

*Series: The Role of Linguists in Indigenous Community Language Programs in Australia*¹

When is a linguist not a linguist: the multifarious activities and expectations for a linguist in an Australian language centre

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The role of linguists employed in Aboriginal community language centres requires three considerations to be addressed by the language centres themselves, by the linguists and by the organisations that prepare them: what is required of the linguist by language centres; to what extent does the linguist's own skills, interests and ideology match what is required by their position; and how the linguist's capabilities can best be matched to the requirements of the language centre. These three considerations are complex, in part specific to each language centre, and can involve skills that are not immediately oriented to, or transferable from, academic knowledge and skills. The sensitive and urgent nature of language revitalisation means that high expectations are often placed on the linguist by the language centre, which can lead to disappointment for all parties in various ways, and could even compromise the effectiveness of the language revitalisation. This paper attempts to critically address these three dimensions in relation to a Western Australian language centre, focussing on a case study of a community-based languages exhibition that took place in 2008. It describes the context of the language centre and then considers the role of the linguist operating within a sociolinguistically-oriented theoretical and methodological framework to revitalize languages, identifying different conceptualisations of the role. The case study explores the range of requirements made of the linguist during the languages exhibition project, and presents some reflections on the role in that context.

1. INTRODUCTION.²

“Activities of language centres vary widely because of the available funds or expertise, and because of the different language situations they serve.” (McKay 1996:95)

The role of a linguist employed in an Australian regional language³ centre can be challenging, as in other community-oriented contexts (Rice 2011, Gerdts 2010). The relationship between the complexities of the language situation, the capabilities of the

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³ Except where otherwise specified, the term *language* is used in this paper to refer to Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.

linguist and the expectations placed upon them by language community members or by the language centres that represent them, can result in frustration or tension for all parties. During the 2011 Western Australian State Languages Conference the subject of the preparedness of linguistics graduates for language centre work was raised as a point of concern. Essentially the following question was posed: How can language centres and universities better communicate with and support each other to ensure a viable and increasingly efficient approach that matches the goals of the language centres and the goals of professional development for linguists?

This paper responds to this question by examining the role of a linguist at the Irra Wangga language centre (IW) in Geraldton (Western Australia), and in particular, the author's involvement in the development of a languages exhibition held in 2008. First, the paper introduces the context by looking at Australian Aboriginal language centres in general, before focussing on the specific language centre responsible for the project. Different conceptualisations of the role of a linguist are identified in order to understand what is required of the linguist by different groups. The paper then uses the languages exhibition to identify the range of functions were required of the linguist for the individual project as well as the general daily demands of the linguist position, such as language documentation, description and dissemination.

2. THE LANGUAGE CENTRE. Australia's regional Aboriginal⁴ language centres are key organisations in Aboriginal language maintenance, revival and promotion, as well as having an important political presence. These organisations and their language management committees under Aboriginal control have "few parallels in the world" (McConvell and Thieberger 2001: 3). Their regional presence in a land of few formal language bastions gives them considerable potential to influence local, regional and even national language policy and planning, and some have indeed developed enduring reputations that help build general cultural prestige in their communities.

However language centres can be fragile spaces. Because their management and much of their staffing and client base are part of the language community, their operations are significantly influenced by the movements and moods of the communities they represent and the challenges these communities face. As a community organisation, they are directly and indirectly affected by the local cultural and social context, for example the cultural importance placed on attending funerals and the problematic state of community services such as health and housing. As a cultural place that works with and for elders in particular, the language centre can lie close to the heart of a language community: not only do language centres store languages, but they often house rare and valuable historical materials to which family members may have access. Centres need to be aware of all the cultural and social matters of appropriateness surrounding these materials to ensure good relationships within the community, for example, taking precautions when showing photos of relatives who have passed away. These social forces of health, housing, and com-

⁴ Many Elders in Western Australia have expressed a preference for the term *Aboriginal* over *Indigenous*. Therefore this term will be used here, unless referring to national initiatives, such as Federal programs, that use *Indigenous* in their name, or international groups.

munity relations impact on language centres to varying degrees; they can affect what gets done, when and how. Add to this the often annual basis of federal funding programs, and what results is an unstable system which struggles to achieve the stability necessary to thrive (and revive!). The linguist will be involved to different extents in all of these factors and can have a highly influential role in local language affairs (and beyond). Furthermore the privilege of working with/for elders entails a duty of care both physical (as can be the case when working with elderly speakers) and cultural, which the linguist cannot avoid. The role of the linguist therefore comes with considerable responsibility and demands strong, but often nuanced, cross-cultural capabilities and a broad skill set.

As noted in McKay's quote in the introduction, for language revitalisation in an Aboriginal language centre, the role of the linguist can only be defined in the context of the specific language centre and the specific language community. The diverse natures of the language centres in Western Australia, for example, dictates the requirements of their language communities, the resources (linguistic, financial, relational), the capabilities (intellectual, technical, cultural - both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) and the flexibility required for the range of responses to community demands for documentation or language acquisition.

For example, the Wangka Maya Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre has a strong documentation history, reflected in their resources and capabilities (in terms of linguists and language workers, technology systems, community contacts, suppliers, etc.) (Dixon and Deak 2010). The Kimberly Language Resource Centre, on the other hand is "strongly directed towards community-managed revival with emphasis on promoting pre-school language acquisition" (KLRC 2010: 131). The KLRC reflects their ideology of "language continuation" (2010: 132) through use of the perhaps more specific term Language Development Officer rather than linguist.

2.1 IRRA WANGGA. The Irra Wangga language program (IW) is based in coastal Geraldton in Western Australia, and services locations within an area of about 500,000 square kilometres. IW has only been active in its present state since mid 2005. Prior to that, regional language revival had been the business of the Yamaji Language Centre, which was established in 1989. Language work has therefore been an established role in the region for nearly 25 years. In 2007/8, the period during which this case study is based, the language projects at IW were centred on Ngarlawangga, Wajarri, Warriyangka, Nhanda, Badimaya and Malgana.

IW is part of a community organisation - the Bundiyarra Aboriginal Community Aboriginal Corporation (BACAC). IW served two masters, concentrating respectively on management and language issues: the BACAC committee and the IW Advisory Body - a committee of language community representatives from the region, comprised of at least an elder and a younger representative of each language community. Language projects and priorities were devised, debated, and decided on by this group.

The language program was divided into two sections - endangered languages and regional languages - with one linguist running each program. Three language workers were spread over the two programs and were, whenever possible, from different language communities. Program administration was conducted by the linguist, who reported to the manager of BACAC.

IW's formal aims at the time of the languages exhibition were standard for a language centre and aligned to those of the funding body, which was the then federal Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA) through the Maintenance of Indigenous Languages and Records Program (MILR). IW's aims were to:

- support the maintenance of Indigenous languages;
- increase the use of Indigenous languages in a range of fields and media, including greater Indigenous community engagement;
- increase public appreciation of Indigenous languages; and
- support the sustainable development of community organisations.

In 2007/8, I believe IW was somewhere in between its two state counterparts mentioned above: it had an established documentation history, largely thanks to what had been accomplished by IW's previous incarnation, the Yamaji Language Centre, and strived to position itself within the heart of the language community in terms of their aspirations for teaching language and promoting it in the wider community. The Languages Exhibition was beyond the usual activities of IW, but nevertheless was seen as an opportunity to further the organisation's goals.

The short-term and limited funding of IW, staff turnover, staff absences and mobility for cultural reasons such as funerals, created a turbulent working environment at times. These aspects could place the language centre under pressure to meet only the short-term goals. For IW at that time, the approach to language revitalisation seemed to be more about the fight to stay funded and to meet our funding body's requirements, rather than the longer-term outcomes of documenting language for subsequent description and reviving the language. However the approach was unavoidable if we were to continue to be a potent line of defence in a language politics dominated by deep-rooted dominant society agendas (Truscott and Malcolm 2010). (See KLRC (2010) for a discussion of the tension around funding ideologies.)

Working for a community organisation such as IW requires an understanding of the myriad of social, cultural and historical issues of marginalisation and suppression (HREOC 2009) that has impacted on and still impacts communities, as well as at least an understanding of the aspirations and importance of decolonisation in health (Sherwood 2010) and education (Poetsch and Lowe 2010). IW (through BACAC) operated within these understandings and had adopted a social justice approach in its work with communities, and so at times our activities would overlap with other projects in, for example, health or juvenile justice. For example, IW provided language classes for Women's Healing camps held on traditional country, and developed language camps for children in the juvenile justice system. Qualitative aims, such as improved social and emotional wellbeing and socio-cultural empowerment were implicit in our work (as in the aforementioned projects), as were quantitative aims, such as those required by the federal funding body, for example the number of hours recorded and archived of a particular language, or the production of a language resource. Despite the pressures towards a short-term focus, the long-term goal was to create a self-sustainable, revived language ecology, so IW would try as much as possible for the long term.

As evident in Table 3 below and related discussion below, IW had ties with many groups and endeavoured to embark on joint-ventures and create projects where our interdependence with other organisations help us to embed ourselves further into the local community. This was a means to not only broaden the base for raising awareness, but also to help provide some degree of sustainability to counter much of the uncertainty created by the immediate funding and other considerations. Funding bodies look favourably on such joint-ventures as it implies joint responsibility and, therefore, increased security in terms of project administration.

A key aspect of IW's operations in pursuit of its goals is how it manages its relations with other organisations and groups in the local communities. The social nature of language means that the language centre has the potential to work with a range of socially oriented partners. These groups, both governmental and non-governmental, deal directly with improving the lives of people in some way, such as in health, justice or housing, or supporting learning (schools) and other institutions, such as museums and libraries. IW's involvement was in how these organisations relate to members of their communities. Their structures and processes need to be appropriate for the communities they serve. Their interactions are cross-cultural and require the staff of these organisations to have the appropriate skills to interact with their clients. Equally, their clients might require specific support to access services, such as translators and interpreters.

Operational area	Description	MILR Objective
Promotion/ Advocacy	Relationships with these groups were based on providing consultation, training and information on language matters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increase public appreciation of Indigenous languages; increase the use of Indigenous languages in a range of fields and media, including greater Indigenous community engagement
Preservation/ Maintenance/ Revival	Language documentation and description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> support the maintenance of Indigenous languages
Administration	Training of staff, attracting and managing funds, planning with the Advisory Body.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> support the sustainable development of community organisations.

TABLE 1. Alignment of IW's public relations areas to operational areas.

The breadth of IW's public relations can be conceptualised in terms of the different areas of IW's operational goals, and in terms of the different groups of people involved. The groups involved at the time of the exhibition are listed in the project-specific discussion below. In terms of operational goals, the areas can be classified under the three headings in Table 1, which are related to the objectives of the funding body (DCITA). For example, in order to "increase the use of Indigenous languages in a range of fields and me-

dia, including greater Indigenous community engagement”, IW worked with the local Aboriginal radio station to produce a weekly language program with interviews and language segments. The groups directly involved were the radio station staff and the local Adult training centre, and indirectly, the radio audience.

3. THE ROLE(S) OF LINGUISTS. The academic discipline of linguistics naturally has language as its object of study, and even though gaps between theoretical knowledge and practical skills and experience occur in all professional fields, it is clear that the difference between what the linguist is required to do in a language centre and what the linguist is trained to do needs consideration by both language centres and universities. Gerds (1998) stated that, “linguistic expertise is not sufficient for successful participation in a language program. The linguist must develop social and political skills to be an effective member of a language revitalisation team.” Similarly, Rice (2011; 320) notes:

On the descriptive side, the agendas of either theoretically driven linguists or language documentarians (whose foremost concern understandably is an abundance of archival-quality primary data backed by meticulously noted curatorial metadata) often dictate against rehabilitative efforts inside the speech community.

This paper supports that general position and elaborates on how a linguist’s tasks are defined by the general context, the specific context, and different conceptualisations of the role of the linguist.

The role of linguists in the general context of community language programs has been described by the Federation of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Languages and Culture (FATSILC), the national peak body for community based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) language programs in Australia, in the following terms:

1. provide expertise in language documentation and description;
2. work with historical records, sound recordings, language speakers and informants;
3. compile and produce publications such as grammars and dictionaries;
4. respond to the requests, ideas and aspirations of communities for the revitalisation of their languages;
5. support communities by developing practical as well as theoretical resources
6. pass on skills and knowledge for the community to continue to use independently, eg computer skills, skills in language description and analysis, using and maintaining recording equipment, applying for grants;
7. and work with other linguists, share findings through teaching, publishing books and papers and speaking at conferences. (Paraphrasing FATSIL 2004: 7)

There is a strong linguistic specialist focus in points (1)-(3) and (7) in these guidelines. However, points (4)-(6) imply a broader set of skills, and this is reinforced by the

expectation that language centres “operate in *all areas* of need to provide infrastructure and technical support to Community Language Teams.” (NILS 2005: 116. Emphasis added). The apparent assumption that linguists somehow possess all the skills to respond to community requests and to operate in all areas of need leads us to examine the various understandings of the role of a linguist.

Most often in endangered language work, there is an ever-present sense of the urgency of revitalising the language. This will typically involve a combination of tasks performed by the linguist, including collecting and analysing data, working with the language community and wider communities, and even teaching the language. In the rest of this section, I will examine aspects of the linguist’s roles identified by various researchers and attempt to develop a preliminary analysis of the various conceptualisations of what a linguist can or should be.

There has been extensive discussion from two related perspectives: firstly, the relevant sub-disciplines of linguistics and the tasks they involve, and secondly, the type of relationship with the language community. Dixon (1997) asserted that linguists should concentrate on fieldwork before time ran out. Tsunoda (2005), who worked with Australian Indigenous languages for over 30 years, some of that with the Kimberley Language Resource Centre, noted that documentation was the “most urgent task of linguists” (2005: 29) and therefore central to the role. While the actual place of language documentation⁵ within linguistics has been debated⁶ (Himmelman 2012), it is nevertheless now widely recognised as part of the role of a linguist. Refining the general documentation approach, Hill (2006) argues that “documentary linguists need to be ethnographers, because they venture into communities that may have very different forms of language use from those of the communities in which they were socialized as human beings or trained as scholars”. Dwyer also notes how the linguist needs to “mediate between speakers, their communities, and the fieldworker’s own community which includes an institution, a university and possibly an archive” (2006: 32).

The language centre linguist may be called on to both collect and to analyse the language. However Rice (2011) notes that theoretical linguists (those who ultimately analyse the data) and language documentarians (those who collect and transcribe those data) may have unhelpful agendas in language revival efforts. The former may only see the data in an objectified manner, removed from social context; the latter might amass lots of data, but provide little feedback to the community apart from, for example, “a massive collection of untranscribed and uninterpretable CD-/DVD-ROMs” (2011: 320). Both sub-disciplines run the risk of viewing Language-as-Object, something that can be lost and found - which may obscure the fact that language is embedded in an important social and cultural context to which the linguist needs to be able to relate (Whaley 2011).

Many have made the case for the linguist to deploy applied linguistic expertise in language revival (Anderson 2011, Whaley 2010), reflecting a growing appreciation of the

⁵ Documentation here is defined as the “collection, transcription and translation of primary data.” (Himmelman 1998).

⁶ The details of such a debate can be read at (accessed August 2012): <http://www.paradisec.org.au/blog/2012/08/distinguishing-language-documentation-and-language-description-revisited/>

pedagogical demands in language revival. However this field too may potentially undermine revitalisation efforts. Rice (2011) reminds us that language learning/revival materials are often based on Anglo-centric understandings from Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL). These may well be inappropriate for indigenous languages due to the linguistic and cultural differences between those languages and English or other European languages. In working as a consultant in Aboriginal Languages with the Western Australian Department of Education, I would often encounter examples of a eurocentric approach to Aboriginal language teaching. While intentions were honourable and there were often practical reasons for this approach, it could unknowingly corrupt the target language itself. For example, when a well-known model for a promotional sticker was produced for the Wajarri language by a mainstream educational resources supplier the proposed Wajarri expression was subjected to a certain level of cognitive, semiotic and syntactic assimilation to English and Romance and other languages. As the equivalent French sticker read, “Je ♥ (heart) Français”, the Wajarri sticker read “Ngatha ♥ (heart) Wajarri”. It simply followed the syntax for the other languages with stickers in that model, such as English and French, and the expression was based on Subject Verb Object order without apparently considering the question of the optimal order in Wajarri. It also wrongly implies interchangeability between cultural conceptualisations, specifically the heart as the bodily locus of emotion, as something that can be shared, used and understood across languages. The Wajarri sticker can only be parsed applying non-Wajarri understandings of emotion to create the interpretation “I love Wajarri”. This risk notwithstanding, Rice notes that “a number of programs worldwide now offer second language training to teachers of endangered, Indigenous languages.” She notes the importance of this pedagogy to effectively deliver language classes to non-speakers, a task that may fall to the linguist.

Cameron et al. (1992) focus on fieldwork conducted using a methodology that explicitly empowers the speech communities – researching on, for and with them. Florey

(2011) goes a step further, positing the term “new linguistics” – an applied, social justice-based approach to working with language, and a conscious means of addressing the social-political factors that bring about endangerment itself. Florey examines the role of linguists in an agenda of language work beyond academia: no longer is the main protagonist of language revitalisation the linguist, looking to document language in some pure form, rather revitalisation requires the multi-levelled effort of multiple actors, both internal and external to the language community - it is political and it is dynamic. New linguistics highlights the need for control by indigenous groups in language revival and for language activists who are members of the language community, who are trained in documentation and revitalisation strategies, and who works with external language activists, like the academically-trained language centre linguist.

It is unclear whether this deep collaborative approach is assumed in the social elements of FATSILC’s definition of the linguist, who should “pass on skills” and “responds to the requests, ideas and aspirations of communities for the revitalisation of their languages” (2004). By noting how the linguist “provides expertise”, “compiles” and “works with other linguists,” FATSILC’s definition seems to assume that the linguist might not be working in the cross-cultural manner that Florey proposes. If so, then the FATSILC definition risks perpetuating a mono-culturally biased approach to language work (akin to

Rice's concerns above). FATSILC's account of the linguist's role also seems to assume that he/she is not a member of the language community.

3.1 CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF THE ROLE OF THE LANGUAGE CENTRE LINGUIST. The public often perceives the interests and capabilities of linguists in terms of some narrow perspectives on language. Many linguists would be able to share examples of when they are called upon by members of the broader public to, for example, list the number of languages that they can speak (Linguist-as-Polyglot), or to join in the chorus about how technology is the demise of English as we know it, or to remedy punctilious punctuation questions (Linguist-as-Maintainer-of-Prescriptive-Standards perhaps). While these lay conceptualisations may somewhat impact on what the wider community and some funding bodies understand about the role of linguists in a language centre, the main focus here is on the perspectives of the most directly involved parties: the linguist, the language centre management, a member of the language community, or a university. The central issue is that different people may conceptualise the role in different ways and will therefore have different expectations.

The differing conceptualisations of the role(s) of the linguist can be usefully characterised as follows:

- Linguist-as-Academic
- Linguist-as-Documentarian
- Linguist-as-Analyst
- Linguist-as-Language-Teacher
- Linguist-as-Materials-Producer
- Linguist-as-Trainer
- Linguist-as-Promoter
- Linguist-as-Advocate
- Linguist-as-Administrator
- Linguist-as-Cultural-Intermediary

For the present purposes these labels are assumed to be generally self-descriptive, though naturally there is scope to develop a more specific characterisation of each. The list is also not exhaustive. The different conceptualisations are not intended to necessarily be mutually exclusive but they provide an initial basis for identifying the mismatches that might occur between different parties. For example, some aspects such as advocate, intermediary and materials producer do not fall in job descriptions such as FATSILC's above, but they often fall into the role in a language centre. As the case study below will demonstrate, the activities of a language centre linguist can be very diverse, combining most of the conceptualisations just listed.

Rather than seeing the role of linguist as being misunderstood by the language community (Gerdt 2010), the range of conceptualisations actually reflects the potential diversity of roles, and that in turn reflects the multifarious nature of language revitalisation. It allows a more nuanced understanding of the different aspects of language revitalisation from different cultural viewpoints. From a language centre perspective, sometimes the pedagogical aspect of the role has relevance - Linguist-as-Teacher - while at other times

Linguist-as-Administrator may be more relevant. From a university perspective, however, the primary conceptualisation might be narrower, the Linguist-as-Analyst. However, Florey's (2011) idea of the *new* does not need to be diametrically positioned against the *old* (as in Rice 2011); these may reflect long-term versus short-term conceptualisations of language documentation, and therefore are actually complementary.

The perhaps inevitable mismatch of these conceptualisations between, say, the developing linguist and the (seemingly) demanding language centre can lead to a range of emotions for both parties including despair, confusion, disillusionment and frustration (Wilkins 1992; Ash et al. 2010: 111). Like others (Rice 2011, Wilkins 1992) I have often felt that some language community members have prejudicial views of the agendas that they perceive some linguists to have, and that this is often based on a conceptualisation of Linguist-as-Analyst. For example, discussions at the 2007 Indigenous Languages Conference in Adelaide aired on-going concerns about the ownership of linguistic research between linguists and language communities. In that case, the conceptualisation of Linguist-as-Academic prevailed over all others.

Although it is not the main focus of this paper, we can also consider what might underlie the different conceptualisations (see Woodbury 2003, Himmelman 2008, Florey 2008 or Rice 2011). These may relate to specific functions (for example, the non-linguistic work identified above), to the general motivations of linguists, or to how they work cross-culturally or otherwise. An individual's view may be based on a broad range of things. It may be based on historical factors involving previous linguists and linguistic work they are familiar with, or it may be based on socio-cultural assumptions, for example that the linguist went to university and so should be able to write a funding application. It may be based on different cultural conceptualisations of the nature of the particular language. Mosel (2006) deals with the issues of conflicting conceptualisations that can arise between a linguist's and language worker and/or speaker's understanding of why we engage in linguistic fieldwork.

Having identified the kinds of mismatches that can occur, another important question is how to approach a shared understanding between parties. What is important for the purposes of language revitalisation is that mutual or rather bi-culturally defined criteria need to be negotiated between the linguist and language community to ensure that a language project meets their goals. As communication between stakeholders is important in defining the role of a linguist, it is worth remembering that differing cultural conceptualisations can influence language work and communication in many ways. For example, Sharifian (2011) notes how miscommunication can occur between speaker of Standard Australian English (say, a non-Aboriginal linguist) and Aboriginal English (spoken by the language community) due to differing cultural schema.

4. CASE STUDY. In this section, I describe the origins, planning, execution and outcomes of the languages exhibition project and the varied requirements for the linguist. This account will demonstrate how the social justice approach of IW influenced the entire project, including role of the linguist.

4.1 THE PROJECT. In 2007, I was approached by the Western Australian Museum (WAM) branch in Geraldton to collaborate on an installation for a fixed period in 2008.

For WAM, the aims were to celebrate the International Year of Languages, encourage participation from the local Aboriginal community and inform visitors of the local Aboriginal context.

I brought the invitation to the attention of the Advisory Body, who believed that this would be a worthy opportunity to tell their story through a new medium to a broad audience. We developed the concept of *Nganhungu Wangga – Our Languages* (Wajarri language) and decided that personal narratives of key language speakers from each language community in the region would be profiled as a way of humanising language loss for the wider Australian community as well. The views of the Advisory Body were that outsiders needed to grasp the concept of language loss being the result of real life problems that impacted on peoples' lives in deep and devastating ways, rather than objectified or viewed as an abstract and romantic notion that is inevitable in the Darwinian sense, as may be the view in some non-Indigenous communities (Visscher 2008). Just as Himmelmann (2008: 338) laments how "(l)inguistic knowledge... is not seen as something that is socially constructed and reproduced," linguistic endangerment too is perhaps not seen by the broader Australian community as socially determined nor politically reproduced, but rather as economically justified as well as evolutionarily inevitable.

On behalf of IW and WAM, I applied for and won a Reconciliation Grant from the Department of Indigenous Affairs to finance the exhibition. Its final aims were:

- to increase total community awareness and understanding of local regional Aboriginal cultures and identities.
- to develop a project for the purpose of Reconciliation and make it valuable to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous members of the community.
- to raise the status of Aboriginal languages.

Discussions were held within the IW Advisory Body for their desired outcomes and with the museum for the practical considerations involved in achieving these outcomes. These led to the proposal that a set of banners would be produced with language texts, testimonies and photos of each language speaker Elder. The banners would be supported by audio-visual resources, a 'Language Trail' around the museum (a children's activity), and a space for visitors to reflect and share on the exhibition. The exhibition would run for three months and occupy a designated exhibition hall at the museum.

4.2 TASKS FOR THE LINGUIST. In this section, in order to give a complete picture of the linguist's responsibilities over the project period, I discuss both the tasks in the general endangered language program, and the project-specific tasks required for the exhibition. For the general tasks, I build on the work of Douglas Marmion (1994, cited in McKay, 1996:95) to outline the skills and concepts required for these tasks. It will be clear that none of the individual conceptualisations of the role discussed above are adequate representations of the real range of activities.

4.2.1 GENERAL ACTIVITIES OF THE LINGUIST AT IW. Table 2 shows a list of the general activities performed by linguist Douglas Marmion during his time at the Yamaji

Language Centre (the predecessor to IW) in 1994. General here means those tasks that might correspond to the projects determined at the time of grant application. Looking at Table 2, the details in the left column list the activities with which the linguist was involved. I have modified the table and added the right hand column to reflect the skills and knowledge required for those activities. Some of these skills would easily fall within the linguistic expertise of the linguist, but clearly there are aspects that demand something quite different, such as administration, health promotion, marketing and promotion. In terms of the linguist's preparation for this broader range of tasks, it is interesting that Curnow (2009) notes that an understanding of the nature of communication, as opposed to language, is under-represented in introductory linguistics texts.

Language centre activities (Marmion 1994)	Skills and concepts required
Producing language materials such as i. Dictionaries ii. Oral histories iii. Posters iv. Newsletters v. Language teaching materials (books, videos, games, computer programs) vi. Kinship system charts vii. Language maps viii. Health pamphlets ix. Songs	i. Lexicography ii. General linguistics skills iii. Graphic design iv. Editorial and design skills v. Language teaching, graphic design, Information and communications technology (ICT). Creative arts/film-making. vi. Anthropology vii. Cartography viii. Health promotion ix. Musicology
Training for Aboriginal language workers	Understanding of field (linguistics, documentation, etc.) Instructional methods Cross-cultural communication
Language surveys and feasibility studies	Project planning Cross-cultural communication
Library and resource centre for materials on languages	Archive development and management ICT
Bush trips for young Aboriginal people to spend time using language with older speakers	Care-giving (Elders) Duty of care (Children) 4 Wheel Drive training First aid Project planning and administration
Providing a contact and resource for members of the public on language matters	Cross-cultural communication
Running presentations and courses such as: i. School language classes for lan-	Course specific i. General linguistics, language policy and practice, second lan-

<p>guage maintenance, language renewal, second language teaching and language awareness</p> <p>ii. In-service courses and workshops for teachers, government organisations etc.</p> <p>iii. Language courses</p> <p>iv. Cross-cultural communication seminars</p> <p>v. Interpreting and translating</p> <p>vi. Language festivals and conferences</p> <p>vii. Lobbying for training, for language programs etc.</p> <p>viii. Arousing language awareness in the non-Aboriginal community</p> <p>ix. Providing a catalyst for language activities in the Aboriginal community</p>	<p>guage acquisition/teaching, primary teaching, multi-lingual pedagogy</p> <p>ii. Course writing and delivery</p> <p>iii. Language teaching. Linguistics.</p> <p>iv. Cross-cultural communication.</p> <p>v. Translation, Cross-cultural communication. Cultural linguistics.</p> <p>vi. Project Planning. Business Administration.</p> <p>vii. Advocacy.</p> <p>viii. Marketing/Promotion.</p> <p>ix. Cross-cultural communication.</p>
<p><i>Administration:</i> Funding applications, Managing staff, finances Public relations Sales</p>	<p>Business administration (Project planning, accounting, marketing, promotion)</p>
<p><i>Community Relations</i> Networking, partnerships, community projects.</p>	<p>Community development Social justice Social studies Business administration</p>

TABLE 2. Activities of the language centre linguist.

Table 2 does not show the amount of time spent on the various activities or the complexity of the skills - pedagogy, for example, is a specialised field in itself. However we can nevertheless compare what is linguistic and non-linguistic in nature. Defining linguistic activities as those relating to academic fields of language (including language planning, lexicography and language acquisition), we note nine such activities. The remaining 27 activities (such as graphic design, care-giving, cartography and marketing) are non-linguistic. With three-quarters of the activities thus carried out by the linguist being non-linguistic in nature, this alone requires consideration as to how those destined for language centres (including linguists and language workers) should be prepared (or interviewed).

What Table 2 made immediately apparent to me was the high degree of similarity between Marmion's and my activities during our respective tenures, separated by over a decade, in the language centre. Nonetheless, it seems that times have changed. Marmion (personal communication) notes that, in his experience, Aboriginal languages were deemed by the wider community to hold no value and his role was seen as being of marginal benefit to them. Promotions and public relation events - at least with the wider community - were minor activities. Opportunities like the advocacy and promotional projects like the exhibition (and other events noted below) did not come about during his time.

Broadly then, during my time in the same region as Marmion, many of the same activities were still largely being carried out at IW. However I spent more time on promotion (through media and community events such as co-hosting a weekly language radio program, having language stalls at whole community events), advocacy, and supporting the local educational institutions in training and developing curricula in Aboriginal languages. This increase in the acceptance of, and demand for, Aboriginal languages in these specific domains could well reflect a general improvement in attitudes towards Aboriginal languages and their speakers or changing attitudes of the Aboriginal language communities.

What is to be noted here is the broad range of activities shown in Table 2, which manifests the need for a depth of experience, preparation and flexibility on the part of the linguist. In addition to the above general activities, the exhibition project brought together a range of skills, which are outlined in the following section.

4.2.2 PROJECT SPECIFIC TASKS. This particular exhibition project was an *ad hoc* event. It had not been planned for in the previous year; it was instead an opportunity that IW had decided to seize upon. This lack of longer-term planning is one reason it was a high-stakes event. Other reasons were that it had been funded by a high profile grant, it would be seen by potentially thousands of people and it was the first exhibition of its kind in our region. I still had my other daily activities to carry out, however the advent of the exhibition meant that I had to prioritise my workload and found fulfilling all my general tasks very challenging. As with any small organisation there is a tendency to become a *jack-of-all-trades*, and language work clearly is no exception.

The project required consolidating aspects of business administration (management of staff, funds and operations), creative enterprise (developing exhibition resources) and promotion (developing a media plan and advertising). The various dimensions of the project are summarised in Figure 1 which endeavours to show how certain areas overlap and how consultation encompassed, to differing extents, all aspects of the project.

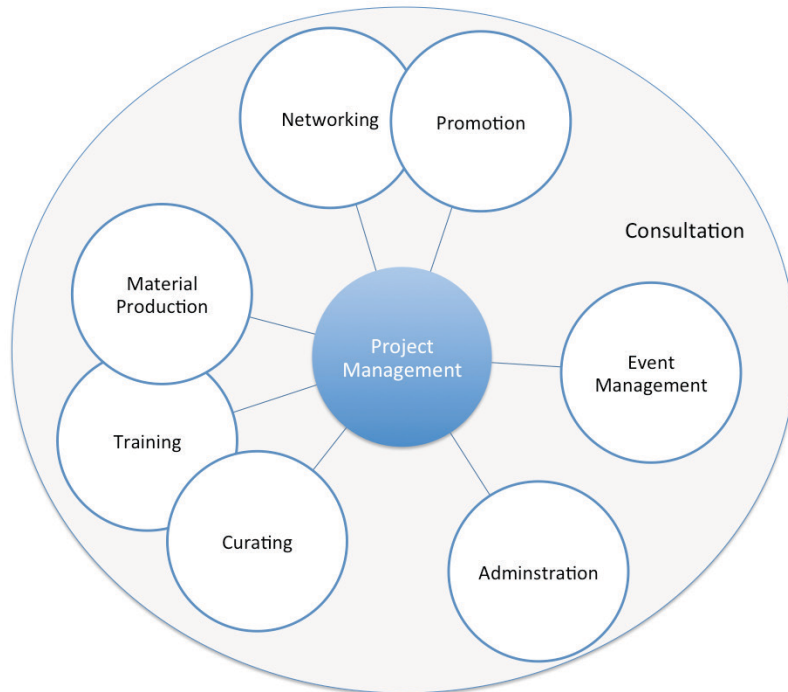


FIGURE 1. Project Responsibilities.

Specifically, these tasks involved:

PROJECT MANAGEMENT. The first step was to develop a project plan and maintain transparent accounts for all financial transactions. Other tasks included applying for further funding, planning, promotion, assessing skills requirements, and training of language workers in communication strategies and administration. Fortunately, many of the skills required for this project were in line with those that I had formally and informally accumulated, namely marketing/promotion, public relations and finance. Also, the language worker team were already involved with other promotional activities which could be used for the event, such as radio presenting.

All IW staff were involved in different aspects of the project, and opportunities were always given to those interested, however due to my initial involvement, time requirements and own skill-set, I became the *de facto* project leader, and therefore was the main IW staff member involved. Nevertheless, it should certainly be noted that all staff supported each other during this endeavour and the opening day was a success only because of the team effort.

PUBLIC RELATIONS. As discussed above, IW's public relations can be conceptualised in terms of the different areas of IW's operational goals, and in terms of the different groups

of people involved. Table 3 details the groups and organisations that IW interacted with over the period around the exhibition

Promotion/Advocacy	Preservation /Maintenance/Revival	Administration
<p><i>Local /Government</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WA Museum - Partnership • Geraldton/Greenough Council • Geraldton Library • Department of Corrective Services (Consulting) • Department of Justice (Consulting) • Department of Indigenous Affairs (Consulting) • Shire of Mullewa – naming project • Department of Health (training) <p><i>Indigenous Service Providers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geraldton Streetwork Aboriginal Corporation (youth group) • Yamatji Land and Sea Council • Radio MAMA (media) • Geraldton Regional Aboriginal Medical Service (health promotion) • Wila Gutharra (Aboriginal Training Organisation) <p><i>Media</i> (media releases, stories)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press, Radio (bi-weekly radio segments on regional radio) 	<p><i>Language recordings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 specific communities (and elders) <p><i>Education:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Western Australia – student placements • Department of Education (Language Other than English Support) • Curriculum Council (Consulting) • University of Sydney (Consulting) <p><i>Language classes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combined Universities Centre for Rural Health • Primary Schools (x2) • John Wilcock High (Consulting) • Geraldton Regional Community Education Centre (Consulting) 	<p><i>Internal Community</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory Body <p><i>Internal Training of language workers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcriber • Audacity/audio editing • Movie editing/ production. • Standard Australian English writing • Internal language lessons • Desktop publishing training (Word, Excel, PowerPoint) <p><i>External Funding</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government Department administering language revitalisation funds • Private business <p><i>Asset Maintenance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local suppliers for vehicles and IT. <p><i>Print / Multi Media Production</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local printers • Local designers

<p><i>Advocacy</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly interviews for language radio show • Other WA Language centres • AIATSIS • FATSILC • Linguists and language professionals across Australia. <p><i>Community</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory Board • Community members • NAIDOC commission 		
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TABLE 3. List of groups/organisations interacted with.

All the groups associated with IW were involved in the exhibition in some capacity: the Advisory Body were directly involved in, among other areas, developing banners for the exhibition; language workers were trained to engage in whichever aspect they wanted, such as radio presenting, contacting other language centres or media agencies to promote the event. External relationships were involved in inviting community agencies to support the event. School children, for example, were invited to be ushers and to provide assistance for all elders.

A key factor in this exhibition, and my general role, was managing relationships with these groups, both internal and external to IW. Positive relationship-building ultimately underpinned all activities from language work to dealing with local government. The range of groups and organisations in Table 3 reflects the range and diversity of the contacts we had developed over time. The fact that the Promotion/Advocacy column is the most populated reflects an unplanned focus for IW operations that developed with the popularity of the language centre.

The relationship between promotion and language revival can be seen to have five stages:

1. Promotion of language and understanding of language as a key identity and ancestral marker.
2. Raise awareness about the social impact of language endangerment.
3. Develop empathy about related social justice issues.
4. Engage wider community to confront social justice issues.
5. Foster reconciliation to empower the language community, which in turn, can strengthen the status of the language, thus returning to stage (1) to start the cycle again.

FINDING FUNDING. Alternative avenues for funding language work are vital, especially considering the precarious reliance of many language centres on one short-term federal fund. In a small language organisation such as IW, the linguist often needs to keep abreast of opportunities that might further the cause. I was made aware of the Department of Indigenous Affairs' Reconciliation grant scheme through the local networks that I actively developed and maintained while promoting the language centre. While I had hitherto minimal experience in funding applications, I was versed in how best to promote an event and learnt grant application skills on the job.

CURATING AN EXHIBITION. At IW, I had organised one small photographic exhibition as well as community language stalls (for Harmony Day, for example), but nothing of the scale of this project. I was briefed by the manager of the WAM on how best to attract visitors and use the space and facilities available for the event. While the curating required some linguistic analysis and documentation, non-linguistic tasks made up the bulk of the work. These tasks included administration of the grant, travelling (when needed) to different communities discussing possibilities with the Advisory Body, collecting footage and photographs to be used in the event, designing materials (invites, banners, advertising) and developing audio-visual material. Once I had been successful in my application for the grant, I had approximately three months to curate the exhibition (which was to be produced by the WAM) and promote the event.

CONSULTATION. While working with the Advisory Body was always ultimately a rewarding experience, much time was spent on logistical matters (travelling to communities to edit work) and political matters (who would be selected as the subject of the banner and on what basis; spending similar amounts of time in each speech community), which would detract me from more language-oriented affairs (such as transcribing texts for the banners). I had to ensure that all parties were equally considered and consulted in order to maintain trust and balance in our work. In this project, the banners needed to reflect this equality. There is therefore a political aspect for the linguist to consider when developing multi-lingual projects such as this.

Consultations are imperative, but they can sometimes challenge the resources and limits set by external organisations, such as funding bodies. For example, having to do multiple trips to a community requires lots of time and means that one needs to compact as much into the journey to make it justifiable. This is a management issue that the linguist (as administrator) needs to address as it might impact on other projects and resources.

EVENT MANAGEMENT. The opening of the event was a key public relations opportunity, and an important moment to achieve the aims of the exhibition. Consequently the media (television, press and radio), local schools, local businesses, linguists, government officials and politicians were invited. Beyond these public relations external to IW, was the presence of the Advisory Board, other language speakers and their families. Funding was secured to bring in members of the Advisory Board from across the region and all their needs had to be catered for, including food, lodging and health concerns. I oversaw these aspects, which were mainly carried out by the language workers.

TRAINING. The exhibition was a valuable opportunity for on-the-job training for our language workers to develop their range of skills in the areas of communication and administration, non-linguistic skills which are essential in a community organisation such as IW. Skills included formal writing to, and communication with, service providers, and interviewing techniques (for radio).

MEDIA PLANNING. I had to devise a media strategy to ensure maximum exposure with a very limited budget. This planning was a part of project management and involved negotiating advertising deals and editorial aspects with local press.

MEDIA AND MATERIAL PRODUCTION. Language workers were involved in all elements of this stage, and created a short documentary and slide show to support the banners. For this, we worked as a team. The development of these extra resources alongside the banners helped me financially justify some of the many trips to visit speech community representatives during the development of the banners. I used a range of audio-visual and design software to develop the materials and worked with an external graphic designer on the final development of the banners. Figure 2 shows a section of the exhibition and some of these banners.



FIGURE 2. The banner section of the Exhibition.

5. REFLECTIONS ON THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE PROJECT. The project was a success on many levels. Language community members and their families spoke of being proud and of the importance of sharing their stories with people from the region and beyond, The project met many of our MILR key performance indicators through regional media coverage, the production of resources and the documented appreciation for Indigenous languages, as noted in feedback from the public and government offi-

cials. Finally, new and strong links were forged between IW and local enterprises and government organisations.

With regards to the demands on the linguist and the lessons that were learnt from this experience, I will share some personal and professional reflections that might serve as considerations for employers and universities in the preparation and professional development of language centre linguists.

5.1 PERSONAL REFLECTION. Coming from a non-Aboriginal, non-Australian background, I came to an advertised role as a teacher/linguist with mainly revitalisation and documentation in mind. I envisioned working alone for long hours on building word lists and hoping to inter-linearise huge quantities of linguistic data in between fieldtrips in beautiful landscapes, as well as develop learning materials for schools. However, through my background in language teaching and applied linguistics, I had become aware of the impact of colonisation on local languages, social inequalities and how the lessening linguistic diversity in the world seemed to parallel the endangerment of biodiversity. As I developed in my role (as a person, an employee and a linguist), relationships and projects with communities were developed around more activist notions of community empowerment and (the restoration of) linguistic rights, similar to what has been promoted by Florey (2011). My own initial conceptualisation of my role as *Linguist-as-Documentarian* and *Linguist-as-Materials-Producer* quickly broadened to include advocacy projects in areas such as human rights (organising community consultations on language rights) and in cultural centres such as the local library (organising talks by local elders), the art gallery (an photographic exhibition of some of the region's language speakers) and the museum (the public exhibition which is the focus of this paper). FATSILC's proposal that linguists should work "Responding to the requests, ideas and aspirations of communities" (FATSILC, *ibid*), it seemed, required something more than documentation and description; and this turned into the main focus of my role.

My graduate training in linguistics, while greatly satisfying, would have benefited from a broader take on the different ideologies in fieldwork as well as working cross-culturally, in language documentation, for example. During my time at IW, I had few opportunities to investigate the body of literature on these topics and thus develop a more conscious appreciation of my abilities, my actions and indeed my role as a linguist. Being situated in regional Western Australia, and having limited funding, restricted the possibility of attending language conferences or other such gatherings.

Overall it was quite stressful having to juggle all the responsibilities that come from working on several projects at once. While the exhibition achieved and even surpassed its aims, the time it required meant that I had a heavy workload. But as much as I enjoyed the promotional and advocacy aspects of this type of project (the exhibition, the language rights projects and related consultations), I often questioned my role as a linguist. Not being able to spend time on what I had conceived to be my core business was extremely frustrating. Marmion (personal communication) also recalls a similar sense of frustration at how his role denied him the time to attend to urgent language work over a decade previously.

As well as the project successes mentioned above, the exhibition led to invitations to take it to an international endangered language conference in Europe; it was eventually

partly exhibited at the Foundation for Endangered Languages conference in Ecuador in 2011. There were also requests to hold the exhibition in other towns and cities, both regionally and nationally, and to publish it as a small book. These were all positive reactions and all were responded to positively by the Advisory Body. However, none were possible because neither my colleagues nor I had the time to follow up these opportunities because other documentation and description responsibilities needed to be respected.

Nevertheless I relished the challenge of employing and developing this diverse range of skills. Though I did not flourish academically as much as I might have liked as a linguist, I developed considerably as a human being as well as a representative of the region's local Aboriginal language centre. I felt that I was responding to what was being asked of me by language community members, even if my employers (respectfully) were not fully aware of the different skills required for the job.

5.2 PROFESSIONAL REFLECTION. Professional development strategies for language centre linguists can be most effectively developed through discussion between language centres and with the institutions that train linguists. One strategy would be for the developing linguist to be given a systematic introduction to her/his roles and to the context, over a period of time and with support from a professional mentor in order to grow the cross-cultural and wide-ranging capabilities that are needed, as well to fashion skills in other non-linguistic fields. Rice (2011) describes a range of university units for language speakers such as investigating successful grant writing, the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in language revitalisation, and “helping students to build language activism capacity in themselves and in their community” (2011: 333). There is perhaps some potential here for also having these options for non-Aboriginal graduate linguists, and for these courses to be run with language speakers and linguists working side-by-side.

More input from language centres in undergraduate and graduate training might be a means of creating a new, more realistic and shared conceptualisation of a language centre linguist between the university and the language centre, and ultimately the language community. Such collaboration might occur through an apprentice model, where a graduate conducts a work placement at the language centre (such as the student program operated by the University of Western Australia). This model has much potential and while this has occurred successfully at IW, it can create an additional burden for the language centre. As Marmion (personal communication) notes, organising ‘interesting’ projects (including field trips) for apprentice linguists on placements can be challenging because it is difficult to plan a placement program in advance when the demands of language centre work are so dependent on the community and therefore can vary on a daily basis.

The rise of *new linguistics* is an opportunity to develop a new shared conceptualisation of the linguist, perhaps developing the field so that the language centre linguist becomes more specialised and so that their range of skills is better recognised. Tsunoda (2005: 248) refers to the lack of appropriate recognition as he laments that often ‘highly specialized’ linguists who focus on one linguistic area of research are seen as ‘true scholars’, while others with a broad range of skills are regarded as ‘not decent.’

However, developing such collaboration is a strategic move that requires a shared vision and then conscious planning and commitment, particularly with respect to the specif-

ic challenges involved (which have been highlighted in this paper). Along with the limited, often short term, resources of language centres (and universities), there may also be a high turnover of linguists, and this might impede long-term partnerships between language centres and universities. The high turnover might result from the graduate linguist not feeling capable because of all the demands on them, or not comfortable in material, emotional or cultural ways in the language centre context. Staff turnover is not exclusive to language work; education and health domains, for example, also experience a high turnover of graduate employees. Moreover, it can be a vicious cycle; the high turnover of staff makes it difficult for staff to develop ways to stabilise turnover. Some of the responsible factors are mentioned above, but we can also add the following: under-recognition by funding bodies of the complexity and skills required for language revival; under-preparation of linguists on the practical, technical and emotional levels; under-appreciation by different stakeholders of the demands of the job, including living in perhaps remote locations; and an over-emphasis on the role of non-Aboriginal/external linguists to ensure the short and long-term success of language work.

6. CONCLUSION. The range of the linguist's role is as much implied as it is overtly stated. It is vague and it is context specific. As an agent of the language centre, the graduate linguist enters a space of varying expectations not all of which will be immediately apparent, but which can perhaps be predicted.

The exhibition discussed here required a range of skills and beliefs that happened to coincide with my own, though they were not largely acquired during my formal linguistic training. The frequent frustration I felt at not being able to attend to the urgent language work is unavoidable because we operate in an ever shrinking space with limited resources – human, temporal, financial, linguistic. At the same time, the conceptualisation of the field is expanding. Greater collaboration between the academy and language centre workers along *new linguist* lines, such as is being practiced by the Resource Network for Linguistic Diversity (RNLD), might lead to a greater mutual understanding of the requirements of the linguist and a cross-cultural and highly technical expansion of this linguistic field. I believe *new linguistics*, as defined by Florey, consciously caters for these tensions and creates a collaborative and cross-cultural conceptualisation of the linguist (Linguist-as-Bicultural-Language-Specialist perhaps) that is developing in Australia in the work of the RNLD and internationally (Mihás 2012).

The graduate linguist will need to be conscious of what their role will be in the evolving field of language revival: to what extent is the work to be limited to the skills of their academic training and ambitions, or a more applied, cooperative and socially-based approach?

The breadth of the role reflects the scope of language revitalisation in all aspects of everyday life; there are many non-linguistic skills that contribute to language revitalisation. Linguists' professional development needs to happen on multiple fronts, for example through work placements and a range of elective units at university in areas such as applied linguistics, health and/or justice. The developing linguist needs to be flexible, open and perhaps creative enough to embrace these multifarious demands, which are not essentially put on them by the community, but by all the factors in restoring a fairer sociolinguistic balance to Australia.

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