or as department advisors) who think "eclectic" is a "dirty word", and espouse single philosophies and approaches to teaching languages and literacy. I have witnessed this in two universities. I advocate that a good classroom teacher can strike a balance between a student-centred program versus a teacher-centred program. I also believe that a good classroom practitioner is quite capable of picking the best elements out of a number of contrasting methodologies for the benefit of their students.

[16] One could argue that the communicative approach may be the better methodology for Anangu to teach their language, but the situation always arises in adult classes whereby someone inevitably asks a grammar question. Case endings and suffixes are a very important part of the grammar of Australian languages, and I argue that it can be an empowering thing for fluent speakers to explicitly understand the grammatical system of their own language.

their language formally to others. For me, explicitly teaching the grammar and the metalanguage to talk about it, to the owners of that language, is akin to repatriating the "the cultural and linguistic wealth of non-Western peoples" back to whom it belongs (see Hale (1972), quoted at the beginning of this paper).

6. What methods work for revival situations

So my philosophy for teaching Aboriginal languages under revival is to be eclectic, and to use what methods work, as long as they get the students using the language for meaningful and practical purposes. By adopting a variety of approaches, including the Grammar Translation Method, each student will hopefully get the taste of success, and be encouraged to keep going, and to experience that sense of empowerment that knowledge of one's language brings. The aim is to get students speaking, reading, writing, translating, constructing, creating and performing language. If I were to give names to the very many different approaches we draw from I would include the following methods: GTM, Communicative, Formulaic, Total Physical Response, Task-based, Functional, Genre-based, Audio-Lingual and Computer Assisted Learning.[17]

For the sake of efficiency, I am going to summarise, in list form, what has brought success to the Ngarrindjeri language classrooms in which I have been involved. The classes for the Certificate III, in Learning an Endangered Aboriginal Language, ran for 15 months over 5 terms. We had lessons for 2 full days a week for 2 terms and then 1 day a week for 3 terms. By the end of 2011, we had 8 successful Ngarrindjeri graduates. As you will see, we take every opportunity we can to use the language together in practical ways:

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[17] For an explanation of the Formulaic Method see Amery (2000:209-12). He espouses the learning of formulaic utterances such as greetings, farewells etc. Total Physical Response is more an activity used in the classroom, particularly to get children to listen to commands and instructions in the language. All these approaches are discussed in the TAFE Certificate IV Teaching an Endangered Aboriginal Language, which I developed for training Aboriginal language teachers, and is yet to be trialled or taught. It is available to any registered training organisation. See www.training.gov.au

1. Brainstorming about the meaningful purposes and genres for the language.

2. Collaboratively writing group texts that model the different genres of chosen texts.

3. Individuals giving self introductory speeches to any visitors to our class.

4. Translating old hymns and favourite songs together as a group.

5. Singing songs in language in every lesson.

6. Writing speeches collaboratively.

7. Sharing time when we share with each other any opportunities we have had over the week to use or talk about language.

8. *Yunti Yanun* time ("talking together time") at each lesson, with language-only sessions of 5 to 10 minutes, with no English.

9. Using morning tea and lunch time as an opportunity to use formulaic language.

10. Having regular spelling tests run by the Elders or other class members.

11. Having transcription exercises, again run by Elders.

12. Using electronic Toolbox dictionary for all searches for translation exercises.

13. Formal lessons that explain the sound system and spelling rules.

14. Formal grammar lessons on each of the parts of speech: verbs, nouns, pronouns etc.

15. Formal grammar lessons on constructing simple and complex sentences.

16. Playing CDs containing Elders pronouncing all the words remembered.

17. Using the language at every opportunity, such as in emails, text messaging, on Facebook.

18. Setting up class rules that encourage class members to have a go at using language in a supportive and non-threatening environment.

19. Using formal requests for Ngarrindjeri names and translation exercises as a group learning activity.

20. Performing in public using the language at every opportunity offered.

For further insight into the methods used, and the successes achieved in other language revival situations in Australia, I recommend the reader to the recently published and very valuable resource *Re-awakening Languages: theory and practice in the revitalisation of Australia's Indigenous languages* (Hobson *et al.* 2010). Another recent paper worth reading on reviving languages is Zuckermann & Walsh (2011), which refers to the revival of Israeli, and makes some reference to the Kaurna language.

7. What methods work for strong languages?

In contrast to the revival situation, the following language teaching methods can be used in teaching stronger languages such as Pitjantjatjara: Immersion, Master-Apprentice and, with more potential or chances of success, the Communicative approach, Audio-Lingual, Computer Assisted and the Accelerated Second Language Acquisition approach (ASLA).[18]

The following list outlines just some of the sound teaching methods and techniques that are possible when teaching strong languages:

1. Being an active listener, constantly listening to the language at home on pre-recorded CDs of narratives and language drills.

2. Constructing long texts in class with all the discourse markers and styles of a healthy language that is still spoken fluently.

3. Looking, thinking and listening to the teachers as he/she models natural dialogues.

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[18] The Master-Apprentice approach was developed by the linguist Leanne Hinton for the Indigenous languages of California, and involves a fluent speaker (the "master") regularly spending intense periods of time with the language learner (the "apprentice"). The aim is to teach the language to the apprentice through immersion, whereby only the target language is spoken (see Hinton 1994). Hinton came to Australia in April 2012 to teach this approach to Aboriginal language teachers and learners. Within the trainee group were Karina Lester and her mother Lucy Lester, both fluent Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara speakers, who are now training others in the method.

4. Mimicking the teacher as he/she models natural sentences with fluent speech, using the intonation and pragmatics of the language.

5. Getting the teacher to record long sentences onto student iPhones.

6. Consulting the many sentence examples in the contemporary dictionary which outlines the different senses and uses of words in natural sentences.

7. Putting away the books and pens, on a regular basis, and having longer and more sustained oral language sessions in just the target language, with no English.

8. Seeking out speakers in an effort to develop an ear for the language and gaining a good passive knowledge of the different genres of the language.

9. Being prepared to go outside student comfort zones, and practise regularly speaking the language with fluent speakers, and making mistakes in front of others in an effort to learn the correct usage of the language.

10. Trying to learn idiomatic usage of the language and practise using idioms in one's speech.

8. The necessary ingredients for all language classes

Despite the inevitable differences in the possible approaches and activities that can be undertaken when teaching a language that is being revived, versus teaching a stronger language such as Pitjantjatjara, there are some common and core ingredients that are necessary for success. I have written in detail about these in another paper (Gale forthcoming), but would like to briefly mention them here before concluding. Experience tells me that these core ingredients aid success in the adult classroom in particular, in a range of language situations, and whether one is teaching a strong language or a language undergoing revival.

These core ingredients include: quality language resources, especially a dictionary that includes a finder list from English to the target Aboriginal language; a learners' guide which explains the grammar simply for the lay person with lots of sentence examples; a pronunciation guide which includes oral sound files of

example words; regular classes which offer a qualification at the end, to ensure dedication; a teaching team that includes recognised community members plus teachers with language teaching experience and linguistic understandings; and finally, systemic financial support to sustain the running of the language classes. Without these essentials, teaching any language is an up-hill battle, but particularly difficult for languages which cannot be learnt by sitting under a tree with a fluent master teacher.

9. Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to return to the main argument of this paper, and that is, for the language revival situation in Australia, we should not be frightened to teach grammar. Grammar rules, OK? I argue that teachers should not shy away from teaching Aboriginal languages using the old tried and tested methodologies, such as the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), even if they are no longer popular or espoused by the language teaching specialists. The theoretical developments over the years among academics, working in the field of language pedagogy, have been largely based on the teaching of modern languages to children. They have also based their theory on the teaching of languages that are spoken fluently, especially by the teacher. The situation of language revival, whereby the language teacher may not even be fluent in the language, is not even on their radar.

It is for this reason that we need to challenge the theory, and acknowledge that learning a language in a revival situation calls for open-minded and selective approaches. Hence one of the approaches I recommend is the tried and tested, and very traditional approach of GTM. This approach worked for teaching the classical, text-based languages of Latin and Biblical Greek, so it should be no surprise that the case marking system of Latin in particular is not so different to that of Australian languages. As in teaching Latin in the modern context, GTM necessitates a dependency on written texts and the learning of grammar, and particularly the teaching of grammar through the learning tool of group translation exercises, from English to the target language, and vice versa.

But this is not to say, of course, that teachers should only use the traditional method of GTM. A good teacher, in my opinion, is an eclectic teacher. There are many skills and understandings to be learnt by students in an eclectic classroom. Teachers need to draw from the many methodologies available, and strategically select from those that have something to offer their own language situation and their own students' needs. If students desire developing a certain degree of communicative competence in their language, then the communicative approach has much to offer. But teachers should definitely not be blinded in their choices by the bias shown for the latest popular teaching methodology, which is often based on the modern language context for the teaching of European or Asian languages. These are the "shackles" that we need to shake off in the language revival classroom, to use Boas's expression, as quoted at the beginning of this paper.

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