

‘I just relexified this one’: Translation processes in language revival texts

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In language revival, text creation is one of the key areas where language development work is focussed. As texts are predominantly developed from the starting point of a text in English, methods used for translation are crucially important in determining the form of the end product. In this paper, we present a representative selection of texts to illustrate different strategies used within translation processes.

The salience of lexical gaps creates a pressure on translators to develop alternatives where a word cannot readily be found. In contrast, the lower salience of grammar allows translators greater flexibility in their focus on grammatical elements. Priorities, resource availability, and salient elements for individual translators at particular times function as drivers in relation to both grammar and lexicon.

In studying language revival outputs, we note the intrinsic connection of language and sociopolitical context. To understand the use of forms and structures in these texts requires an view of revival languages as inherently in-process, being researched, learned and developed in a single complex process.

Keywords Language revival; translation; Aboriginal languages; lexical development; grammatical development

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1. Introduction

In language revival, the creation of texts is one of the key areas where the work of language development is focussed. As texts are most frequently developed from the starting point of an existing or created text in English, the methods used for translation are crucially important in determining the form of the end product. In this paper, we present a representative selection of texts, and sequences of drafts, to explore the kinds of strategies and resources available to and employed by their writers. Patterns evident within the texts reveal a range of translation strategies, leading to different outcomes for particular texts.

Our data is drawn from a case study corpus of six language communities across the eastern states of Australia, through the language programs at Parkes (Wiradjuri), Nambucca Heads (Gumbaynggirr), Gippsland (Gunai/Kŭrnai), the southwest coast of Victoria (Keerraywoorroong and other Gunditjmara languages), Geelong (Wathaurong) and Hervey Bay (Butchulla). These case studies form the core data for a five-year project, *Meeting Point*¹, which aims to develop an initial typology of revival languages, involving theoretical elaboration of the linguistic structures of revival languages in their associated social contexts. This is intended to address a long-standing gap between linguistic-theoretical models of language development and the lived experiences of language development in Aboriginal communities, thereby increasing the ability of both linguists and communities to understand and support processes of language revival. Data for the present paper draws primarily on 25 texts from these six case studies, plus an additional three partially relexified stories (in the Victorian languages Boonwurrung (Briggs 2008), Yorta Yorta (Atkinson 2013a) and Taungurung (Healy nd). The Keerraywoorroong case study data was collected and in many cases created by Vicki Couzens, one of the authors of this paper.

Investigating texts in revival languages requires the researcher to adopt a position in regard to data which is produced only through people researching, constructing and learning their languages in a single, complex process (Eira 2010). Crucial to

¹ *Meeting Point* is a five-year project hosted by the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages throughout, in collaboration with La Trobe University for three years, and funded in different phases by AIATSIS and the ARC. See <http://www.vaclang.org.au/projects/meeting-point-language-revival-typology-project.html> (accessed 29/04/2014).

our position is the view that the sociopolitical context of language revival is not separable from this process and its outcomes. The findings of the *Meeting Point* project support a view of language revival in Australia as intrinsically connected with a process of healing and decolonisation (Couzens, Eira & Stebbins, 2014). As Patricia Rosborough puts it:

...the processes of colonization that have suppressed Indigenous languages have left scars that are barriers to the revitalization of Indigenous languages and that, to revitalize Kwak'wala, we must overcome those barriers; that is, we must decolonize and heal. (Rosborough 2012: 32)

This requires us to define our object of research in terms of its purpose: people getting their languages back for themselves, according to their own developing practices of language and language revival. It requires us to work within a framework of the views and personal responses of people reviving their languages as to what Language² is, and therefore what language revival is. Our analytical position, then, includes the understanding that usage in the present constitutes valid data with which to describe the language under study. It also assumes a view of revival languages as necessarily in-process, so that the study of data available now is also a description-in-process. While a description of any living language is particular to a given social context and period of time, the rapidity of change and need for constant, conscious decision-making in language revival heighten the salience of this factor.

Implications of this for the study of texts include an approach of considering each text on its own terms, as opposed to assessing it in terms of other possibilities, such as by comparison with grammatical analyses of historical records, or the typology of Aboriginal languages in general.

The focus of this paper is the way that revival languages are developing through the process of writing texts. We observe that the centrality of text creation in many language revival programs results in significant amounts of new Language forms and structures, as well as functioning to instantiate, in the present-day language, forms and structures available to the writers through analyses of archival

² It is customary in language revival contexts to use the term 'Language' as a general term for Aboriginal languages. A text can be said to be 'in Language', and the term can be used as a descriptor: 'a Language word'. When used in this way, 'Language' – as well as 'Ancestors', 'Elders' and a few other words – is also capitalised, as a respect convention.

Language records. As we noted above, texts are almost invariably developed from the starting point of an existing text in English. From this starting point, people locate and work through various kinds of resources to produce a Language text. The resulting text, then, strongly reflects the methods that people use to transform the one text into the other, and the kinds of resources that are available for people to use to make that transformation.

Part of the richness in our data is that in many cases we have been able to discuss the process of text creation with the writers. This has enabled us to ask questions such as why a particular word was chosen, what was the context of its choice, and what resources were available to draw on at that point in time. We have been able to hear detailed stories about the process of investigation and the authors' intentions. This adds significant explanatory depth to an approach of simply analysing the text itself.

2. Relexification and translation

A key conceptual and terminological issue is the contrast between relexification and translation. Definitions of code-switching also come into play. The term relexification is perhaps most familiar in pidgin and creole studies, where it captures the whole-language process applied to 'various lexicons on the basis of a single superstratum language [which] provides the speakers of the substratum languages with a common vocabulary' (Lefebvre, 1998: 35). Relexification in the context of Aboriginal language revival occurs in the reverse direction – the substitution of Language words for words in English. In this context, the level of scope is not the whole language, but a given text. Sandefur (1983) describes the use of considered relexification as part of a language revival strategy. He relates language learning situations in Australia to a teaching method developed for Quileute (North America), describing 'exercises in which the students inserted as many Quileute words as they knew' (Sandefur 1983: 8). Similarly, in this paper, we use the term relexification to refer to the individual substitution of selected words in a given text.

The density of Language in a text varies. In the present study of eight partially relexified texts, ranging in length from 200-500 words, the level of word insertion

ranged from 6% to 18.7%. Some texts contain only a couple of words in a paragraph, while others use several words in a sentence. If these were examples of spontaneous speech in fully bilingual communities, these would be examples of *code-switching*. Because they are instead examples of deliberate, planned language alternation by people who are learning the language even as they use it, with strategic use of an English framework, we prefer to use the term *relexification* here. Thus a passage such as Example (1) is consistent with typical patterns of code switching (Wei 2000:17) in which one language sets the grammatical framework:

- (1) Narrative history (Keerray Woorroong, Couzens 2009) (Glosses inserted by the authors, in square brackets)

Weetpurpoin softly whimpers, small sounds. Staring wide eyed at her koorrookee [grandmother] and the other ngeerrang [mother(s)] of her clan gazing back at her. she nuzꞤles for her ngeerrang [mother('s)] ngapang [breast] searching, seeking nourishment, comfort

Our use of the term *relexification* for such texts signals both the intentional planning involved in its production, and the sociopolitical functions of the relexification process, as revealed through discussions with the writers of these texts. In relexifying texts, the translators are stating their claim on a story about their culture, history or lands, as well as educating their own and other people about the Language words for various key elements of the story. As Zabus (1995:318) describes for West African languages, relexification:

...transcends the merely methodological. On the methodological level, it stems from a need to solve an immediate artistic problem. On the strategic level, relexification seeks to subvert the linguistically codified, to decolonize the language of early, colonial literature.

The focus of Zabus' interest is relexification as a means of 'translation' from a (suppressed) West African mother tongue into a colonising European language. For Zabus, then, relexification serves to subvert the dominant language by evoking the ways of the mother tongue even while using a European language. We argue that a similar goal is achieved in our context despite the opposite

direction of the translation: in relexifying, translators are making their language/culture mark on the English text.

In our corpus, a general tendency is to replace particular kinds of words – particularly Ancestor/animal names (average 29.5% of all Language tokens). Language words for people (such as ‘woman’ or ‘son’) are also very common at an average of 24% of Language tokens. Other well represented semantic fields are environment terms (such as ‘creek’ or ‘path’), colour terms, natural elements (‘water’, ‘fire’), traditional foods, and then a range of more idiosyncratic selections depending on the text and the writer’s interests. Verbs (less than 1% on average) and closed word classes (in only one story) are unusual targets for relexification, but not unrepresented. While major lexical classes have at times been considered more likely as targets of relexification, it has been demonstrated, for instance by Lefebvre (1998), that functional classes can also undergo relexification. We will illustrate this further below.

We contrast this use of *relexification* with the term *translation*, referring to Language writing strategies that have both a lexical and a grammatical focus. This does not necessarily map readily onto the more standard or at least literary concept of ‘translation’. *Translation* generally implies a goal of completely reworking a text, in terms of not only the lexicon and grammar, but also metaphoric language, stylistics, and norms of communication of the target language in a particular genre. Certainly, translators and writers in revival languages can and do explore metaphoric, stylistic and other discursive possibilities while building in and towards a given literary language culture. However, our data indicates it is more common at this stage of language revival to treat translation as a more procedural creative activity – starting from English, and converting one element, one word, one grammatical structure at a time.

In this context, it can be useful to think of the relationship between relexification and translation as existing on a continuum. Low density relexification is at one end and full translation into Language is at the other. Within this continuum, the intermediate space is most clearly represented by texts in which Language words have replaced all of the English words, but the writers have essentially left the English grammar intact, except for simply omitting most of the grammatical words. It should be noted that some language revival practitioners regard this as

relexification, but others view it as translation. Our title is taken from a comment made by Vicki Couzens one day, in reference to an intermediate text of this type she had been working on. By saying “I just relexified this one”, she indicates the possibility of translation at a grammatical as well as a lexical level, and is overtly categorising this particular text as focussed only on lexical exchange. We will refer to the replacement of all English words with Language words as ‘full’ relexification, while the insertion of selected words only will be denoted as ‘partial’ relexification.

One of the barriers to full translation with Language grammar is that complete grammars of revival languages cannot normally be retrieved from archival sources (see Amery 2000:114-141 for a detailed case study in this regard). A full translation which adequately reflected the content of the original would therefore, at times, require new grammatical forms and structures to be developed. Writers face similar problems with records of the lexicon. Over and above the types of lexical gaps that might be expected as a result of the changes wrought by modern lifestyles, historical sources typically only record a portion of the vocabulary that obviously would have been available to speakers of the language before colonisation. Across the two broad categories of relexification and translation, writers use a range of strategies for filling in the gaps where either words or grammatical categories are not available.

In the following sections, we (i) describe the uses of Available lexicon and grammar in our dataset, (ii) explore strategies for developing lexicon and grammar, and (iii) compare the occurrence of Available and Developed lexicon and grammar in relexified and translated texts. This structure is summarised in Table 1. We are using the terms *Available lexicon* and *Available grammar* to refer to forms and structures that have been handed down or retrieved from archival sources. The terms *Developed lexicon* and *Developed grammar* refer to new forms and structures that a speaker/learner has introduced into the language. We discuss sources for these new materials below.

	Lexicon		Grammar	
	Available	Developed	Available	Developed
Relexification	✓	✓	~	X
Translation	✓	✓	✓	~

✓ = frequent, ~ = emergent, X = not observed

Table 1: *Uses of language in text creation*

The following sections work through samples of Available and Developed lexicon and grammar in turn, for our two broad translation types, describing some of the strategies people use in creating texts.

3. Focus on the Lexicon

Table 1 above indicates both that there is widespread use of Available lexicon, and that people are confident to develop their own lexical resources as part of translation processes. This is apparent in both relexification and translation.

3.1 Available lexicon

We begin by exploring some strategies for the use of Available lexicon associated with relexification, while also exemplifying an interesting translation method. Examples 2 and 3 below represent stages of translation by Vicki Couzens, as a contribution to an edited collection of creation stories. Couzens' translation process involved working the text through several distinct stages to a final version which reflects traditional grammar as well as lexicon.

Stage (1): Rewrite original English text (Example 2)

The original text is written in a fairly old and complex style. The goal of rewriting is to obtain a grammatically simpler English base which will be easier to work with at the stage of incorporating Language grammatical constructions. In this stage, we see that Couzens has changed some Language words from the starting text into English words. This allows her to focus on the meaning of these words

at the outset. Deen Marr is both glossed and left in Language, as this is a place name which is also translatable at lexical level: literally ‘these people’. As Deen Marr³ is a place of rest for spirits of the dead, this word-level meaning suggests that the place can be named only indirectly.

- (2) Traditional story Stage 1: Rewritten English (Keerraywoorroong and Dhauwurd Wurrung, V Couzens In press a)

Original

...called Tarn Weerreeng which has a path between the land and Deen Maarr.

Rewritten

...there is a spirit path there between the land and that place/Deen Maar.

Stage (2): Relexify using Available lexicon (Example 3)

Couzens primarily uses the community dictionary (Krishna-Pillay 2006), with recourse to Blake (2003) (a grammatical analysis of historical records, with an extensive wordlist). At the relexification stage, words which were present in the original English text are among those (re)inserted, such as *tharn* ‘path’. Interestingly, a few grammatical words are also added – *bakarr* ‘between’ and *ba* ‘and’ are shown here. This indicates that the prevalence of closed or minor word classes in relexification may be closely responsive to their availability in the community or other commonly-used dictionary.

- (3) Traditional story Stage 2: Relexification (Keerraywoorroong and Dhauwurd Wurrung, V Couzens) (Glossed English words have been italicised to assist identification with the corresponding Language words in the line below.)

there is a spirit	<i>path</i>	there	<i>between</i>	the	<i>land</i>	<i>and</i>	that place/	<i>Deen Maar</i>
	<i>tharn</i>		<i>bakarr</i>		<i>meerreng</i>	<i>ba</i>		<i>Deen Maar</i>

³ Variant spellings maintained as per original.

Couzens then went on to a further two stages in her translation (not illustrated here): Stage (3): Lexical development for remaining words, and Stage (4): Incorporating selected features of Available grammar.

3.2 *Developed Lexicon*

Our data shows that, where specific words in an English text are not found in whatever resources are available, there is widespread confidence to develop words in major word classes. Examples 4-8 show a small range of strategies for lexical development in both relexified (4, 6) and translated (5, 7, 8) texts.

Example 4 is drawn from a sequence of storyboards on public display in a park on Gunai/Kurnai Country. Calquing is common in language revival, as in *kirndan Jiddelek* (jump+frog) ‘leapfrog’.

- (4) Storyboards: Calques (Gunai/Kurnai, L Solomon-Dent)

<i>Ngeth</i>	<i>il</i>	<i>Jimmialong</i>	<i>boolarumah</i>	<i>kirndan</i>	<i>Jiddelek</i>
turtle	and	platypus	play	jump	frog

‘Turtle and platypus played leapfrog’

Example 5 is from the script for a claymation that was published on DVD as the culmination of a school project. This illustrates another popular means of lexical development: compounding. This is frequently done by imaginatively recombining words in the Available lexicon, as in *yerra nyal* joyful+word ‘joke’.

- (5) Claymation DVD: Compounding (Wathaurong, D Tournier 2007)

<i>Yerra</i>	<i>nyal</i>	<i>bengadak</i>	<i>karree!</i>
joyful	word	we	tell

‘We could tell jokes!’

At other times, usually outside of a specific text translation project, compounding may be effected by imitating compound patterns recorded for the language, as in

Narungga: *mara baldha* (hand+clothes) ‘gloves’, by analogy with the earlier recorded *dhina baldha* (foot+clothes) ‘trousers’ (Eira & Wanganeen 2006: 40, 42).

Example 6 is from a storybook published with colour images, one of a series of 6. It contains a Language story with English ‘subtitles’ underneath the picture on each page. In Example 6, the English word ‘confused’ leads to a semantic extension strategy for ‘feeling (oneself) died (dead)’, as this exact word was not in the community dictionary. It is unfortunately typical of the historical records available to people reviving their languages that emotion terms are very largely missing.

- (6) Original story: Semantic extension (Butchulla, Bonner & Bonner 2007)

<i>Bula</i>	<i>biralunbar</i>	<i>doolinge.</i>	<i>Ngai</i>	<i>buranga-li-nj</i>	<i>balumi.</i>
two	many	shell	I	feeling (REFL)	die-pst

“There’s too many shells. I’m feeling confused”

Perhaps surprising in Example 6 is the use of (English) homophones as a lexical development strategy: *bula* ‘two’ for ‘too’. Moreover, while it is easy to imagine this strategy being employed accidentally, the experience and training of this particular writer suggests that it was done in full awareness of the semantic transformation being effected. So we were very interested to see, here and elsewhere, that a homophone can function as an option for translation where necessary.

While the above use of homophones appears to be an ad hoc response to gaps in the records, the emergence of homophones is also evident through bifurcation, and particularly grammaticisation – perhaps largely by analogy with English grammaticalised words. Example 7 shows one such development, where *wooloon* ‘back’, is derived from the recorded body part term:

- (7) Claymation DVD: Grammaticisation (Wathaurong, D Tournier 2007)

Ngobeeyt wooloorn nyoorran bengadak?
 water back how 1PLINC

“How will we get our water back?”

In our data generally, it is very common to find changes in word class without any signalling morphology. This is probably done for the most part unconsciously, and is readily available as a strategy largely because English words frequently belong to multiple word classes, for example in the large set of noun/verb pairs.

The definition of *borrowing* may differ amongst language revival practitioners from how it is typically understood within linguistics. In linguistics, a language is usually defined in terms of a group of dialects, so that many words are understood to be common to some or all of those dialects. For contemporary revival language practice, however, to use a term from a related dialect that was not recorded for one’s own would be seen as *borrowing* from another *language*, and so permissions protocols may come into play. Borrowing from an unrelated language is rare or nonexistent in our data. In the language community sense, then, the extract in Example 8, from a song by Vicki Couzens, uses both her own language, KR (Keerraywoorroong), and words borrowed from related dialects K(oornkopanoot), TY(akoortwoorroong), W(ooloowoorroong) and KE(ewoorroong):

- (8) Birthing lullaby: Borrowing (within the language group) (Gunditjmarra languages, V Couzens)

<i>Ngowata ngowata</i>	<i>koornong</i>	<i>poopoop</i>
come, come	little	baby
(KR	K, TY	K, W, KE)

“Come, come little baby”

Finally, some of our data exhibits lexical development through derivational morphology – a keen interest of Vicki Couzens in particular. One derivational

affix she makes frequent use of is the nominaliser *-(t)ity*, as in *yakeen-itj-i* ‘[to the] dreaming place’ (dreaming-NOM-LOC/ALL) (*Deen Marr*).

As we have shown above, approaches to the use and development of lexical resources are not strongly distinguished between relexification and translation modes, if at all. As we turn to grammar, however, we will see translation and relexification more strongly differentiated in terms of Available and Developed Language elements.

4. Grammar

As suggested by Table 1 above, lexicon is more readily incorporated into translations than traditional grammar. A useful concept for understanding this difference is *salience*. The salience of lexical gaps creates definite pressures on writers to develop alternatives. If the writer is not able to find the word they have chosen to replace but they are committed to having everything in Language, then there is no way to avoid the problem of those missing words. If this word replacement problem cannot be solved using looking-up strategies, it must be filled by some other method. In contrast, grammar is less salient. With the readily available strategy of using structures familiar from English to keep meaning clear – such as the use of subject-verb-object word order – other forms of grammar are less critical to effective text creation (see Goodfellow 2003 for a positive view of this in language education). There is a pressing semantic demand to deal with problems of lexical replacement that is rather less compelling for the grammar.

In a relexification process, traditional grammar is typically not incorporated at all, because writers understand themselves to be writing within an English structure. They are not ‘translating’, so much as ‘inserting words’. However, for various writers we have worked with, the idea of including aspects of grammar is beginning to emerge, at discussion level. For example, in the final stages of the recently published storybooks *Yurri’s birthday* (2013b) and *Yurri’s manung* (2013c), author Sue Atkinson was considering using the Yorta Yorta possessive *-nj* (palatal nasal). This idea was withdrawn only at the last minute, when she realised that *Yurri-nj* unfortunately sounds like ‘urine’. As more data on the possibility of incorporating components of traditional grammar emerges, it will be interesting to

see whether it is still reasonable to posit a line of practice distinguishing relexification (with inflexional elements) from translation (with more syntactic disruption of the English original).

4.1 Available grammar

A common strategy for translation using Available grammar is to focus on one particular element at a time – popular choices being the locative, and the pronoun paradigms. Conversations with various language revival practitioners reveals a general awareness that pronoun paradigms are particularly rich in Aboriginal languages, and authors appreciate the iconic difference from English that this can give their Language texts. This can result in a noticeable emphasis on pronouns – particularly a prominent use of free pronouns, which also reflects the starting point of a text in English structures, as shown in Examples 9 & 10.

Example 9 shows the use of the free possessive pronoun *ngadhi* ‘my’ and the locative suffix *-ga*:

(9) Scripted conversation (Wiradjuri, G Anderson & K James)

<i>Ngadhi</i>	<i>gibir</i>	<i>ngurrung -ga.</i>
1SG.POSS	man	home-LOC

My man at home.

Example 10 shows the second person plural free pronoun *bengoot*, doubled with the bound form *-at*, and the third person object suffix *-nuk*, which assists in the cognitive separation of two predicates (effectively, ‘Have you seen that old frog/[he] is big’).

(10) Claymation DVD (Wathaurong, D Tournier 2007)

<i>Ngarrwa-at</i>	<i>bengoot</i>	<i>tarndyon</i>	<i>dyeerrm-nuk</i>	<i>deerdabeel?</i>
know-2PL	2PL	old	frog-3OBJ	big

Have you seen how big that old frog is?

Our Gumbaynggirr case study reveals another approach, which is currently raising some interest. In the Gumbaynggirr language program, supported by Many Rivers Aboriginal Language Centre, Language is taught on the principle of modelling. Language is modelled, largely orally, in a traditional grammar framework, expanded one feature at a time, according to a method developed and taught by Steven Greymorning (see Greymorning 1997). Sample phrases and sentences are imitated, then extended, with the aim of developing a mental framework of the target grammar over time. Example 11 is extracted from a scripted and recorded conversation, written in the context of this ‘whole grammar’ approach. If this text is translated at all, the ‘translation’ appears to be conceptualised quite differently to the procedure evidenced in some of the other texts that we have.

(11) Scripted conversation (Gumbaynggirr, authors unknown)

Ngii wala! Ngaya ngambii -bay.
yes maybe I drink -needing/wanting

‘Yes maybe! I need a drink.’

Yaam daambarr darruy. Gala Rosie, ngalii yanaa
this damper good but Rosie we two go

garrada Lands Council meeting -gu.
quick! Lands Council meeting -ALL

‘This damper’s good! But Rosie, you and me (got to) go quickly to a Lands Council meeting.’

It is possible that the existence at some level of such a mental grammar framework makes the grammatical integration of an English phrase like “Lands Council meeting” more likely, following the code-switching pattern of strong languages. In other words, rather than inserting Language words into English, this conversation demonstrates code-switching from within a Gumbaynggirr base. What we are seeing here may be a move off the end of the relexification - translation continuum altogether, towards writing conceived in the target language from the outset. (Note that we have not had opportunity to discuss this question overtly with Gumbaynggirr people to date.)

One final strategy for use of Available grammar is the adoption of an iconic word order. Where records and their analyses demonstrate a default word order, or perhaps a number of specific clause- or phrase-level ordering principles, translators may adopt these as a general rule. In Wathaurong, for example, the indication in available records of *verb first* as the default word order (Blake 1998: 84) is highlighted in texts such as the following:

(12) Claymation DVD (Wathaurong, D Tournier 2007)

Ngarrwa-at bengoot tarndyon dyeerrm-nuk deerdabeel?
 know-2PL 2PL old frog-3OBJ/POSS big

Have you seen how big that old frog is?

Gabrrak dyeenang-ik bengadak yan
 tread foot-1 OBJ.IND/POSS 1PLINC go

We will trample on his feet.

This translation strategy highlights clearly an aspect of the use of Available grammar in general – that it is not necessarily reinstantiating the grammar as evidenced in the recorded history of the language. Rather, it is making use of this evidence to create something which is simultaneously old and new. Discussions with language revival practitioners confirm that one of the most important goals of this type of grammar incorporation is to noticeably mark the text as having a different foundation from that of English language-culture.

4.2 *Developed grammar*

While elements of traditional grammar are commonly used in translation mode, it is quite challenging to find ways to develop grammatical structures as part of the translation of the text, when appropriate grammar is not readily available. This is shown in the Table 1, where Available and Developed grammar are far less consistently distributed over relexified and translated texts.

There are a range of ways for people to respond to apparent gaps in the grammar that is directly retrievable from historical records. These include:

- filling gaps on the basis of a more or less morphologically transparent paradigm
- reconstituting required grammatical elements through research into grammatical development processes in other Aboriginal languages
- establishing a particular use for an attested affix whose function is not fully clear on an analytical basis (such as Taungurung *-djak* as EMPH, suggested in Blake 1991: 78, and Keerraywoorroong *-pa* as CAUS, more tentatively suggested in Blake 2003: 50)
- borrowing grammar from a (related) language (see for example the role of related languages in developing Narungga tense affixes, in Eira & Wanganeen 2006: 32-33)
- establishing a strategy borrowed from English, for example using an interrogative for relativising or complementising functions (see discussion of grammaticisation in Example (7) above).

We will briefly explore the first two of these strategies.

Pronouns, being highly salient in language revival as noted above, can be an early target for filling gaps. The process of filling out this paradigm for Gunai has been described in Eira & Solomon-Dent (2010). This project involved examination of historical sources, the use of productive morphology, and decision-making which moves beyond a linguistic analysis. The goal was to expand a paradigm already in use, balancing the goal of reclaiming older semantico-grammatical components (particularly the inclusive/exclusive distinction, and ergative/absolutive options in 1sg and 2sg) without destabilising the knowledge and usage already established in the speaker-learner community. For example, the revised pronoun paradigm includes *njinde* (2sgSUBJ) and *ngingoo* (2sgOBJ), where previously community resources had listed *njinde*, *nungoo*, *ngowo* as ‘you’ (undistinguished, with *njinde* the most commonly used), as well as *waru* (1PL.INCL) and *werna* (1PL.EXCL), where previous resources had listed only *werna* ‘we, us’.

This kind of dedicated paradigm completion is rarely a component of text translation. As in the case of Gunai/Kurnai pronoun development, grammar development, beyond what is readily available in historical or analysed sources, is

more likely to be a focused project in itself than a side activity in the context of text creation. It can, however, be triggered by ongoing text translation activity because this raises people's awareness of grammatical gaps. In addition, for some people who work in this area for an extended period, it becomes clear that access to a greater range of pre-established grammar would speed up translation projects significantly.

A more likely, though still emerging, text creation process is to reconstitute individual grammar components likely to have been part of the language, and/or needed for a full range of expressive functions. While doing the research for writing a creation story in Koornkopanooot, Vicki Couzens became determined to develop an inchoative, filling a likely gap in the traditional grammar resources of her language. Example 13, from this story as translated by Couzens, includes her newly developed inchoative suffix:

- (13) Traditional story (Koornkopanooot, V Couzens In press b)

Wart-kat marrang ba kayap ngeerrangoon Kurrokeheear-mayapa, the Pleaides.
 behind six [five+and+one] sister Kurrokeheear-**INCH**

“The 6 sisters [left behind] became the Pleaides, Kuurrokeheear, the Seven Sisters.”

As well as a general interest in the goal of reconstituting the language in this way, Couzens' determination arose out of her understanding that *becoming* something, changing into something, transforming, was so intrinsic to Aboriginal epistemologies that a grammaticised way of expressing it seemed to be paramount. A lexical way of expressing this was not deep enough.

Without pre-empting an extended account of Couzens' process of language development that she plans to write up separately, suffice to say that she ascertained by reference to Dixon (2002: 75), that for some Aboriginal languages, the inchoative appears to have been derived through a process of semantic bleaching of either 'make' or 'get'. As shown in Example 13, Couzens decided to derive an inchoative for the Koornkopanooot story from *mayapa* 'make'.

Due to the low level of attention to grammar evidenced in relexification, we have not seen any instance of grammar development within a relexification strategy. It is conceivable, however, that translators undertaking a ‘full relexification’, or what we have identified as a writing process in the intermediate space on a relexification–translation continuum, may at some point begin to consider possibilities such as those outlined above.

Finally, it is important to note that writers and/or language groups may also choose overtly to stay with English grammar, either for the whole program or for selected areas of it. For example, Lynnette Solomon-Dent argues that the use of an English framework is supportive of language learning in the early stages, helping people accustom themselves to other aspects of the language.

If I try to do it in the proper Aboriginal grammatical way, they’re all mixed up, we just want to get them talking.

Lynnette Solomon-Dent (Couzens, Eira & Stebbins 2014: 171)

In this fully relexified example, from a text by Solomon-Dent used in the signs described at Example 4, not only is the base grammar English (omitting TAM morphology), but also the idiom ‘here and there’ is calqued:

(14) Storyboards (Gunai/Kŭrnai, L Solomon-Dent)

Bataluk kirndan tinkara il manana bee-im-bah nungal bullon.
goanna jump here and there puff his belly

‘Bataluk strutted to and fro, puffing out his stomach.’

For this teacher, who has both qualifications and long experience in language teaching, the point of writing texts in this way is to present the language in highly accessible forms. This is intended to support people’s confidence to ‘get talking’. If she assesses her students as potentially confused or discouraged by suffixes and unfamiliar structures in their reading, then she is clear that teaching grammar does not take the highest priority.

5. Conclusion

Our work in the Meeting Point project has shown us how revival languages, particularly their lexicon and grammar, are to a significant extent built up as people make texts, in response to requests or projects as they arise. The choices that writers make reflect the resources that are available to them and the priorities they have for the text, as well as their consideration of the audience and their perceived needs.

This brief study of translation strategies in revival languages highlights an interesting feature of language revival. While an assumed or preferred pathway may be that Language in the community emerges from language learning, in turn based on analysis of available records and memories of Language, in practice the pressure on community language workers is such that the production of texts itself may be driving much of the implementation and development of Language. Rather than being able to research and learn the language to a certain level of competency before developing resources and producing texts of various kinds, language revival practitioners are tending to start with a translation project, and research and develop Language to their chosen level for that text. This means that an approach which focused predominantly on the linguistics of a text, or its relation to a historical analysis of the language, would be unable to adequately account for choices made and the final output. It means that Language is inherently in-process at all times, as people build on what they already know or have decided for a previous project, adjusting this knowledge in successive projects as community decision-making and resourcing develops.

Being driven by practical needs and the urgency of language reclamation for immediate contexts, the choice and development of both lexicon and grammar do not always follow predictable lines. One way of understanding this is that the languages are in some sense moving back into being living languages. This view is compatible with the variation, irregularity, change and individuality that we are seeing in revival language text – even if the type or level of variation differs from what we might expect of an established language. Certainly, too, the variation is at this stage developing faster than standardised resourcing and teaching can support. This would also mean, as we have noticed throughout this project, that revival languages are very much a new type of language, which cannot be

understood primarily from the perspective of historical records, but which become comprehensible first and foremost on their own terms (Eira 2010). It suggests that linguists involved in these programs might best support the gradual building of language by following the directions that emerge through the range of activities which constitute community language revival. As we might expect given the emergent nature of these languages, the goals in linguistic terms are not clear – but perhaps the pathways are.

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