Language ecologies.
A tool for understanding linkages between Indigenous languages and well-being

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Welcome to Canberra
Ngunnawal Country

SISTER CITY OF
Nara, Japan
Beijing, China

FRIENDSHIP CITY OF
Dili, East Timor

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge and celebrate the First Australians on whose traditional lands we meet and work, and whose cultures are among the oldest continuing cultures in human history.

Indigenous languages and well-being

- based on current work for upcoming National Indigenous Languages Report (NILR) by Pillar 2

- led by Department of Communication & the Arts (DOCA)

- International Year of Indigenous Languages (IYIL)

- NOT pre-empting NILR

- reporting on language ecologies and methodologies

Venn, D., Dinku, Y., Markham, F., Simpson, J., Angelo, D., O'Shannessy, C., Kral, I., Hunt, J. & Dreise, T.(2019). *Indigenous language use and well-being. Preliminary findings from the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey [Final draft Feb 26]*. CAEPR & ARC CoEDL, ANU

Angelo,D., O'Shannessy, C., Simpson, J., Kral, I., Smith, H. & Browne, E. (2019). *Well-being and Indigenous Language Ecologies (WILE): a strengths-based approach . Literature review, National Indigenous Languages Report, Pillar 2. [Final draft Feb 26]*. ARC Centre of Excellence for the Dynamics of Language, Australian National University

Overview

- Evidence base & First Nations' languages
  - language diversity
  - language data

- Language ecologies
  - Importance for linking to well-being
  - Operationalising Language Ecologies

- Empirical Model
  - empirical strategy
  - well-being variables
  - language variables
  - other explanatory variables

First Nations' voices: Languages & well-being

It has opened up many doors in my Gumbaynggirr language journey across all facets of my life and has given me back my pride as an Aboriginal man. I am passing on my knowledge and skills to other Aboriginal people so they can feel the way I feel. I feel more connected to my language, my homeland, my people, the spirits of my homeland and most of all to my ancestors.

Michael Jarrett, author profile, Bellingen Writers Festival 2016,

Centre for Ecological Learning

http://www.cel.org.au/uncle-michael-jarrett/

Knowing that our own language and culture play the biggest role in growing our spirit, our connection to our land and the stories of our grandmother and grandfathers. With our language we know where we belong, we know the names from our country and Jukurrpa (Dreaming stories and designs). Young people can't lead a good, healthy and happy life without this. Language and culture come first. When kids feel lost and their spirit is weak then they can't learn well or be healthy.

Warlpiri Patu Kurlangu Jaru,

submission to Our Land Our Languages parliamentary report

(Commonwealth of Australia, 2012: 11)

Research on languages & well-being

Link noted across a range of well-being domains in Australia and overseas settler-colonial societies

bringing a language perspective to inform this work

- Biddle & Swee (2012). The relationship between well-being and indigenous land, language and culture in Australia. *Australian Geographer*, *43*(3), 215–232.

- Dockery, Alfred M. (2010). Culture and well-being: The case of Indigenous Australians. *Social Indicators Research*, *99*(2), 315–332.

- Schultz, Abbott, Yamaguchi, & Cairney. (2018). Australian indigenous land management, ecological knowledge and languages for conservation. *EcoHealth*.

- Chandler & Lalonde. (1998). Cultural continuity as a hedge against suicide in Canada's First Nations. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, *35*(2), 191–219.

- Reid, John, Varona, Golda, Fisher, Martin, & Smith, Cherryl. (2016). Understanding Maori 'lived' culture to determine cultural connectedness and wellbeing. *Journal of Population Research*, *33*(1), 31–49.

Traditional Languages

The AIATSIS map of Indigenous Australia.

David R Horton (creator), © Aboriginal Studies Press, AIATSIS, and Auslig/Sinclair, Knight, Merz, 1996.

Traditional Indigenous Languages

- many hundreds spoken before invasion & colonisation

- language, land/seas, culture & spirituality bound together
  - sense of identity, belonging, agency and purpose

- around 13 languages still learned as L1s by children
  - everyday language of community or family
  - maintenance programs, incl. bilingual education

- many more still spoken, e.g. by older people

- some remembered, e.g. words still in use, from childhood

- some from historical sources or linguistic documentation
  - relearned for occasional use, special purposes; to teach others
  - "L2" programs of different types – target language

- **Census: speaks a language other than English at home**
  - **meaning of responses mediated according to L1, L2 or revival contexts**
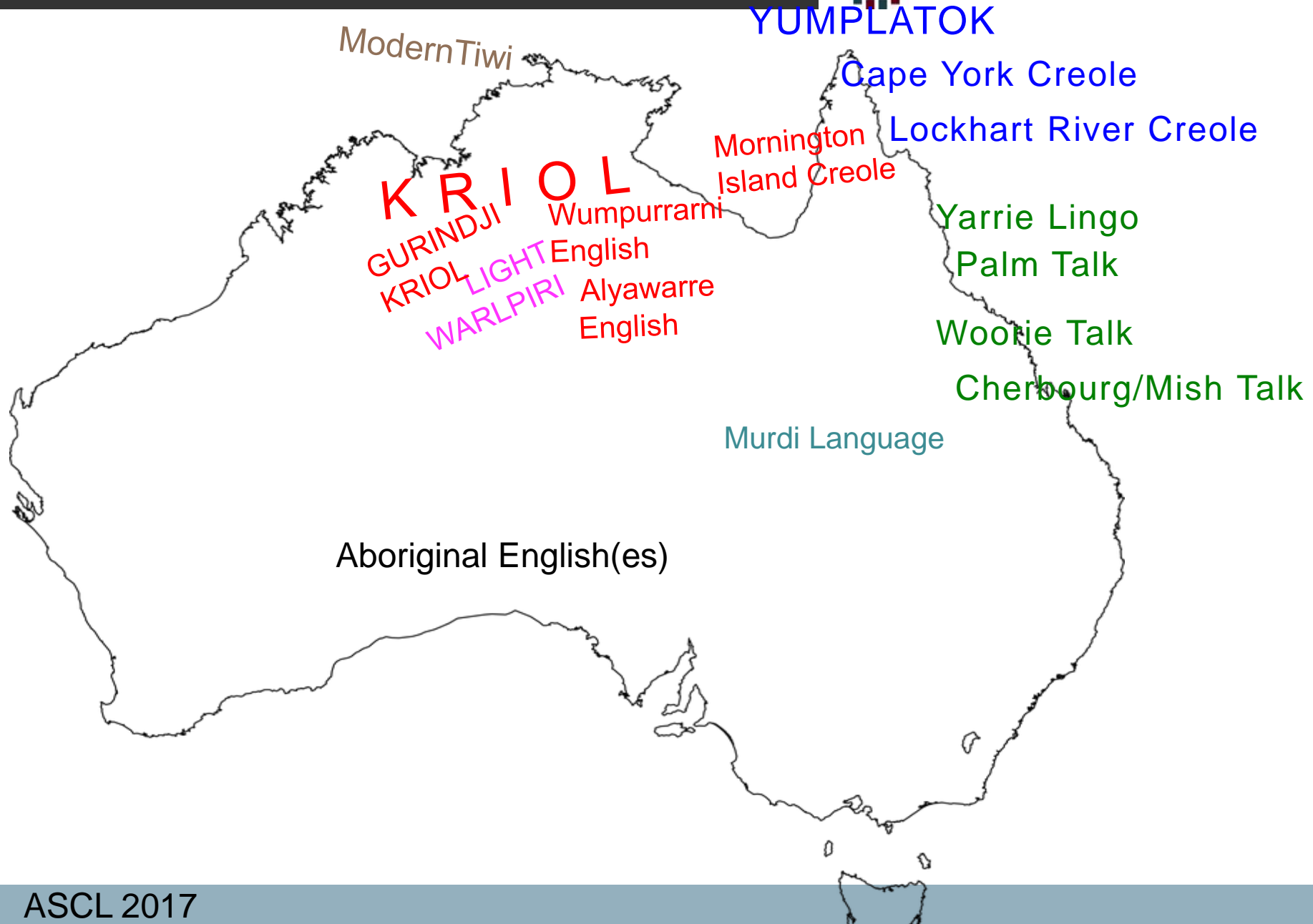
"New" (contact) Indigenous Languages

- not "Traditional": caused by language contact
- some partially "recognised" with large speaker numbers
  - Kriol 20-30,000 speakers (estimated*; 2016 Census 7155)
  - Yumplatok 20,000 speakers (estimated*; 2016 Census 6000)
- some not recognised/named
  - northern Cape York, Gulf country, Barkly, Qld Settlements
  - shifting language use
- English-lexified: most common pattern, not all
  - words historically of English origin: autonomy from English?
  - vocabulary, meanings, sounds, endings, word-building, phrases, sentences, genres & styles not English-like

not captured or *not well captured in survey data

- standardised nomenclature? confidence of "languagehood"
- which language: traditional or everyday

- **Census: speaks a language other than English at home**
 - **captures some New Languages: 8000s ASCL: "Indigenous"**

YUMPLATOK

Cape York Creole

Lockhart River Creole

ModernTiwi

Mornington Island Creole

K R I O L

Wumpurrarni

GURINDJI

KRIOL LIGHT English

WARLPIRI

Alyawarre English

Yarrie Lingo

Palm Talk

Woorie Talk

Cherbourg/Mish Talk

Murdi Language

Aboriginal English(es)

English(es)

– Acquired as a first language by most Indigenous Australians
  – Standard Australian English

  + local ways of speaking English: identity marked

  - differences in spoken usage may be significant

– Learned as a **second/foreign language** in many contexts (to varying levels, depending on opportunities)
  – **second language** = target language used socially around you (i.e. with peers, neighbours, sport...)
  – **foreign language** = target language taught/used only in classroom (i.e. not with peers, neighbours, sport...)

– Census: if YES: speaks a language other than English...
        how well does the person speak English? (4 scale)

Nambucca Heads
& surrounds
mid far-north coast NSW
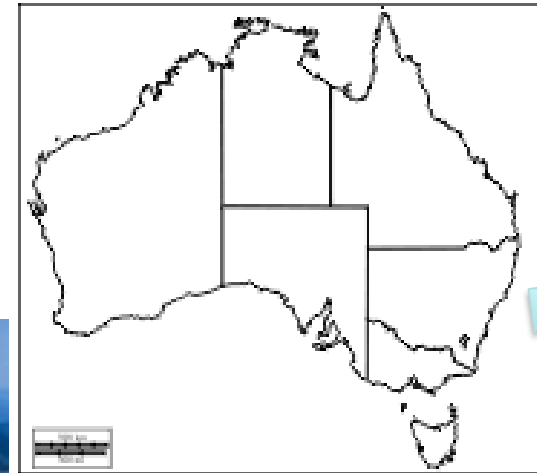
Nambucca Heads & surrounds
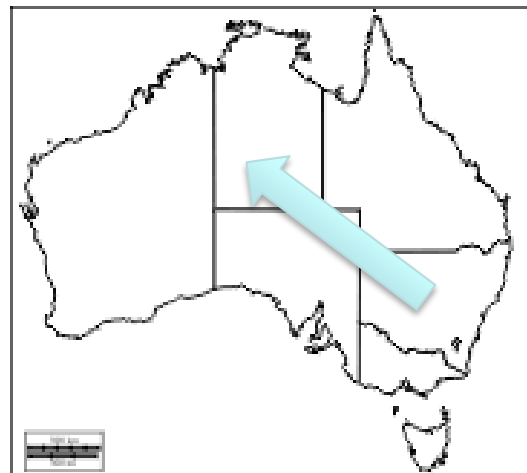mid far-north coast NSW

- Gumbaynggirr (L2 revival)
  - adults learning and teaching each other & young
  - language nest, Muurrbay Aboriginal Language & Culture CoOp
- English L1: able to mark identity too
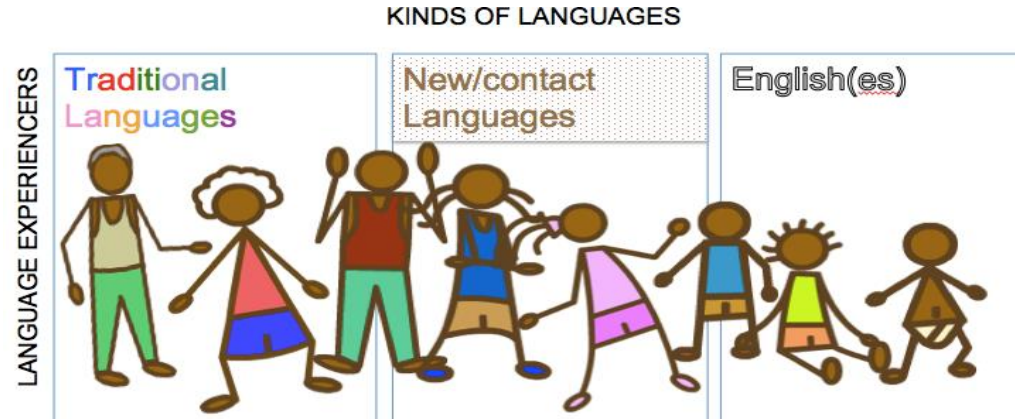 - everybody speaks this
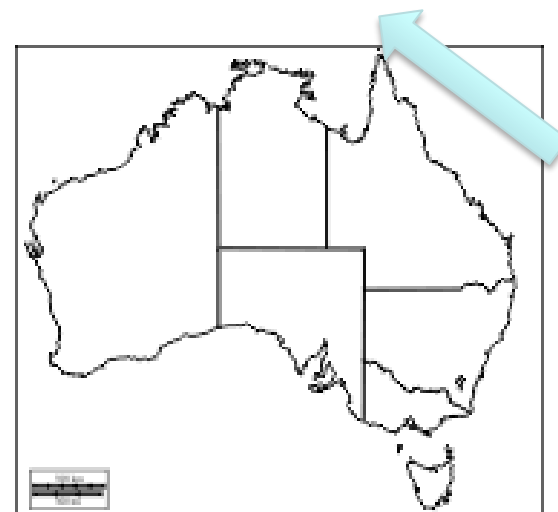
Yuendumu
Tanami Desert, NT

Yuendumu
Tanami Desert, NT

KINDS OF LANGUAGES

Traditional Languages | New/contact Languages | English(es)

LANGUAGE EXPERIENCERS

- Warlpiri (L1 maintenance)
  - whole community way of talking
  - marker of local identity

- English (foreign language mostly)
  - little exposure outside of classroom, some workplaces

Badu Island
western Torres Strait

Badu Island
western Torres Strait

KINDS OF LANGUAGES

- Kala Lagaw Ya (KLY) **(**L2 revitalisation for younger people**)**

- Yumplatok (**also called** Torres Strait Creole, Broken) **(L1 many)**
  – whole community way of talking
  – marker of local identity

- English **(foreign language mostly)**
  – little exposure outside of classroom, some workplaces

Yarrabah
far north Queensland

Yarrabah
far north Queensland

Kriol 171 -7%
Gudanji 13 - 0.5%
Kuku Yalanji 10 - 0.4%
Guugu Yimidhirr 4 - 0.2%
Djabugay 3 - 0.1%
English 2116 - 85%

- Gunggay **(**L2 revival: language of place**)**
  – adults relearning – from historical resources: teaching children
  – historically over 40 languages: some still spoken e.g. Guugu Yimidhirr

Census 2016 QuickStats
Yarrabah IARE

- Yarrie Lingo **(L1 mostly; named about 10 years ago)**
  – whole community way of talking
  – marker of local identity

missing 7%

- English **(foreign language mostly)**
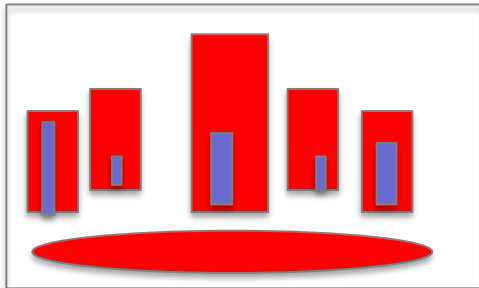 – little exposure outside of classroom, some workplaces

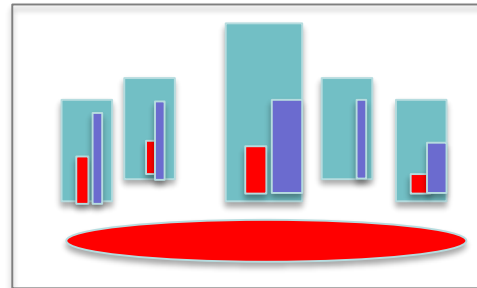# **socio-cultural function** interacts with **aspects of well-being**

identity

- group/community
- link to country
- shared history
- L1 or L2*, TL and NL

- resilience
- belonging
- safe, supportive communities
- recognition
- ...

and multilingual language ecology and individual repertoires

e.g.
Yuendumu...
Traditional L1
English L2

e.g. Yarrabah...
New   L1
Traditional L2
English L2

e.g. Nambucca-Coffs...
Traditional L2
English L1

socio-cultural function interacts with **aspects of well-being**

access to services

- use of own strong L1
- as L2 English learners/speakers
- access to services

- agency, benefits...
- L1 recognised, valued
  - L1 opportunities
  - L1 staffing, interpreting...
- success as L2 speaker
  - appropriate L2 training
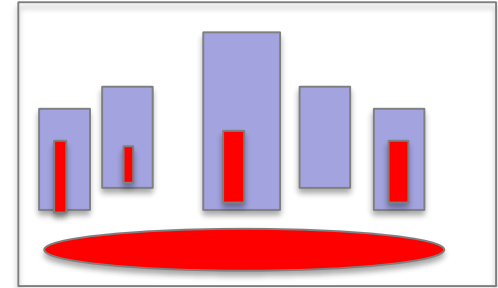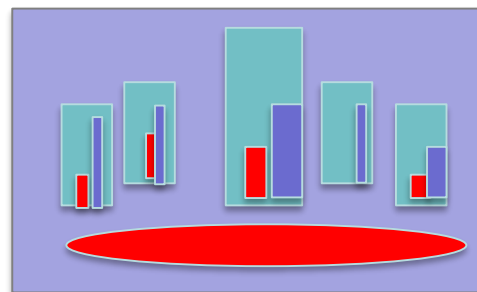 - well-informed residents

and multilingual language ecology and individual repertoires

e.g. Yuendumu...
Traditional L1
English L2

e.g. Yarrabah...
New   L1
Traditional L2
English L2
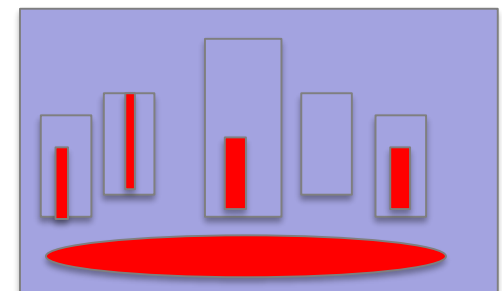
e.g. Nambucca-Coffs...
Traditional L2
English L1

Language ecologies: a way forward understanding dynamics

- **place-based:** language & interactions, services, country...
- **language strengths:** multilingualism
- **differentiating contexts:** L1, other situations
- **incorporate post-contact languages**
- **language processes:** maintenance, shift, revival

- **but cities & heterogeneous towns**

Operationalising Language Ecologies

- Traditional Language: TL1,   TL2,   TL1some/TL2some
- New Language: NL1   NL1 most   NL1 some
- English L1 or L2:   ENG1   ENG2   ENG2 some
- Demographics of location: URBAN, HET, unspec

- 1st pass: Census
- 2nd pass: manual checking: ground-truthing: specialist linguistic knowledge
- ...
- granularity, statistical areas, de-identification...

Some potential data sources

	Lang Type	Multilingualism	Proficiency	Lang Activity
Census - national - 2016	main language at home English	Potential for 1 language (TL or NL) + English	only English (4 point scale)	
NATSIH - 9,000+ - 2012/3	Aboriginal Torres Strait Other Eng	Potential for 1 INDIG_LANG + English	only English	
NATSISS - 11,000+ - 2014/5	Aboriginal or Torres Strait English	Potential for 1 INDIG_LANG + English	L2 English (over 15) L2 INDIG: well vs some words	L2 learners of INDIG identified
LSIC +Indigenous led -11 sites, 150 children	INDIG (list of 20) or name own Kriol Sign overseas English(es)	Potential for several TLs, 1 NL, Englishes (data release: 1 TL)	each language 4-5 point scale, incl. literacy	context of use, incl. interlocutors school language activities

Data

NATSISS (2014/215)

- https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/exnote/4714.0

Scope

- 11,178 people in private dwellings
- People aged 15 and over

Well-being data

- Subjective and objective indicators

 Language data

- Repertoire
- Ecology

Empirical Strategy

$$W = F(L; X)$$

- W well-being Indicator
- F(.)
  - Logit
  - OLS
- L speaking an Indigenous language
- X observable and unobservable confounding factors

Empirical Strategy

Spiritual/cultural

- Identifying with language group/tribe
- Participating / being involved in cultural events
- Lives on homeland
- Visiting homeland
- Hunting/gathering/fishing

Emotional

- Full of life/energy
- Psychological distress (K5 scale)
- Life satisfaction
- Mental health

Empirical Strategy

Social

- Frequent contact with family/friends
- Having a say in the community
- Getting support from community members
- Experience of unfair treatment

Physical health

- Self-assessed health
- Long-term illness
- Daily smoking
- Risky alcohol consumption

Economic

- Weekly personal income
- Employment status
- Income arts and cultural activities

Empirical Strategy

- Employment in hospitality and tourism industries

Education

- Completed Year 12
- Post school qualification

Justice and safety

- Arrested past 5 years
- Ever been incarcerated
- Experienced physical violence past 12 month

Access to services

- Government services: Centrelink, employment services, motor vehicle registration etc.
- Healthcare if diagnosed with long-term illness
- Housing if lives in rental property
- Legal services if arrested/experienced violence

Empirical Strategy

IL proficiency

- English only: main language spoken at home is English and does not speak or understand an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander language

- EL1, some IL2: main language spoken at home is English and speaks or understands a few words of an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander language

- EL1, IL2: main language spoken at home is English and does speak or understand well an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander language

- IL1: main language spoken is an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander language

Empirical Strategy

EL proficiency

- **Good English**: main language spoken at home is English OR main language spoken at home is an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander language and reports no difficulties understanding and/or being understood by English language speakers

- **Limited English**: main language spoken at home is an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander language and reports difficulties understanding and/or being understood by English language speakers

Empirical Strategy

Control variables

- *Demographic characteristics*

- Level of education

- Marital status

- Family removal

- Household financial conditions

- Overcrowding

- Cultural participation

- Health status

- Personal stressors

- Labour force status

- Remoteness

- State

NATSISS Category	Language ecology classification by 2016 Census population count (persons)						Proposed analytical category	% of population in category
	TL2, EL1	HET	NL1 freq.	TL1 freq.	TN mix	Total		
NSW Major Cities	98060					98060	TL2, EL1	100.0
NSW Inner Regional	74792					74792	TL2, EL1	100.0
NSW Outer Regional	33258					33258	TL2, EL1	100.0
NSW Remote	7566					7566	TL2, EL1	100.0
VIC Major Cities	22502					22502	TL2, EL1	100.0
VIC Inner / Outer Reg.	22583					22583	TL2, EL1	100.0
VIC Remote	40					40	TL2, EL1	100.0
QLD Major Cities	62148					62148	TL2, EL1	100.0
QLD Inner Regional	32041	7324	548			39913	TL2, EL1	80.3
QLD Outer Regional	13629	28763	8972			51364	n/a	
QLD Remote / V. Remote	3152	1950	22008		4463	31573	IL1 frequent	83.8
SA Non-Remote	28514					28514	TL2, EL1	100.0
SA Remote / V. Remote	2432			2601		5033	n/a	
WA Major Cities	29179					29179	TL2, EL1	100.0
WA Inner / Outer Reg.	14232			133	2187	16552	TL2, EL1	86.0
WA Remote / V. Remote	7809		4843	7588	8693	28933	IL1 frequent	73.0
TAS Non-Remote	22836					22836	TL2, EL1	100.0
TAS Remote / V. Remote	687					687	TL2, EL1	100.0
NT Non-Remote		11930				11930	n/a	
NT Remote / V. Remote		6859	5755	23188	9752	45554	IL1 frequent	84.9
ACT Non-Remote	6323					6323	TL2, EL1	100.0

Source: computed from the 2016 Census with linguist hand-coding

Empirical Strategy

Language ecologies

- *TL2, EL1* where the predominant Indigenous language use pattern is speaking a traditional Indigenous language as a second language: comprising all of NSW, Victoria, Tasmania and the ACT, as well as non-remote areas of SA and WA and major cities and inner regional areas of Queensland

- *IL1 frequent* where new and/or traditional Indigenous languages are frequently spoken as a first language: comprising remote and very remote areas of Queensland, WA and the NT

- Three NATISS regions (Queensland outer regional, SA remote/very remote and NT non-remote) are not easily classified into language ecology regions, as they do not fit neatly into the 2 groups we've decided to use

  - Together, these three regions account for 5% of the adult NATSISS sample.

Cautionary notes

- Traditional vs New Indigenous languages

- Reporting bias: language proficiencies & well-being

- Community-level data

Language ecologies

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's present day use of their languages is rich, complex and diverse

Using language ecology frameworks has the potential to acknowledge

- First Nations multilingual strengths and agency
- language processes: maintenance, contact & shift: Traditional, New, Englishes
- people use different languages for different purposes

Language ecologies are broad arrangements of languages spoken in a particular place: attuned to imperatives of policy and service delivery

Thank you

KINDS OF LANGUAGES

LANGUAGE EXPERIENCERS

Traditional Languages | New/contact Languages | English(es)

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Extras

Language Data Sets: issues: questions

Census example

- language other than English spoken at home
- main language or any? 'main'= L1, frequency, proficiency?
- 'at home'
- self-declared proficiency
- one response only (identity or L1?)
- social context (revival pride, concern...)
- (autonomous) language (esp. New Languages)
- ...

Other issues

- coverage: only Census attempts national
- de-identification: language, location...
- count accuracy: mobility, auto-exclusion
- interviewer/collector knowledge
- language names
- coder knowledge: Mauritian Creole
- lack of comparability across data sets
- lack of cross-checking across data sets
- significant variables lacking: L1or L2; lang vs lit; ±SAE
- school domain: LBOTE, 'language', bilingual...

Traditional Languages TL1   TL2   TL1some/TL2some

Census unreliable, with caution, generalisations:

- less than 3.5%: definitely TL2

- over 66%: likely TL1

- between: likely TL1some/TL2some

TL1 some/TL2 some could refer to

- a language shift context (older people who are speakers, younger people who are partial speakers)

- or in conjunction with HET it would indicate a patchy distribution, eg diaspora communities with first language speakers of one language living amongst other groups who are second language speakers of other languages

New Languages: NL1   NL1 most   NL1 some

- manual checking required: large-scale undercounting
- From the Census only Kriol & Yumplatok (still unreliable)

NL1: over 66%

- Census: self-reported in just a few places
  e.g. Indigenous Locs: Minyerri 83%, Ngukurr 78%; Warraber 93%
- underreporting and mis-coding of responses

NL1 most (more than half)

- manual checking.

NL1 some (less than half)

- manual checking.

English: ENG1, ENG2, ENG2 some

Self-reported English proficiency unhelpful – likely underreporting.

ENG1: (close) variety of English is L1.

- Speaks English only might include New Language speakers
- Speaks Language at Home might include L2 speakers

ENG2: TL1 or NL1 area automatically treated as ENG2.

- ENG2 is important data for language-based services, such as interpreters, mothertongue education and English as a Second/Foreign Language, government officials fluent in the local language etc
- might not be apparent in NL1 areas

ENG2 some: TL1 some/TL2 some, &/or from NL1 most/NL1 some.

- language services, NL1 speakers' needs might not be apparent
- Urban, regional towns (HET): The needs of ENG2 populations tend to be submersed and depend on the presence of "goodwill" intervention (i.e. language-aware person in school, health, legal contexts).

Demographics of location: URBAN   HET unspec

URBAN: big coastal cities including their suburbs.

- very few Indigenous people as a proportion of the population. (e.g. Adelaide, Sydney, Perth)

- propose greater urban areas of these cities are treated as a single entity, such as Greater Capital Cities Statistical Areas

- should apply to cities with populations greater more than 200,000

HET (heterogeneous): smaller urban areas with a relatively high proportion of Indigenous people (e.g. Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Ck)

- reflects a range of language repertoires - some TL1, some NL1, some ENG1.

- some areas have quite disparate populations, e.g. Mapoon - Napranum - Weipa (communities & mining town): patchy speaker distribution.

- HET could apply to towns with populations under about 200,000 (e.g. Darwin in our HET category - Greater Statistical Region is about 160,000)