LINGUISTICS TRAINING IN INDIGENOUS ADULT EDUCATION
AND ITS EFFECTS ON ENDANGERED LANGUAGES

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THESIS DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work herein, now submitted as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the Charles Darwin University, is the result of my own investigations, and all references to ideas and work of other researchers have been specifically acknowledged. I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis has not already been accepted in substance for any degree, and is not being currently submitted in candidature for any other degree.

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ABSTRACT

Australia is losing its Indigenous linguistic and cultural identity at an alarming rate. Of the 250 Indigenous languages on this continent 250 years ago, only eighteen are ‘strong’. However, if decisive action is not taken immediately we risk losing the remaining languages by 2050. Not only have these Indigenous languages been lost, but many have disappeared without adequate documentation. There is a strong desire expressed by Indigenous communities and Australian policies to reverse this situation before the remaining Indigenous languages are lost.

Documentation and maintenance activities by linguistically trained Indigenous adults are vital to reducing this loss. This research project analyses the past 30 years of courses and graduates of linguistics training that has been specifically designed for Australian Indigenous adults. It then explores what enhances or constrains the work of graduates, whether due to training or other factors, from the point of view of Indigenous people at the grassroots level. The data were gathered through open-ended interviews with 98 participants in 22 Indigenous communities representing 32 Australian Indigenous languages across the northern half of Australia.

The data show that graduates of linguistics training specifically designed for remote Indigenous adults are not working in the field or are achieving limited language documentation and maintenance outcomes. The analysis shows that changes are needed in (i) curriculum developments and delivery methods, (ii) the policy and practices of educational institutions, particularly with respect to literacy and student numbers, and (iii) access to regional language centres to help negotiate cultural and project support issues in remote communities. The details of these issues vary systematically across the diversity of social and cultural environments faced by Indigenous Australians.

The results provide guidance to educational institutions, the linguistics profession and governments. They assist in the development of targeted, culturally appropriate and effective training for Indigenous language researchers and identify the vital linguistic support and policy needed in remote regions of Australia.
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ABBREVIATIONS

AD-ALS  Diploma of Arts (Language Studies)
AD-ALS1  Associate Diploma of Arts (Language Studies) Stage 1
AD-ALS2  Associate Diploma of Arts (Language Studies) Stage 2
AD-ALS3  Associate Diploma of Arts (Language Studies) Stage 3
AIATSIS  Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
AV-ALS  Advanced Diploma of Arts (Language Studies)
AVD-ALL  Advanced Diploma of Arts (Languages & Linguistics)
C3L  Certificate III in Linguistics
CA  Central Australia
CALL  Centre for Australian Languages and Linguistics
CIT  Certificate in Translation
CLA  Certificate of Literacy Attainment
CLW  Certificate in Literacy Work
CTS  Certificate in Transcription
D-ALL  Diploma of Arts (Languages & Linguistics)
D-ALS1  Diploma of Arts (Language Studies) Stage 1
GCAL  Graduate Certificate in Applied Linguistics
IAD  Institute for Aboriginal Development
ILR  Indigenous language researcher
NILR  Non-Indigenous language researcher
NILS  National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005
NT  Northern Territory
NTDEET  Northern Territory Department of Education, Employment and Training
QLD  Queensland
SAL  School of Australian Linguistics
SIL  Summer Institute of Linguistics
TAFE  Technical and Further Education
UNESCO  United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WA  Western Australia
PARTICIPANT CODES

Interview quotes in this thesis are anonymously referenced by participant codes. Participant codes represent individual participant’s number, key features and the region in which the participant was interviewed. For example, the code 04IL3 refers to participant number 4 who is Indigenous, a language researcher and was interviewed in region 3. More details about these codes are in section 3.5, but the coding is repeated here for ease of reference.

01 to 98 (inclusive)  Participant number
I                 Indigenous person
N                 Non-Indigenous person
L                 Language researcher
E                 Elder
O                 Other member of the community who participated
1 to 6 (inclusive)  Region of participant

QUOTE CONVENTIONS

Participant and interviewer quotes are indented using the standard thesis font, Times New Roman. To distinguish between the participant and the interviewer, the interviewer’s words are italicised.

Participants are referenced using the relevant participant’s code (as above) at the end of the quote.

Pseudonyms are used in place of names used by the participants to protect the privacy of the person they are referring to. Pseudonyms are placed in square brackets, for example [Sarah].
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION AND THESIS STRUCTURE
Chapter 1. **INTRODUCTION AND THESIS STRUCTURE**

In the two hundred years since Europeans settled in Australia, there has been a huge decline and loss of Indigenous languages, many undocumented. In recent decades, public policy has supported the goal of stemming these losses. Based on evidence that speakers of endangered languages are particularly important in this endeavour (see Chapter 2), considerable resources have been put into linguistics training for Indigenous language researchers over the past 30 years. I was a part of this effort, working for the Centre for Australian Languages and Linguistics at Batchelor Institute for Indigenous Tertiary Education for 10 years. During this time, I became increasingly concerned that our well-motivated efforts were not contributing as effectively as they might to their goal of enabling Indigenous people to document and maintain their own languages. This thesis therefore aims to assess the successes and limitations of courses such as the ones I was teaching.

Australian Indigenous language researchers come from many different areas across this vast continent (highlighted by the diversity of the photos shown in this thesis). They live a great diversity of lifestyles, as well as having different levels of support and resources to meet their linguistic goals of keeping their languages strong.

Linguistics training courses specifically designed for remote Indigenous Australians to gain the skills to document and maintain their traditional languages have been designed and delivered across northern Australia since 1974, yet no detailed research to date has been carried out to see what effects they are having in terms of graduates working in the field. This research project explores whether the linguistics training of Indigenous adults has resulted in people working on language projects that contribute to the documentation or maintenance of their traditional languages and, if not, why not. It brings the voice of Indigenous experience to this question, and the issues that lie behind it, through interviews in 22 remote Indigenous communities with 90 participants representing over 30 Australian Indigenous languages.
1.1. The research project

The initial research question for this project was:

To what extent, and in what ways, does linguistics training assist in the documentation or maintenance of endangered languages?

To address this question I analysed the available course and graduate data from relevant educational institutions (Chapter 4) to profile the types and successes of courses offered to Indigenous adults who want to work on language activities within their home community. I then interviewed graduates of these courses, as well as Elders and other community members in their home community (Chapter 5), to assess what people do with their linguistic skills.

As the research progressed, it became apparent that factors outside the control of Indigenous language researchers affected them when working on language documentation and maintenance activities. To ascertain the nature and implications of these other factors, the original question was extended to include:

If trained Indigenous language researchers work in the field, what factors enhance or constrain them? If they do not work in the field, why not?

The results of the interviews are the main focus of the project. These results detail what graduates do, if anything, with their linguistic skills and what effect they have on the documentation or maintenance of Australia’s endangered languages. They also identify how aspects of the training itself (Chapter 6), their work environments (Chapter 7) and other community factors (Chapter 8) enhance or constrain these outcomes.

The majority of Australian Indigenous languages that are still spoken occur in the northern half of Australia. This is also where the majority of Indigenous Australians who speak an Indigenous language live and where most of the graduates from the courses that I taught come from. The remote Indigenous communities involved in this project in this region were chosen due to their linguistic vitality and linguistic support. As shown in Map 1.1, northern Australia encompasses northern Western
Australia (the Pilbara and the Kimberley), the Northern Territory and northern Queensland (in particular the Torres Strait Islands). It had become obvious to me over the years that each State/Territory had different language documentation and maintenance policies and practices as well as linguistic support systems and resources, even though people from each of these places attended the same courses. Given the very different linguistic, education and governance history of each State and Territory, each could have different training needs.

Map 1.1: The six main regions of study in northern Australia.

1.2. Significance of this study

An understanding of why people train in linguistics, the types of training they do and whether and why they use these skills to document or maintain their endangered languages would provide an evidence base to assist educators, curriculum developers and industry to develop appropriate and effective training for Indigenous Australians wanting to document or maintain their endangered language. As it became evident that relatively few graduates were achieving their linguistic goals, the research turned to identifying whether there were factors other than training that affect language documentation and maintenance by Indigenous Australians that some educators and
linguistics organisations are not yet aware of. Systematic knowledge of these factors could assist Indigenous people in documenting or maintaining their traditional languages in ways that are not currently happening. People in the linguistics field also need an understanding of these issues to assist them in developing the necessary support processes and policies to assist future documentation or maintenance of Australia’s endangered languages.

The problem of Indigenous languages dying out is not unique to Australia: it is happening around the world. Linguists around the world estimate that over half of the world’s 6-7000 languages will disappear before the end of this century (see Chapter 2). Therefore, this research also aimed to be relevant to linguistics curricula elsewhere in the world to ensure the courses are culturally appropriate and relevant to the diverse needs of Indigenous language groups.

Most previous research on factors that prevent languages from being documented and maintained has been from the point of view of organisations and individuals who are not Indigenous speakers of a severely threatened language (section 2.1.6). Participants in that research were usually highly literate and highly skilled in linguistics or an equivalent discipline. Through confidential, face to face interviews this thesis provides the points of view of people who are speakers of an endangered Indigenous language and who are therefore most affected when their languages are dying or have died. Usually these people do not have the linguistic, social or political skill or voice to change the status quo. These Indigenous Australians live in remote environments, dealing with the hard issues of speaking a minority language every day. This thesis addresses the issues of language documentation and maintenance from the perspective of people at grassroots level, not that of prominent Indigenous leaders, organisations or non-Indigenous Australians. I have written this thesis in a style that is accessible and useful to all participants of this project. Therefore, I use plain English and minimal technical terminology.

I had prior, usually long-term, relationships with many of the people and communities involved in this study, which is vital for Indigenous people when working with others. It is only through a prior relationship that people feel comfortable enough to be honest about their thoughts and beliefs. As I had already
earned their trust over previous years, they knew that their privacy and identity would be respected and protected.

Some comments in this thesis are based on my own experiences of over fifteen years, including living in a remote Indigenous community for three years, then working as lecturer, then senior lecturer/coordinator of an Australian Indigenous linguistics education centre over a period of nearly ten years. During this time I had the opportunity to experience first hand many issues relating to students, administrative and funding policies as well as linguistics and educational programmes. These experiences provided me with much knowledge in these areas, but this knowledge is limited to my own culture and experience within the education system and my own analysis of these experiences. I do not have the experience that Indigenous students have had nor did I fully understand why trained Indigenous adults do or do not work on their traditional language once they complete their linguistics studies. These are the things I have learned from this research project. In this thesis, usually in the discussion at the end of each chapter, I talk about the relevance of some of my own beliefs and observations to the issues discussed.

1.3. Structure of the thesis

The structure of this thesis is designed to mirror the process of the research project, as shown in Figure 1.1.

The background and approaches to the research are discussed across four chapters. This chapter (Chapter 1) introduces the research project and the terms and definitions used through the thesis. Chapter 2 provides an outline of the relevant supporting literature needed to appreciate the importance of this research project and to inform its conceptualisation and methods. Chapter 3 describes the research design and the linguistic, geographical and cultural diversity of the research participants involved in this project. Chapter 5 describes the project’s participants and their languages and communities.
The findings of this thesis are also discussed across four chapters. Chapter 4 explores the broad patterns seen in the course data and various questions concerning disparities in enrolments and awards. Chapter 6 looks at the effectiveness of the linguistics courses from the perspective of the people who undertook these courses, and the perception of the courses and the skills taught in these courses by other community members. The different work environments, the skills that Indigenous language researchers need for their particular region and whether the training is provided for this, are discussed in Chapter 7, which also looks at the personal outcomes of linguistics training for Indigenous language researchers. The last of the results chapters, Chapter 8, explores the community factors that affect language documentation and maintenance. These community factors include the linguistic, cultural and societal factors that affect language documentation and maintenance. Chapter 8 also explores the attitudes and beliefs of Indigenous Australians relating to the governance, policy and funding factors that enhance or constrain language activities by Indigenous language researchers.

The various findings are then synthesised in Chapter 9, which reviews the factors that enhance or constrain trained Indigenous language researchers when working on
language documentation or maintenance activities. Chapter 9 also provides suggested solutions that could enable more Indigenous Australians to document or maintain their endangered languages.

This thesis is intended to articulate the attitudes, practices and beliefs of Indigenous Australians about their traditional language maintenance and documentation activities. Interview quotations are designed to flow with the text but are indented and justified on each side. The language used in these quotations is that of the participant and is reproduced exactly as said in the interview; the grammar and speech styles in these quotations are those of the research participants and are not edited. Some of the participants’ quotes are long. The purpose of this is to allow the emotion in the voice of Indigenous Australians to be heard. The voices of the participants also highlight the fact that for most English is a second, third or fourth language, and provide a clearer picture of the participants and the issues discussed. All participants’ quotations are referenced using the referencing system discussed in section 3.5.

As the thesis aims to increase the documentation and maintenance of Australia’s severely endangered traditional languages, it was important to focus on the problems that constrain participants, Indigenous Australians, when attempting to document and maintain their languages, rather than the benefits of training. Without such a focus, the status quo across Australia will continue, thereby risking the loss of the rest of Australia’s languages undocumented. However, some benefits of training are also discussed.

The photos used are of Indigenous communities or land and were taken during my field trips. They highlight how different the environments across northern Australia are. The languages and cultures of Indigenous Australia are just as diverse and so are their beliefs and training needs.

1.4. Key Terms and Definitions

How one refers to Indigenous Australians and their languages can be a very sensitive issue and there are different conventions for the terms used (Tsunoda, 2005: 6). In this thesis, I have chosen to use the following terms in the manner described below. I
have adopted the following usages because they are accepted by many Indigenous Australians.

1.4.1. Australian Languages
Australians speak many languages, both migrant and Indigenous; however, in this thesis the term ‘Australian languages’ refers to Australia’s Indigenous languages only - languages that are ‘native’ to Australia (Walsh, 2005: 294). I follow Devlin’s (1990: 54) definition of ‘vernacular’ – ‘an Indigenous local language; the language used by people of a certain district or place’.

1.4.2. ‘Indigenous’ and ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders’
The term ‘Indigenous’ in this thesis refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It has been claimed by some in the literature that the term ‘Indigenous’ is inappropriate, as Indigenous “in its correct definition is applied to a person ‘born to the land’ which could equally apply to a non-Aboriginal or non-Torres Strait Islander person” (Grant & Hutchings, 2002: 1). However, I have chosen to use the term as many Torres Strait Islanders I have worked with prefer it to ‘Aboriginal’, which usually refers to the first people of the mainland of Australia. Torres Strait Islanders do not see themselves as ‘Aboriginal’ but as ‘Islanders’, ‘Torres Strait Islanders’ or ‘Indigenous’. Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders I have worked with do not mind the term ‘Indigenous’. In addition, using a single word that respectfully includes all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders is easier for the reader.

1.4.3. Capitalisation of terms
I have capitalised the term ‘Elder’ as this is the preferred and accepted practice for several Indigenous organisations in Australia as a sign of respect to Indigenous Australians. It is also the preference of many Indigenous Australians.

1.4.4. Indigenous/Non-Indigenous Language Researcher
In this thesis, so as not to offend any person and to show due respect for my colleagues, I use the term ‘language researcher’ to refer to any person – ‘linguist’, ‘language worker’, ‘community linguist’, ‘Indigenous linguist’ – who does language work regardless of their race or the type, or amount, of training they have had. When I specifically refer to Indigenous people who do language work I refer to them as Indigenous language researchers (ILRs). Non-Indigenous people who do language
work are referred to as non-Indigenous language researchers (NILRs). Section 8.2.1 provides a detailed discussion and extracts from interviews showing individuals’ strong preference for being referred to as something other than a ‘language worker’.

### 1.4.5. Documentation and Maintenance

There are various terms used in the literature and by language researchers around the world that refer to language activities designed to support Indigenous languages. These include ‘language revitalisation’, ‘language maintenance’, ‘language revival’, ‘language reclamation’ and so on. For consistency and ease of reading and understanding, I use the term ‘language documentation and maintenance’ in this thesis to encompass these various terms. In addition, ‘language documentation and maintenance’ in this thesis refers to any language work that is done by ILRs regardless of the level of linguistics training these researchers have received. This also refers to anything at all that is written, visual or oral at any linguistics level; it does not necessarily mean a deep linguistic analysis of the language. Chapter 2 discusses in depth the various definitions and practices of documentation and maintenance as described by many authors.

### 1.4.6. Community factors

I use the term community factors to include any factors that affect individual ILRs when working on language projects in their community. Such factors include those relating to their culture, community and language group, their linguistic skills, confidence, knowledge of their language or access to people with knowledge of their language and family and community support. The effects of individual linguists from outside the community through to Commonwealth and State government policy or other government-related factors, funding and external support and resources are also included under community factors, as it is the views of the participants on these issues that are represented, not those of outside bodies.

Among the community factors are the cultural factors that affect ILRs working on language projects. Indigenous peoples’ cultural practices and beliefs differ across northern Australia. Even the same language group can differ in some cultural beliefs and practices depending on the language community and the geographical position of its speakers; for example, the Meriam Mer people on Murray Island have cultural
practices and beliefs that differ from the Meriam Mer people living in Townsville. Therefore, throughout this thesis ‘cultural factors’ refers to the cultural beliefs and practices of the specified community rather than assuming that all Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders have the same cultural beliefs and practices. This does not mean that Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people do not practise the same culture in some respects but that there are some differences between the groups, which may be a result of their physical locations and the different social, political and environmental pressures of the location (this is discussed in more detail in Chapters 6 to 8).
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW
Chapter 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

There is little literature available to provide a critical review of the issues relevant to the question, “to what extent and in what ways does linguistics training of Indigenous adults assist in the documentation or maintenance of endangered Indigenous languages in Australia?” Therefore, this chapter provides a review of literature that highlights the importance of documenting or maintaining endangered Indigenous languages and the issues relevant to this topic. This chapter also provides an understanding of the dire situation that the world’s endangered Indigenous languages currently face and the urgent need to document or maintain them.

This chapter starts by considering the global situation, which provides an understanding of why traditional Indigenous languages desperately need to be documented or maintained. Australia has already lost much of its Indigenous knowledge by many of its languages dying without being recorded. It is highly likely, if current trends continue, that all of Australia’s surviving Indigenous languages will be extinct by the middle of this century, many with little documentation. These issues are explored in section 2.1 whilst section 2.2 examines why language documentation and maintenance is essential to the vitality of a language community, as well as defining the various terms relating to documenting and maintaining endangered languages. Section 2.3 provides an overview of the institutions that offer linguistics training specifically designed for Indigenous Australian adults and the expected outcomes of such training. The methods for assessing such training are also explored in section 2.3.

2.1. Endangered Languages

The number of Indigenous endangered languages and the causes of language endangerment and loss differ from continent to continent, country to country and language group to language group, but there are also many similarities. This section explores these similarities and differences according to the literature. It also addresses the issues and categories of linguistic vitality, the theories relating to whether or not endangered languages should be documented or maintained, and, if they should, how it should be done and who should be responsible for doing it. This section has a strong focus on Australia’s endangered languages.
2.1.1. Definition

There is no single generally accepted definition of an endangered language (International Clearing House for Endangered Languages, 1996), even though Krauss (1998: 101) argues that one is urgently needed. A simple internet search offers all sorts of definitions, including “[a]n endangered language is a language headed for extinction. It is a language without monolingual speakers ... It is a language spoken by a minority of people in the nation” (yourdictionary.com, 2006). Language scholars have also offered various definitions. Kindell (2004: 1) defines it in the most simplistic way as “languages being below some critical number of speakers”.

Landweer (2002: 8) argues that, while the critical mass of speakers is one of the most commonly cited factors in determining language viability, “the number of speakers defined as critical varies”: a language with a small number of speakers may not necessarily be endangered. In Africa and South Asia language communities of less than 10,000 speakers are considered too small to be prioritised for language development projects by government and non-government agencies. By comparison, in Papua New Guinea 90 percent of language groups have less than 10,000 speakers, some have just 500 speakers, yet some of these communities have been targeted by their government education department and non-government agencies for language development projects (Landweer, 2002: 8). UNESCO’s Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages (2003: 7) also argues that it is difficult to assess the number of actual speakers of a language as language communities are complex and diverse.

A language can only continue to survive where there is a community to speak and transmit it. The community can only exist in a viable environment where people can make a living. If people cannot live in a viable environment their languages are in danger (Nettle & Romaine, 2000: 5). It is often said that a language dies when the last speaker dies, but Crystal (2000: 2) argues that a language dies well before then, as a language can only really live as long as there is someone to speak it to. He claims that the last living speaker is more of a repository or archive of a spoken language. The only difference between a last living speaker of a language and an archive, argues Crystal (2000: 2), is that when the last living speaker dies the “archive disappears forever” if there is no documentation of the language. Wurm (1998: 191) maintains that a language is in danger of disappearing eventually if it has
lost, or is losing, child speakers to another language. He argues that the chances of stopping or reversing this process, even if there are large numbers of adult speakers, depend on how far this process has progressed. However, even languages that are in the very early stages of losing child speakers can potentially become extinct quite quickly (Wurm, 1998: 191). Thus, the most vital factor for language maintenance is intergenerational transmission, as without it a language cannot survive (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2001: 403-404).

SIL International (2006a) defines an endangered language as one that is no longer being taught to children by parents and or actively used in everyday conversation. UNESCO (2003: 2) argues that a language is endangered when it is on a path toward extinction. Without adequate documentation, a language that is extinct can never be revived. A language is in danger when its speakers cease to use it, use it in an increasingly reduced number of communicative domains, and cease to pass it on from one generation to the next. That is, there are no new speakers, adults or children.

There are many terms used around the world to refer to endangered languages, including ‘language loss’, ‘language extinction’, ‘language death’, ‘language decay’, ‘language decline’ and ‘language obsolescence’ to name a few. Tsunoda (2005: 14) categories these terms as ‘endangered’ to mean weakening, sick, moribund and dying languages and ‘language endangerment’ refers to these plus those that are extinct (Figure 2.1).

![Figure 2.1: Terms for language endangerment (Tsunoda, 2005: 14).](image)

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Whilst there is no formal definition of ‘endangered language’, it is clear that if a language is no longer being handed on to children it is heading for extinction. Intergenerational transmission is crucial for the survival of a language even if there are large numbers of speakers. However, there are increasing pressures on the younger generations to speak the more dominant language. Pressures on Australia’s Indigenous children include the language used in education, television, video, magazines and music, as discussed in the following section.

2.1.2. Causes of Language Endangerment and Loss

There are many causes of language endangerment and death – war, genocide, disease (Maffi, 2002: 385; Ostler, 2003: 30), social or economic destruction, language suppression in forced assimilation or assimilatory education and military takeover (Hinton & Hale, 2001: 4; Krauss, 1992: 6). Other contributing factors include community attitudes, urbanisation, industrialisation and the lack of prestige, the language used in education, and government and church polices (Bradley & Bradley, 2002b; Dorian, 1980; Grenoble & Whaley, 2006; Grimes, 2001; SIL International, 2006a; UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages, 2003: 3). Krauss (1992: 6) discusses another cause, “electronic media bombardment”, which he calls “cultural nerve gas”, arguing that it is “an incalculable lethal weapon”. Others have also referred to the role of the new technologies of communication (Calvert, 2006: 43), and acknowledge that their power is not yet fully understood. Ostler (2003: 30) argues that globalisation is the “biggest threat of all”. As the world becomes more intertwined, many minority language speakers stop using their traditional languages as they regard them as “economic and social liabilities”. Languages can die suddenly or gradually - a language can be suddenly wiped out by a natural disaster, such as a tsunami, plague or other natural disasters, or slowly by such things as political takeover (Dixon, 1991). Initially, Australian Indigenous languages died rapidly due to “the extermination of all speakers, their total dispersal so that no transmission possibilities remained, or other forms of extreme denigration and damage to the speech community” (Lo Bianco & Rhydwen, 2001: 394). Since then language loss has been more gradual. Dixon (1991: 234) argues that not only are we losing languages and dialects at an “ever-increasing rate, it also seems to be the case that
very few (perhaps no) new Indigenous languages are evolving” (with the exception of a few pidgins and creoles).

Dixon argues that there are four factors to which Australia’s language loss can be attributed - white insistence; Aboriginal choice; shift of cultural emphasis; and media pressure (1991: 236). Others describe the main causes of language loss in Australia as being the result of “a post-contact history of demoralisation” (Schmidt, 1990: 11) including mass poisonings, massacre, relocation, political and social inequality, and the assimilation policy that pressured Indigenous people to adopt the white lifestyle, language and sociocultural values (Fishman, 1991: 252-254; McKay, 1996; Schmidt, 1990: 11; Wurm, 2001:42).

Wurm (1991: 2-15) classifies these causes of language endangerment and death into three main categories:

- Death of all speakers: Where all speakers of a language group die through warfare, disease, genocide or a natural disaster;
- Changes in the ecology of languages: Languages lose their viability and ability through drastic changes in their natural environment, causing changes to the cultural and social setting of the language group. As the languages adapt to their new environment they must also suit the needs of that new environment, which often leads to the severe endangerment or loss of the original language; and,
- Culture contact and clash: When a language community encounters another language community that is politically and economically stronger, and speaks a different language, many changes are forced on the smaller or weaker language community.

Nettle and Romain’s research (2000: preface) “shows striking correlations between areas of biodiversity and areas of highest linguistic diversity”, which they call “biolinguistic diversity”. They conclude that “the greatest biolinguistic diversity is found in areas inhabited by Indigenous peoples”.

The above causes of language endangerment and death can lead to “[s]ome speakers of endangered languages com[ing] to consider their own language backward and impractical” (UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages, 2003: 4).
However, they do not always lead to the decimation of the smaller language group even though they can cause them to assimilate into the larger, stronger language community, often resulting in a change of attitude of the smaller and weaker language community towards their traditional language. Such contact and culture clash can result in future generations of the smaller community accepting and using the language of the larger community as their preferred or first language.

2.1.3. Stages of Language Endangerment

Whilst some languages die rapid deaths due to war, genocide or disease, as discussed above, others die more slowly. There are various stages that languages go through before they become endangered and die. Krauss (1992: 6) proposes three categories for the world’s languages:

- **Moribund**: “Languages no longer being learned as mother-tongue by children”, and which “are already doomed to extinction” if the current situation continues. The Foundation for Endangered Languages (2006) describes moribund languages as languages that “are not effectively being passed on to the next generation” and argues that “within perhaps two generations, most languages in the world will die out”. Again, this account stresses that intergenerational language transmission is vital for the survival of a language – particularly in Australia where most languages are moribund (Whalen, 2004: 331);

- **Endangered**: Languages that “are still being learned by children but will - if the present conditions continue - cease to be learned by children during the coming century”. This is the case for all Australian languages, as discussed below, and,

- **Safe**: Languages that have “official state support and very large numbers of speakers”. Australian Indigenous languages do not have very large numbers of speakers but some of them are classified as safe; the following discussions address this point.

A summary similar to Krauss’ three categories of languages also appears in Kindell (2004: 1). Using Krauss’ categories for the world’s languages, 90 percent of the world’s languages are moribund or endangered.
Linguists at the February 2000 Colloquium on Language Endangerment, Research and Documentation: Setting Priorities for the 21st Century, as discussed by Grimes (2001), distinguished six stages of language endangerment:

- **Critically endangered.** Very few speakers, all 70 years old and older, great-grandparent age;
- **Severely endangered.** Speakers are only 40 years old and older, grandparent age;
- **Endangered.** Speakers are only 20 years old and older, parent age;
- **Eroding.** Speakers are some children and older people. Other children do not speak it;
- **Stable but threatened.** All children and older people are speakers, but few in number; and,
- **Safe.** Not endangered. Language expected to be learned by all children and all others in the ethnic group.

The colloquium’s first three stages equate to Krauss’ ‘Moribund’ stage, discussed above. Stages 4 and 5 equate to Krauss’ ‘Endangered’ stage. Both Krauss’ and the colloquium’s stages have been used to assess Australia’s Indigenous language vitality.

Approximately two years later linguists from this colloquium and UNESCO met to identify stages of language vitality, at which time they identified six stages of language endangerment. To assess the degree of language endangerment in Australia the *National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005* (NILS Report) (AIATSIS and FATSIL, 2005) used these six stages, with slight modifications to suit the Australian language situation.

Table 2.1 lists the six stages of endangerment used in the Australian NILS Report, which are very similar to the UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Language’s stages (2003: 8). Earlier, Dixon (1991: 237) had argued that there were five stages of endangerment but these stages are similar to the ones used to assess the 2005 situation in Australia. The exception to this is that the NILS Report separated the parental and grandparental generations where Dixon combined them.
Landweer (2002: 8) and others (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006; Kindell, 2004: 1) argue that there are decisive factors that determine the future of a language beyond the number of speakers necessary for linguistic vitality. These factors include languages not being “transformed through use or intergenerational transmission” (Maffi, 2002: 385). Maffi argues that languages can die when the “flow of communication and transmission is interrupted because speakers voluntarily or unwillingly shift to another, generally dominant, more prestigious, more powerful language and choose not to teach their native language or language to their children”.

This issue was also addressed by UNESCO’s Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages, who “lead the way” (AIATSIS and FATSIL, 2005: 29; UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages, 2003: 7) in identifying nine factors that characterise a language’s overall sociolinguistic situation. Six of these factors assess the vitality of the language, two assess language attitudes, and one factor evaluates the urgency for documentation. UNESCO (2003: 7) strongly argues that none of these factors should be used alone, as a language that is ranked highly according to one criterion may deserve immediate and urgent attention due to other factors. Their factors are:

- Intergenerational language transmission,
Absolute number of speakers;
Proportion of speakers within the total population;
Trends in existing language domains;
Response to new domains and media;
Materials for language education and literacy;
Governmental and institutional language attitudes;
Community members’ attitudes toward their own language; and,
Amount and quality of documentation.

Grenoble and Whaley (2006: 4), who use these factors to assess the state of a language before determining how to document or maintain the language, argue that some factors are more relevant than others (they also provide a very good analysis of each of the factors). These, or similar factors have been used to assess the linguistic vitality of languages within specific countries. In Papua New Guinea, Landweer (2002: 16) identified eight indicators of ethnolinguistic vitality for the languages, which are similar to those identified by UNESCO. McConvell and Thieberger (2001) in their State of Indigenous Languages in Australia – 2001 report (SOIL Report) also identified similar indicators to report the state of Australian languages, including indicators of endangerment, language vitality and revitalisation. The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and the Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages (FATSIL) surveyed the status of Australia’s Indigenous language vitality and resources and reported it in their National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005 (AIATSIS and FATSIL, 2005). The NILS Report argues that UNESCO’s language endangerment indicator “is the best way of making a reasonably accurate assessment of the state of a language and is compatible to the SOIL Report indicator” (AIATSIS and FATSIL, 2005: 30). It also argues that in Australia it is widely accepted that there are three levels of endangerment:

- Strong - all age groups know and speak the traditional Indigenous language; this level correlates with Krauss’ (1992) Endangered category because, as the SOIL Report argues, if the current linguistic problems in Australia continue no Australian language will be spoken by 2050 (McConvell & Thieberger, 2001: 2);
Endangered – mainly older people know and use the language but children are not learning the language; this correlates with Krauss’ Moribund category; and,

No longer spoken, or ‘sleeping’ – nobody speaks the language except for a few words or phrases; Krauss does not have a category for this level.

These are the levels referred to in this thesis.

The NILS Report (2005) adapted the language vitality assessment indicators used by both the UNESCO and the SOIL Reports to assess the Australian situation. According to this assessment, Australia has over one hundred languages that are assessed as being in “a far-advanced stage of endangerment” and will cease to be spoken within the next 10-30 years if decisive action is not taken. Most of these languages are poorly documented and, again, if action is not taken to document them they may be lost without record. Indigenous languages are not only dying, often undocumented, in Australia but in many other places around the world.

2.1.4. The Changing Number of the World’s Languages

As languages constantly undergo change, and there is often no clear indication of whether or not a particular variety is a distinct language or a dialect of another language, the exact number of mutually unintelligible languages that exist in the world today is difficult to say. However, what is clear is that language endangerment and extinction in recent times has reached an “extraordinary level and the outlook for an impressive percentage of the world’s surviving languages is very poor” (Hale, 1992b: 2). For many years language researchers and linguistics organisations have estimated the number of languages to be between 5,000 and 7,000: Dalby (2002: ix) estimates 5000 languages; AIATSIS and FATSIL (2005: 23), Schmidt (1990), King and Schielmann (2004: 13), Krauss (1992: 5) and Wurm (2001: 13) all estimate 6000 languages, and Cahill (2004) and Everett (2004) estimate 6,800 languages. The Ethnologue states that there are 6,912 known living languages world wide, which is an increase of 103 known languages since its last publication by Grimes (2000). Gordon (2005) argues that this increase is not a result of finding previously unidentified languages, but of recognising languages that had previously been considered dialects of another language. Over half, possibly up to ninety percent, of
these 6,912 languages will be extinct by the end of this century (Dayton, 2004; Hinton & Hale, 2001). Woodfield and Brickley (1995) argue that even if a language looks healthy now it could become moribund within a decade. The Ethnologue (Gordon, 2005) states that 347, or five percent, of the world's languages have at least one million speakers and account for 94 percent of the world's population. By contrast, the remaining 95 percent of languages are spoken by only six percent of the world's people. Nettle and Romaine (2000: preface) state that Indigenous people represent around four percent of the world’s population, but speak 60 percent of the world’s languages. “[M]ost of the world’s linguistic diversity is carried by small communities of Indigenous or minority people” (Maffi, 2001a: 4). Fifty-two percent of languages are spoken by fewer than 10,000 people and 28 percent by fewer than 1,000 people (Foundation for Endangered Languages, 2006). In 2005, 344 of the world’s languages had between ten and ninety-nine speakers and 204 languages had less than ten speakers. These 548 languages make up nearly one-tenth of the world’s languages (Harrison, 2007: 4).

Australia has one of the worst records of language endangerment and extinction in the world (Wurm, 2001: 42) with the most rapid decline occurring in the last 50 years (McConvell, in press). Fishman (1991: 255) argued that “modern Australia is a veritable graveyard of Indigenous languages”. It is estimated that Australia had 250 Indigenous languages, or six to seven hundred when their dialects are counted (Black, 1983: 8; Calvert, 2006: 42; Henderson & Nash, 1997: 7; Nettle & Romaine, 2000: 9; Schmidt, 1990: 1). Approximately 160 of the 250 languages have died out completely (Schmidt, 1990: 1; Walsh & Yallop, 1993: 2). Some of the surviving languages only have a handful of speakers. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 1996 census at least eleven Australian languages still spoken have less than 100 speakers (Caffery, 2003a) and it is estimated that only about twenty Australian Indigenous languages are likely to survive for any length of time (McConvell & Thieberger, 2001; Schmidt, 1990). Some linguists argue that only about 10 Indigenous languages will be spoken in Australia within 30-40 years; indeed, others argue that there will be no Australian language spoken regularly in Australia at all by 2050 (McConvell & Thieberger, 2001). Figure 2.2 clearly shows the dramatic decline of Australia’s Indigenous languages since 1788.
Figure 2.2: Estimated number of Australia’s living Indigenous languages and their past and projected decline since colonisation (Henderson & Nash, 1997: 8).

Dixon argues that these figures are even more disturbing because not only is language diversity decreasing, but so is dialectal diversity within a language and since “new languages develop out of divergent dialects, the loss of dialect differentiation reduces the potential for new languages to develop in the future” (1991: 234).

Of the ninety or so Australian Indigenous languages still spoken today, about seventy are severely endangered and are likely to die out within the next ten to twenty years, or some argue within the next generation (Henderson & Nash, 1997: 7). There are eighteen languages (according to the NILS Report) that are classed as ‘strong’ (AIATSIS and FATSIL, 2005), or where there is intergenerational transmission, as defined in Table 2.1. Their distribution can be seen in Map 2.1. Dixon (1991: 237-238) argues that of the 250 languages spoken in Australia in the late 1800s there is probably not one Australian language spoken today that is “used as the first language by a full community of at least some hundreds of people and is used in every aspect of their daily lives”, including thinking in this language.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Year Book Australia 2006 (2006) states that 460,000 people identified themselves as Indigenous Australians, and that 51,000 people, or twelve percent of them (0.3% of the entire Australian population), speak an Australian Indigenous language, indicating that 409,000 Indigenous Australians
do not speak their traditional language. The three most commonly spoken Indigenous languages reported to be spoken were Kriol, Pitjantjatjara and Warlpiri. Pitjantjatjara and Warlpiri are traditional Australian Indigenous languages spoken prior to colonisation. Kriol is a contact language developed between English and traditional language speakers after colonisation.

Map 2.1: Approximate regions of the remaining strong Indigenous languages. Kriol is not included.

Note: The data for this map were drawn from the information provided in the NILS Report (AIATSIS and FATSIL, 2005) and the Department of Communication, Information, Technology and the Arts (2006). Languages are: 1-Alyawarr, 2-Anindilyakwa, 3-Anmatyerre, 4-Arrennte, 5-Burarra, 6-Dhuwaya, 7-Guugu Yimidhirr, 8-Kukatja, 9-Kumwinji, 10-Maung, 11-Murrinhpatha, 12-Nyangumarta, 13-Pintupi, 14-Pitjantjatjara, 15-Tiwi, 16-Warlpiri, 17-Wik Mungkan, 18-Yulpara.

It is estimated that approximately four to five thousand of the world’s languages are spoken by Indigenous peoples who live in environments where they have been able to retain their specific customs, languages, practices and beliefs (King & Schielmann, 2004: 13). All of Australia’s ‘strong’ languages are in remote areas of Australia. Map 2.1 highlights that whilst not all remote regions have retained strong language, all strong languages are to be found in remote regions.
It is clear from the majority of the authors cited in this section that if current patterns continue, most, if not all, Indigenous languages will be severely endangered or extinct by the end of the twenty-first century. Internationally, we are currently looking at losing a language every 10 days (Harrison, 2007: 5). Australia will lose even its strongest languages by the middle of this century if action is not taken. Linguists around the world believe that we should be gravely concerned by such a loss, for reasons explained in the next section.

2.1.5. Why Care?

“[E]ach language is a store of intellectual capital” (Pawley, 2001: 230) and reflects a unique view of the world (Wurm, 2001: 13). Indigenous people have argued that their “cultures have a rich reservoir of knowledge. We want to preserve and develop this – and we want to share it for the benefit of all human kind”, also “we know who we are by the language we speak... It ties us to our land and it makes us proud and strong” (words by Boonie Deegan, reproduced in Bedford & Wagner, forthcoming).

Peoples’ identity, land and culture are intimately tied to their language (AIATSIS and FATSIL, 2005: 21; Cahill, 2004). “Languages are storehouses of cultural knowledge and tradition. Indigenous groups have developed their own special culture and relationship to the environment they live in, and in their languages they have developed rich means of expression for their culture and environment” (AIATSIS and FATSIL, 2005: 21). The maintenance of languages not only sustains peoples’ identity but also social acceptance to the wider community whilst strengthening the important economic role that language plays in the arts, media and tourism. Local languages are valuable because they promote community cohesion and vitality, foster pride in a culture, and give a community self-confidence (Crystal, 2000:31).

The concern for language loss is so great that various specialists from many disciplines around the world have come together to research, discuss and publish many articles and books on topics such as ecolinguistics, biocultural diversity and language and the environment (see, for example, Crystal, 2000; Maffi, 2001; UNESCO, 2003). Bradley and Bradley (2002b: xi) summarise four main reasons why the world should care about the loss or endangerment of languages: linguistic, ethical, scientific and symbolic. Thieberger (1990: 352) argues that “language
maintenance is part of a set of broader issues” and he identifies seven reasons for maintaining endangered languages. The arguments for language maintenance from both of these authors, and that of other linguistic scholars, can be merged together to provide the following four justifications as to why we should care about dying languages: ethical, scientific, symbolic, and social.

**Ethical:** If languages disappear undescribed, future generations will not be able to learn the language and will not have access to various aspects of traditional knowledge and culture. From an ethical point of view, we have no right to deprive them of the possibility of retaining or regaining their language (Bradley & Bradley, 2002b: xi). Thieberger (1990: 344) supports this and argues that “language maintenance implies cultural maintenance”.

**Scientific – Linguistic & Cultural:** Every time a language dies so too does a unique view of the world (Grimes, 2001; Woodfield & Brickley, 1995). Treasure troves of information are lost and with them a unique creation of human beings (Ostler, 2001). With the death of a language we lose the opportunity to really understand the world (Wurm, 1991) as every language provides “a unique repository of the accumulated thoughts and experiences of a community” (Woodfield & Brickley, 1995). “The loss of local languages, and of the cultural systems that they express, has meant irretrievable loss of diverse and interesting intellectual wealth” (Hale, 1992: 36). We have lost unique cultural and ecological knowledge (UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages, 2003: 6) including thousands of years of vital knowledge gained from experience, trial and error, in areas of knowledge as diverse as land management, native animal behaviour, the use of plants for medicinal purposes and human evolution and migration (Woodfield & Brickley, 1995). “[T]he loss of any single language may be the key to answering fundamental questions of the future” (UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages, 2003: 3).

For some linguists, language maintenance may be purely for the sake of “linguistic self-interest”. If languages disappear undescribed, language researchers “will never know whether they had otherwise unattested or rare structures. Also, it is clear that endangered languages change in different ways from other languages, and this has important implications for historical linguistic theory” (Bradley & Bradley, 2002b:
xi). However, Bradley and Bradley also argue that whilst this is important, language documentation and maintenance is extremely important for the teaching and documentation of endangered languages and development of materials used by endangered language speakers on a day-to-day basis.

**Social Values:** Social values are “psychological imperatives that help generate and maintain an individual’s level of comfort and self-assurance, and, consequently, success in life” (Reyhner & Tennant, 1995: 280). Social values are ‘absorbed’ whilst learning one’s mother tongue in the first years of life, and cultural values and mother tongue are closely intertwined and often seen as inseparable (Reyhner & Tennant, 1995). Social justice and individual social well-being are important reasons for language maintenance (Thieberger, 1990: 346-351).

**Symbolic** – The need for identity is vital for social cohesion in a multi-cultural society. Group and individual identities provide a positive self-image, and in return individuals and the wider community break down barriers that result in a more unified, integrated and just society. Bradley and Bradley (2002a) and Thieberger (1990) argue that this is probably the most important reason for documenting and maintaining traditional Indigenous languages.

These reasons are strong arguments for documenting and maintaining endangered languages with benefits for both Indigenous people and the larger dominant community by providing a better understanding of both cultures, which in turn, makes for more social cohesion by reducing racism, poverty, unemployment and segregation. Whilst there are sound reasons for documenting and maintaining languages there is debate throughout the literature as to whose responsibility it is do so.

### 2.1.6. Who Should Be Responsible?

There are several views on whose responsibility it is to document or maintain endangered languages. Some argue that it is the role of linguists; others argue that it is the role of the speakers themselves, and some argue that is the responsibility of both. This is a contentious issue and while this section explores each of these opinions it does not attempt to resolve the debate nor does it address the fact that
some speakers of endangered languages do not want to document or maintain their
dying languages (this is explored further in Chapter 8).

Whenever a language dies "it's a human tragedy and one of the few human tragedies
that linguists can do something about" (Endangered languages list, 2004). Krauss
(1992: 10) believes that professional linguists need to rethink their priorities or “go
down in history as the only science that presided obliviously over the disappearance
of 90 percent of the very field to which it is dedicated”. Dixon (1997: 136-138)
believes it is the role of linguists to document and maintain languages and that PhD
linguistics students should play a major role in doing so by writing a grammar of an
endangered language for their PhD thesis.

In contrast, Kindell (2004) argues that what keeps a language alive “is its social
function; the only people who can stop a language from shrinking or dying are the
speakers of that language”. It is an “undeniable fact that responsibility for language
maintenance ultimately rests with the speakers of the languages themselves” (Devlin,
1990: 66). “In the end, it is speakers, not outsiders, who maintain or abandon
Ober (2003: 7) also argues that Indigenous people have to drastically increase their
own efforts, before it is too late, by taking full responsibility for the documentation
and maintenance of their languages rather than relying on someone else to do it.

Others argue that it is the responsibility of both the linguistics scholars and
endangered language speakers to maintain and document endangered languages.
Bradley and Bradley (2002a: 352) believe that there is a clear need for linguists and
language organisations to reach out to endangered language communities by letting
them know we are here to help and that training skilled and enthusiastic insiders is
vital to any language maintenance programme. Henderson and Nash (1997: 33)
argue that relevant Indigenous people should have control over deciding what
cultural maintenance activity is needed and what materials should be produced, and
that Indigenous people should have access to linguistics training and access to people
with specialist skills.
Regardless of whose responsibility it is to document and maintain traditional languages, it is a difficult task. Where language researchers are struggling to document and maintain endangered languages, the search for effective ways of halting and reversing the loss is an urgent task (AIATSIS and FATSIL, 2005: 11). The NILS Report (AIATSIS and FATSIL, 2005: 99-110) recommends effective ways on how Australian Indigenous languages should be documented and maintained and who should do this. This may include the establishment of Community Language Nests, Community Language Teams, Regional Indigenous Language Centres and a National Indigenous Language Centre:

- Community Language Nests are environments where young children learn language and culture, from Elders who speak the language, through play and traditional activities as well as other activities that prepare them for school;
- Community Language Teams are an initiative where people support the language nest and other language programmes in the community by providing the necessary language resources. Such teams should consist of Elders who speak the language and can pass knowledge on to other community members who have skills such as administration, teaching, child-care and language research. Such a scheme would replicate a ‘master-apprentice’ programme, and would significantly enhance maintenance, and documentation programmes within the community;
- In Regional Indigenous Language Centres both Indigenous and non-ILRs work together to support the community language teams and language nests and produce language resources for the languages in their region. The NILS report also recommends that such centres should be controlled by an Indigenous board consisting of representatives from the different language groups of that region; and,
- The role of a National Indigenous Language Centre would be to provide support and policy for language work at all levels. For example, it could provide the Regional Indigenous Language Centres with higher-level linguistic documentation and maintenance programmes. This centre should also provide linguistics training, or work very closely with linguistics training bodies, to train Indigenous people to carry out the necessary, and often urgent linguistic documentation and to support or
work in the regional language centres, community language teams and the language nests.

There is much emphasis in the literature on Indigenous people documenting and maintaining their own languages. But regardless of who does it “a seriously endangered language should be documented as quickly as possible” (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006: 5) because “without adequate documentation, a language that is extinct can never be revived” (UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages, 2003: 3). When summing up the International Symposium on Endangered Languages, Tsuchida said that, regardless of whose responsibility it is, it is ironic that whenever the documentation or maintenance of a language becomes a hot topic it is already too late to do so (International Clearing House for Endangered Languages, 1996). Indigenous people also have a great deal to say about who should do this work and why, as is discussed in detail in the results chapters (Chapters 6, 7 and 8).

2.2. Language Documentation and Maintenance of Australian Languages

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (1992) produced the report *Language and Culture: A Matter of Survival*. This argues that the maintenance of Australian Indigenous languages is an urgent task and it is important for Australia that the language and culture of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people be protected and maintained. This report, and many other sources (see, for example, AIATSIS and FATSIL, 2005; Amery et al., 2002; Bradley & Bradley, 2002a; Dixon, 1991; Fishman, 1991; McKay, 1996), have made recommendations about what should be done, but the Australian situation is still dire. There have been many language documentation and maintenance programmes in Australia to which language researchers have dedicated their careers and lives. However, there are not enough trained language researchers to document or maintain all of Australia’s surviving Indigenous languages. This section addresses these issues whilst discussing the wider issues relating to language maintenance or documentation.
There are various definitions of the term ‘language maintenance’. Thieberger (1990: 334) provided two. The one most relevant here is his second one: “those activities engaged in with an aim of maintaining languages”. However, the House of Representatives Standing committee (1992: 17) provided a broader definition: “language maintenance activities include the appropriate promotion, development, recording and retrieval of language”. Devlin (1990: 54) explained that “‘maintenance’ generally implies the conservation of an ethnolinguistic vitality within and by a speech community”. Corris et al. (2002: 344) argue that “[m]aintaining a language means recording the language in a way that is useful to the speakers and their descendants now”. Ober (2003: 9) points out that language maintenance, in the broader sense, is a “set of deliberate activities including the promotion, development, teaching and recording of language”.

However, regardless of finding the exact or most relevant definition of language maintenance, it is vital that Australia’s surviving Indigenous languages are documented or maintained before it is too late. UNESCO (2003: 6) believes that a “language that can no longer be maintained, perpetuated, or revitalized still merits the most complete documentation possible” and that the process of documentation often helps the language resource person to re-activate the linguistic and cultural knowledge.

Of the 250 Australian Indigenous languages Dixon (1991: 238-239) argues that 51 have good documentation, 110 have fair materials and ninety have no to poor documentation. He describes good documentation as having “full grammars, collections of traditional stories and a decent size dictionary”. Poor documentation is defined as having “fragments of a grammar and a few medium-sized word-lists” and for minimal documentation there are only a few short word-lists; sometimes these lists only have one word in them. Over the years, scholars have usually developed dictionaries, grammars and other linguistically technical materials to assist in the documentation and maintenance of endangered languages. Simpson et al. (2001: 344) argue that “dictionaries provide status to a community and are a means to documenting dying languages … [they] alone will not revitalise or maintain a language, but they are but one tool in the task” “as many spin-off language materials can be easily generated from them” (AIATSIS
and FATSIL, 2005: 92). Hinton (2001: 413), however, argues that scholars have “failed to document the most important aspects of a language for users: the pragmatics of language use”. Language documentation needs to be accessible to language communities “even if that is not what we [linguistics scholars] might think they should want” (Bradley & Bradley, 2002: 352).

As each language is unique, so too is its prospects and needs (Bradley & Bradley, 2002: 348). Community attitudes as to who should document and maintain languages differ between each individual language community. Some communities only want people from their own language group documenting their traditional language and they do not want any linguistic details of their language shared with the wider community. An example is the Miriwoong people, in the Kimberley in northern Western Australia, who have a specific policy in place stating that Miriwoong language resources are only available for Miriwoong people on Miriwoong land. This policy also states that anyone who wants to learn the details of the language must do so through these restricted materials with an appropriate Miriwoong person, as this method of learning will “prevent the language being used inappropriately or incorrectly” (Newry & Palmer, 2003). In contrast, other language communities are happy for anyone to document and maintain their traditional language. These language groups are generally happy to have the linguistic details of their language publicised for anyone who is interested to read and study them. This issue is explored further in Chapter 8.

As Indigenous linguistic situations differ, so do the methods used to document each language. In 1991, Fishman developed a theory and practice to assist endangered language communities around the world in maintaining their endangered languages; he calls this theory ‘Reversing Language Shift’ (RLS). The theory and practice of RLS attempts to strengthen endangered languages through sociolinguistic efforts. The theory advocates achieving diglossia through language domain-separation and consists of an eight-stage model known as the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS). The GIDS recommends language maintenance efforts according to the linguistic situation of the language community. Fishman’s GIDS model attempts to cater for all language situations; Stage 8 provides for languages that are no longer spoken, through to Stage 1 where there is much intergenerational language
transmission and literacy among all the generations. Through Stages 6 to 1 he emphasises the need for intergenerational mother tongue transmission, as, he argues, intergenerational communication is vital for the survival of a language (for detailed discussions on RLS in other language situations see Fishman 1991).

Table 2.2 lists all the stages of Fishman’s RLS GIDS with Fishman’s titles or analyses for the Australian language situation. This scale includes both Australia’s migrant and Indigenous language situations. However, the following discussion focuses solely on the Australian Indigenous language situation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Language maintenance action required</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1:</td>
<td>Higher education, regional or central governmental activity, national media and higher/specialised work sphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2:</td>
<td>Local mass media and governmental services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3:</td>
<td>The Xish work spheres (serving Xmen and/or Ymen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4a:</td>
<td>Xish-sponsored and conducted schools that are attended in lieu of meeting compulsory education requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4b:</td>
<td>Xish programmes in Yish schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 5:</td>
<td>Literacy via agencies or institutions that are entirely under Xish control and that do NOT need to meet or satisfy Yish standards re compulsory education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 6:</td>
<td>Family-neighbourhood-community based language maintenance in which the link to the younger generation is established and retained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 7:</td>
<td>The elderly among themselves: learning, relearning and use without intergenerational family or integrated community functions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 8:</td>
<td>Reassembling the language</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2: Fishman’s 1991 Reversing Language Shift Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale for Australian Indigenous Languages (‘X’ represents the minority language and ‘Y’ represents the dominant language).

Fishman (1991: 252 - 286) argues that 80 percent of Australia’s Indigenous languages are at Stage 8 and there is ‘scant comfort’ for reversing language shift at this stage, even though efforts do add considerably to both scholarly and popular appreciation of human diversity, ingenuity and cultural dedication. Most other Australian languages are at Stage 7. At stage 7 the elderly need to learn, relearn and use their language amongst themselves; there is no intergenerational transmission. Very few Australian Indigenous languages have been able to achieve Stage 6, according to Fishman, and only in the remoter regions of Australia. These regions are
generally outstations where Indigenous people can live their culture in their own way without too much dominance from ‘white Australia’. These outstations allow the local Indigenous language to be spoken in many domains, which enhances intergenerational transmission so that prospects for RLS are significantly improved. In Australia, very few schools exhibit Stages 4a, 4b and 5 characteristics. However, Fishman argues that the few schools that do satisfy these criteria can reverse language shift. These stages require that the language be nurtured by society until the children who have learned their traditional language have children of their own, “preferably via intensifying efforts at Stages 6 and 5, thereby recreating a community that functions increasingly via the language”. In this circumstance a revival of the language can be said to have occurred (Fishman, 1991: 268). Stages 3, 2 and 1 are not relevant in the Australian Indigenous language situation as there is no intergenerational language transmission integration for these practices to operate effectively. These Stages could only be achieved in Australia if all of the prior stages have been achieved, which is unlikely.

Fishman (1991: 277) argues that:

the RLS outlook in Australia is far bleaker than the sheer amount of RLS activity currently ongoing might seem to imply... good intentions are not enough and the steps taken or about to be taken are either largely unrelated, non-productive or even counter-productive as far as intergenerational RLS-payoff is concerned.

Fishman’s RLS theory and practice has been widely accepted around the world. However, in Australia there has been some criticism and calls for changes to the GIDS. Reviews of Fishman’s RLS theory state that Fishman “hits the nail on the head” when he stresses the main goal of RLS activity is intergenerational mother tongue transmission (McConvell, 1992: 211; Reyhner & Tennant, 1995: 281-284). McConvell (1992: 211) also states that Fishman should be listened to very carefully as he has “many insights of a practical commonsense nature … which are often overlooked in actual language movements and activities”. However, McConvell (1992: 216) argues against Fishman’s theory of ‘diglossia’ and ‘language domains’. He states that if Indigenous Australians only speak their language in certain domains then they will “have to depart from [their] prior social norms to achieve RLS”, which
is a “means of language shift away from [Indigenous] languages, not of language maintenance” (McConvell, 1992: 216). He also argues against Fishman’s stress on the importance of outstations in Australia. He states that while it is a plausible argument, there is no evidence to back it and there are cases in Australia where language shift has occurred in isolated areas but not in urban areas. McConvell finishes his review by saying that “we should be wary of applying assumptions about domains and diglossia contained in [RLS Theory] in ways that could have the opposite result from the one intended: reversing language shift” (McConvell, 1992: 219).

Lo Bianco and Rhydwen (2001: 419-420) also argue that the GIDS may require modification to accommodate the Australian Indigenous language situation. They summarise their main concerns about GIDS in five points: Point (1) argues that the higher levels (lower numbers) of the GIDS do not really relate to the Australian Indigenous situation, especially when diglossia and domain-separation make it unlikely for Australian Indigenous languages to reach the higher levels. Point (2) relates to the development of policy and who should be involved. Points (3) and (4) relate to education in schools policies and funding issues, and Point (5) argues about the domains that Indigenous languages should be spoken in, and supports McConvell’s recommendations for the modification to this requirement within the GIDS. Other scholars have also called for modifications to the GIDS and these arguments can be found in Walsh’s (2005) paper ‘Will Indigenous Languages Survive?’.

Grenoble and Whaley (2006: 21) argue that language maintenance and documentation involves “counter-balancing the forces which have caused or are causing language shift”. They argue that whilst there are similar forces operating across languages, each case is different. Therefore, a single successful programme that could be implemented in all language situations “simply does not exist” because “each situation is unique: although there is a commonality of factors shared by most communities”. They argue that there are macro and micro-variables that affect language documentation and maintenance (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006: 21-49). Macro-variables are external forces that affect language documentation and maintenance, and include local, regional, national and extra-national forces are are
“shared across large numbers of endangerment situations (Grenoble & Whaley, 1998: 28). Micro-variables are forces at the local level that affect language documentation and maintenance that are “unique to specific speech communities (Grenoble & Whaley, 1998: 28). UNESCO’s Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages (2003: 3) discusses similar forces but refers to them as internal and external pressures. Regardless of the terminology used the “work of communities cannot alone revive language. Good bureaucracy and institutions play a vital role in supporting language work. Local work can be assisted or hampered, depending on whether government and non-government structures are providing effective support or not” (Koori Centre, 2007). The fact that a diversity of micro and macro variables exists has informed the analysis of this thesis (Chapters 6, 7 and 8).

One contemporary question is “can endangered languages be saved?” There are various views on this. Whilst exploring this question it is important to clarify what it means to “save a language”. Walsh (2005: 308) argues that to save a language could mean to revive an entire language and ensure that language is passed on to future generations in its entirety. Tsunoda (2004: 270) believes that the answer to this question depends on the definition and aim of the language programme. However, most scholars agree that it is vital that languages are recorded as much as possible and as soon as possible, even though “it takes a tremendous commitment on the part of the Indigenous communities and those who might assist them” (Walsh, 2005: 308). Bradley (2002) and others (see Devlin, 1990: 69; Tsunoda, 2004; Wurm, 2002) argue that in the end it is the attitudes and efforts of the endangered language speakers that make a difference to the survival of their traditional language and culture. It is not what scholars think the endangered language speakers would like to do, nor is it the efforts or attitudes of outside agencies or individuals, even though one should not underestimate the difference they do make. Even if a language is unlikely to survive there is value in attempting to maintain the language (Dorian, 1987). Language communities often just want “ongoing dialogue” about their language to strengthen identity and language awareness and use in the community (Stebbins, 2003: 270). It is because of such beliefs by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and organisations around Australia that courses have been established specifically to teach Indigenous Australians the linguistic skills to
contribute to the documentation and maintenance of their endangered languages themselves.

### 2.3. Linguistics Training For Indigenous Australians

“Ideally, Aborigines should be trained as linguists” (Dixon, 1991) because of their prior knowledge and relationships which can help to make more discoveries than non-Indigenous people (AIATSIS and FATSIL, 2005: 105). But there are only a handful of Indigenous Australians who have been through full university training (AIATSIS and FATSIL, 2005: 89). Courses need to be accessible to remote traditional Indigenous adults. Such accessibility must cater for people’s limited literacy levels and cultural needs, and courses need to be offered at all education levels including “certificate, degree and postgraduate levels” (AIATSIS and FATSIL, 2005: 122).

UNESCO (2005) provides a list of the world’s academic programmes concerning the safeguarding of endangered languages and intangible heritage. While UNESCO states that it cannot possibly list all programmes offered around the world, it does provide a list that is representative of the programmes in Australia. This list provides the names of nine educational institutions in Australia that offer, or have offered, courses that are related to the safeguarding of endangered languages. Of these nine institutions only two, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education and Pilbara Technical and Further Education (TAFE) (previously Pundulmurra College), offer courses specifically designed for traditional remote Indigenous Australian adults, who usually have had little access to education. The other seven are universities, which require year 12 (completion of secondary schooling), and these courses are not specifically written for Indigenous Australians.

However, between 1974 and 2004 there were six educational institutions in Australia that offered linguistics courses specifically designed for Indigenous Australians and only for Indigenous adults (see section 4.1). The six educational institutions were the:

- School of Australian Linguistics;
- Centre for Australian Languages and Linguistics, Batchelor Institute;
- Summer Institute of Linguistics;
Pilbara TAFE;
Cairns TAFE; and,
Institute of Aboriginal Development.

It is important to note here that the School of Australian Linguistics (SAL) became the Centre for Australian Languages and Linguistics (CALL) within Batchelor College in 1990 (Batchelor College changed its name to the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (Batchelor Institute) in 1999). As CALL’s staff, courses and delivery methods became so different to SAL’s they are best thought of as two separate institutions. Currently, in 2008, only three of these institutions still offer linguistics courses: CALL, Summer Institute of Linguistics and Pilbara TAFE. Batchelor Institute is the only institution that caters for Indigenous people from all States and Territories of Australia; the other two typically only offer courses to people within their own geographical area (see Chapters 3 and 4 for full details on each of these institutions).

Just as education for Indigenous people around the world is as diverse as the cultures, societies and languages in which they live (King & Schielmann, 2004: 14) so is the linguistics training that individual educational institutions offer and its effectiveness. However, there are many different ways to assess the effectiveness of training.

2.4. Impact/Effectiveness of Linguistics Training

The development and delivery of linguistics curricula specifically designed for Indigenous Australians is vital to the documentation and maintenance of Australia’s endangered languages, yet to date there is little research on the effectiveness of these programmes (Jones & Campbell Nangari, in press). This is surprising considering the significant financial investment by the Australian government in the linguistics training of Indigenous adults at least since 1974.

Identifying school effectiveness is not easy, “either conceptually, technically or politically” (Wyatt, 1996: 2). Over the past three decades across Australia several large-scale evaluations of school improvement projects “have not generally led to any significant and sustainable improvements in student outcomes” (Wyatt, 1996: 1). Evaluating the impact of a training programme requires considerable time, but even with time “it is difficult to determine whether a given output has had an impact”; it is
generally easier to establish whether and to what extent it has been used. Wyatt also states that one way of doing this is to see how many graduates have been recruited in the fields for which they were trained. This type of evaluation is known as ‘external evaluation’ and can also “assess the value of training, identify improvement areas, and identify unnecessary training that can be eliminated” (Farmer, n.d).

An effective external evaluation could be achieved through an ethnographic research method for educational purposes. As defined by Wiersma (1991: 17), this is a “process of providing ... descriptions of educational systems, processes, and phenomena within their specific contexts .... relying on observations, descriptions and qualitative judgements or interpretations of phenomena” that “takes place in the natural setting and focuses on process in an attempt to obtain a holistic picture”. To assess the impact of linguistics training across several communities, case studies could be established in various communities in combination with Wiersma’s methodology.

A case study is a “comprehensive research strategy” comprising an all-encompassing method that includes the logic of the design, data collection techniques, and particular approaches to data analysis (Yin, 2003: 13-14). This method is often used when a researcher deliberately wants to cover contextual conditions. Yin (2003: 13-14) describes a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life contexts, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”. A case study inquiry allows for a technically distinctive situation where there may be many more variables of interest than data points; as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, the result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis (Yin, 2003: 13-14). These, combined with a combination of Patton’s (2002) interview techniques, provide a researcher with a methodology that assesses the impact or effectiveness of training of many language groups and communities across a diversity of regions. The researcher can assess the similarities and differences across the diversity of complex social and political communities by confidentially interviewing individuals. Patton’s interview techniques incorporate three basic approaches to open-ended interviews and allow interviews to be flexible enough to explore other issues brought up by the interviewee, ensuring informal
conversation but following an interview guide so as to keep the conversation within the realms of the research.

There are other methods that could be used to collect data that assess the impact of training. Such methods include a longitudinal study, interviews of lecturers of educational institutions that offer such training, or interviewing staff in language centres. However, these methods alone may not provide as holistic or in-depth a picture as the combination of methods discussed above, especially when including such a diversity of language groups, organisations and environments.

Just as it is important to assess the impact or effectiveness of linguistics training, it is important to know what this training set out to achieve. The main aim of the School of Australian Linguistics (SAL) was to support bilingual education programmes for Aboriginal people. The establishment of SAL was a direct result of the Australian Federal government’s self-determination and self-management policy for Indigenous Australian’s in the late 1960s and early 1970s. At that time SAL’s aims, according to the brief summary provided by Black during a review of SAL (Black, 1984), included:

- making Indigenous Australians “self-sufficient in linguistically-related spheres”;
- linguistically training Indigenous people so they could “assist the development of bilingual education, and for other practical scholarly purposes”;
- developing creative language skills among Indigenous people; and,
- training Indigenous translators and interpreters.

In 1990 SAL was transferred to Batchelor College and renamed the Centre for Australian Languages and Linguistics (CALL - see Chapter 4 for details). While SAL’s original aims remained, the academic level of the courses increased so that graduates could work as language teachers and researchers (see sections 4.1.1 and 6.1 for further details on the level of SAL’s courses). The next ten years saw the courses aim to provide higher-level courses so that graduates could work in a wider field of linguistics. CALL’s 2003 Diploma of Arts (Languages and Linguistics) course (Caffery, 2003a) aimed to provide graduates with the skills to:
CALL developed higher-level courses to enhance students’ linguistic knowledge, linguistic analytical abilities and technical skills so that they can record, analyse, document and produce resources for their own languages, thus assisting in the documentation and maintenance of Australia’s Indigenous languages (Caffery, 2003a).

There is no evaluation available in the literature on whether or not these courses have assisted Indigenous language researchers in documenting and maintaining their traditional languages. This is a gap that this thesis aims to fill so that urgent action can be taken to document and maintain Australia’s endangered Indigenous languages.

2.5. Discussion

Regardless of the definition of an endangered language and causes for loss of such languages, if urgent action is not taken, Australia will lose all of its Indigenous languages by the middle of this century. More generally, the world is likely to lose up to 90 percent of its Indigenous languages by the end of this century (section 2.1). These figures are alarming and even more so if the languages are not adequately documented. The reasons why Indigenous languages are dying differ from language group to language group, as does the number of speakers, but regardless of this it is vital that they are documented before they die out. Language loss can contribute to Indigenous people losing their identity, land and culture. In addition, with the loss of an Indigenous language the world could lose vital knowledge that could answer important questions of the future (section 2.2). Indigenous Australians do want to document and maintain their traditional languages but they need much support in doing so. Appropriate and targeted linguistics training of Indigenous Australians is needed to assist them in achieving this goal (section 2.3).
CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH DESIGN
Chapter 3. Research Design

A study of records and other documentary evidence from linguistics education programmes designed to support Indigenous language work (section 3.1), along with my own experience, provided a basis for undertaking interviews with a diversity of participants in Indigenous communities in many different geographical locations across the northern half of Australia (section 3.2). The combined interview technique used to collect interview data, and its analysis, are described in section 3.3, which is followed by a discussion on the gaps in the data obtained by the research (section 3.4). The ethical clearances and the consent of the participants that were obtained before undertaking this project are described in section 3.5.

3.1. Course and Graduate Data Collection and Analysis

To collect data on linguistics courses specifically designed for Indigenous Australians and the graduates of those courses, I needed to know which educational institutions, currently or previously, delivered such courses. The approach used to collect the relevant data had to vary with each educational institution due to the availability of, and access to, their databases and their different data holdings.

From my own experience, I had a reasonable idea of the educational institutions that offered linguistics courses specifically designed for Indigenous adults. However, to ensure that I had not missed any institutions I searched the internet and library catalogues for information leading to any educational institution that offered such linguistics courses and which were accredited by the State or Territory’s education authority. All educational institutions that participated in this research project were registered with their State, Territory or Federal government and offered accredited courses that were approved in accordance with the Australian Quality Training Framework (Australian Government, 2002). This ensured that the courses and the graduates’ qualifications were officially recognised.

As a result of this search and my prior knowledge, I found that six educational institutions in Australia offer, or had offered, linguistics courses specifically designed for Indigenous adults:

- School of Australian Linguistics (SAL),
Centre for Australian Languages and Linguistics (CALL), Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (Batchelor Institute);

The Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL);

The Institute of Aboriginal Development (IAD);

Cairns Technical and Further Education (Cairns TAFE); and,

Pilbara Technical and Further Education (Pilbara TAFE).

This internet and library search provided me with the names and contact details of the relevant educational institutions but not the graduate or course data I required. I therefore telephoned or met with staff representing each of these institutions, usually the lecturers of the linguistics courses, to arrange an interview with them to discuss my research and the courses they offered. During the visits to these institutions, or interviews with the lecturers (some of whom had left the education institution and so were interviewed elsewhere) I collected various course documents and any student data that they could provide me without breaching the privacy and copyright restrictions of their institution.

To collect the same minimum data, as listed in Table 3.1, the institution’s databases were searched in a structured systematic way using consistent codes, standardised data queries and cross checks to eliminate incomplete or redundant data. Some institutions’ representatives provided additional data on students and courses for further analysis.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Number of graduates per course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Graduates’ languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Level of linguistics courses offered e.g. vocational education and training or higher education courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Dates courses offered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Length of course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Delivery methods e.g. distance or on campus, block or mix-mode</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Minimum data collected from each education institution.

Even though gathering data was undertaken in a consistent and methodical manner, and was flexible enough to cater for the individual institution’s privacy and ethical
restrictions, I could not use the same data collection method for each institution. The following sub-sections describe the method used to collect the relevant course and graduate data, and the data collected from each institution.

### 3.1.1. School of Australian Linguistics

Much of the School of Australian Linguistics (SAL) data were collated from the Darwin Community College 1980 to 1984 graduation booklets and the Darwin Institute of Technology 1985 to 1989 graduation booklets. These booklets are held in the Charles Darwin University’s archives, which provided on-site access to the booklets for photocopying of the relevant sections of each booklet. These booklets provided the students’ names, year of graduation and the course completed.

Additional data were sought from the School’s 1980-1985 newsletters, *Ngali*. In 1985, *Ngali* provided a complete list of SAL’s graduates between 1980 and 1985. This newsletter not only confirmed the graduates’ details listed in the 1980-1984 graduation booklets but also provided the name of the graduate’s Indigenous language group. Other data collated from the *Ngali* newsletters included course details, the purpose of some of the courses and the dates and places these courses were offered and the delivery method used. Other relevant details were collected from the School of Australian Linguistics Review Report (School of Australian Linguistics, 1989) and from the review’s preparation papers (Cooke, 1989). The data collected from any one of these sources were confirmed through one or more of the other sources to ensure the validity of the data collected. Additional course or graduate data were obtained during interviews with institutional staff.

### 3.1.2. Centre for Australian Languages and Linguistics

Due to the work pressures of Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education’s (Batchelor Institute) registrar and staff, it was agreed that as I was a staff member I could have full access to the Centre for Australian Languages and Linguistics’ (CALL) student database to collect the relevant data myself. I travelled to both the Alice Springs and Batchelor campuses to collect this data.

Batchelor Institute changed its student statistical database from ‘Old Smart’ software to their current database system in 1997. For archiving purposes, the old database
was sent to the Northern Territory Government, which then forwarded it to Canberra. Unfortunately, this database could not be located. Therefore, all the data between 1993 and 1996 presented in this thesis were collected from Batchelor’s graduation booklets and staff records. These records have been crosschecked to ensure all details collected are accurate. No data for the period of the 1990, 1991 and 1992 were accessible as discussed in section 3.4.

The data collected for CALL’s linguistics courses between 1997 and 2004 came from Batchelor’s student database, and were similarly crosschecked with the graduation booklets and other accessible records. This database was sorted for all linguistics courses using Batchelor’s course codes ‘*ALS*’ (Arts Language Studies) and ‘*ALL*’ (Arts Language and Linguistics). The asterisk wildcards were used to ignore any details before and after the ALS/ALL coding. In addition to the information listed in Table 3.1, the following details were sought:

- Graduates’ name;
- Graduates’ contact details;
- Linguistics courses that Batchelor currently and previously offered;
- Dates the courses were offered;
- Level of courses;
- Number of students enrolled each year;
- Level of course completed by each student;
- Length of time for completion of full qualification;
- Total number of students graduated;
- Students’ highest level of education upon application;
- Gender of student; and,
- Community/place of residence.

The database was sorted for the details listed above and the details were collated in a Filemaker Pro list, which was copied to a CD for analytical purposes (see section 3.1.7). This CD was shown to the Student Record Officer and Registrar to ensure there was no breach of Batchelor Institute’s ethical or privacy policies.
3.1.3. Summer Institute of Linguistics

For reasons of confidentiality, the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) could not allow me direct access to their student database because I would have been able to identify individual students. Therefore, SIL staff members collated much of the relevant data themselves, maintaining student anonymity. They provided me with everything listed in Table 3.1, except for item 2 – Graduates’ language. During a subsequent interview, a SIL staff member went through the data carefully with me and was able to provide me with further details, such as students’ background, curriculum and the method of delivery. I was also provided with a copy of SIL’s course curriculum documents from which I gathered additional information on the course. SIL’s course details and student data for the period between 1997 and 2004 are discussed in detail in section 4.1.3.

3.1.4. Cairns TAFE

Cairns TAFE offered one linguistics course, between 1998 and 2001, and does not have any accessible records on the course or its graduates. However, a lecturer of the course provided me with much of the data listed in Table 3.1, except for item 2 – Graduates’ language. In addition to the knowledge of this lecturer, I, as a CALL lecturer, had previously known and taught some of the graduates of the Cairns TAFE Diploma of Arts (Language Studies) course, so I had some prior knowledge of the Cairns TAFE course and its graduates. Also, as some of these graduates subsequently enrolled in a CALL course, additional information on these students had been gathered from the Batchelor Institute’s database. Through my prior knowledge and the knowledge of the lecturer who developed and taught this course, much of the relevant data were gathered. As some of the details came from the lecturer’s memory, the data may not be 100 percent accurate; nonetheless, the data are adequate enough to provide a more complete picture of the courses offered to Indigenous Language Researchers (ILR) and the numbers of students who attended and completed the courses.

3.1.5. Pilbara TAFE

Due to a takeover of Pundulmurra College by Pilbara TAFE and the relocation of course and student records to the new head office, there were no records available on the Pilbara TAFE linguistics course for their lecturers or manager to access, making
it impossible to obtain details such as those listed in Table 3.1. However, I did interview two lecturers of the course who provided other important information relating to the course design and delivery, which has been included in some discussions in this thesis. As with Cairns TAFE, all the course and graduate details came from the lecturer’s memory, which helps provide a more complete picture of linguistics courses specifically designed for Indigenous Australians offered in Australia. However, unlike the data gathered from Cairns TAFE, the numbers of graduates and other relevant graduate information were not known, therefore are not discussed in the results chapters of this thesis.

3.1.6. Institute for Aboriginal Development

Similarly, the Institute for Aboriginal Development (IAD) had no records of the language and linguistics courses offered or the awards presented by them. Again, any data collected came from interviews with previous IAD lecturers’ and language researchers’ memories. However, the data on student numbers, graduates and courses were so limited that I have not attempted to use them in this thesis. Therefore, the findings in Chapter 4 do not include any details of courses or students who studied with or graduated from IAD.

3.1.7. Institutional Data Analysis

As course and student data became available from the participating educational institutions and individuals they were entered into a master Excel document. The data inserted in this document included (where known) the students’ name, gender, language, place of residence, the name of the education institution the student graduated from and the name of the course and year of graduation. Figure 3.1 provides an example of the data inserted into the master Excel document (CLA, ALS and AV-ALS are course codes – see Chapter 4 for further details). As many students graduated from more than one course, and for ease in calculating the number of graduates from each course, each course was listed separately in the header; not all courses are shown in Figure 3.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Name of Institution</th>
<th>CLA</th>
<th>Grad year</th>
<th>ALS</th>
<th>Grad year</th>
<th>AV-ALS</th>
<th>Grad year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Figure 3.1: Example of Headers in Master Excel Document.
The majority of the data in the master Excel document related to SAL and CALL students. The data from each of these institutions was compared and contrasted to look for similarities and differences. This analysis is provided in Chapter 4, which includes charts created in Excel to assist with explanations.

As I was able to collect language and gender details on all of CALL’s graduates and most of SAL’s, I analysed these data to look for patterns across communities and language groups. The data results of this analysis are discussed in Chapter 4. The data collected from SIL and Cairns TAFE did not include the students’ name, gender, language or community, therefore the analysis provided in Chapter 4 on gender and language does not include graduates of these two institutions. The data collected from Batchelor Institute were not always accurate or complete: for example, at least one student whom I taught and knew was female was listed as male. From information provided by participants, and from my own knowledge, corrections to any known errors were made after the fieldwork but prior to the final analysis. Where there were incomplete fields in the data I entered ‘NDP’ (no details/date provided) which is shown in the relevant Figures in Chapter 4.

Participants of this project included ILRs who had not undertaken any formal training with one of the above institutions but did receive on-the-job training. These individual’s contributions are valuable and have been included in this thesis, but as they did not undertake formal training with the participating institutions their training is not included in the analysis in Chapter 4.

3.2. Selection of Research Participants

Participants were selected after the institutional data were collected and analysed. Batchelor Institute and SAL were the only institutions that provided the graduates’ names and community details. Therefore, only participants from these two institutions were initially used to select the research participants. Once I contacted the participants or was in the field, these participants recommended other people who could participate. Upon these recommendations, I contacted these people asking for their participation, and in most cases interviewed them. Due to the interest of ILRs, particularly those trained on-the-job and other community members, the number of participants grew as I conducted the fieldwork. This section provides an overview of
how these participants were selected (section 3.2.1) and who the participants were and their locations (section 3.2.2).

### 3.2.1. Consultation Groups

To ensure a holistic picture of ILR training, and of the effects it has on maintaining and documenting traditional languages, I chose to select groups of people from within a single community, referred to here as consultation groups. The definition of consultation groups was based on Yin’s (2003) case study groups, which represent a variety of language groups and geographical areas, as discussed in the following section. The consultation groups were selected to include extreme and deviant case sampling (Patton, 1990; 169-171); that is, looking at cases that have outstanding successes or notable failures. I selected 22 consultation groups, one for each participating Indigenous community, across northern Australia. Each Indigenous consultation group comprised people from a cross-section of the community, including at least one (often more than one) Indigenous linguistics graduate, ILR with some formally training or training on-the-job, at least one community Elder and at least one other community member interested in language documentation and maintenance. Such triangulation of the data sources ensured a broader perspective from each community. I also interviewed graduates of a linguistics course who no longer work as ILRs, or have never used their linguistics skills to document or maintain their traditional language.

In addition, I interviewed non-Indigenous language researchers (NILR) to ascertain their views about their experiences and beliefs about the effectiveness of the linguistics training of ILRs. The people involved in this group included NILRs from a variety of backgrounds. All had experience documenting and maintaining Australian Indigenous languages, had worked with ILRs on language projects or taught linguistics to Indigenous adults. I interviewed NILRs from language centres, literacy production centres and linguistics training institutions. I also interviewed community based NILRs and independent NILRs who have worked on Australian Indigenous language programmes in remote and urban communities, as well as members of various language and linguistics organisations.
3.2.2. Research participants and communities

I chose to interview graduates who came from northern Australian language communities rather than those of the southern Australian language communities for two reasons. Firstly, the institutional data showed that the majority of graduates came from the northern half of Australia. Secondly, the majority of these graduates still lived in a remote traditional communities where their traditional customs, values and beliefs are still practised and their traditional languages are still spoken by some members of the community (in eleven cases the languages were still being handed on to children as a first language (AIATSIS and FATSIL, 2005)). The main purpose of this study was to help graduates “to help keep their language strong”, in other words, to help the graduates encourage younger generations to learn the language by maintaining or documenting their traditional language.

Due to the diversity of the communities’ linguistic, social, geographical and political situations across northern Australia, I divided the consultation groups into six regions across the three political boundaries of northern Australia. The six regions, as shown in Map 3.1, include the participating thirteen remote Indigenous communities and the nine urban communities across the three States/Territory of northern Australia, which were:

- The Torres Strait in Northern Queensland (region 1);
- The mainland of Northern Queensland (region 2);
- The Pilbara in Northern Western Australia (region 3);
- The Kimberley in Northern Western Australia (region 4);
- Central Australia in the Northern Territory (region 5); and,
- The Top End of the Northern Territory (region 6).

As a result, there were two large regions within each State/Territory, each containing remote and urban communities and languages.

Urban and remote communities were selected to compare and contrast the effects of remote and urban settings, as it is possible that the linguistic skills, community desires and needs and the available linguistic supports significantly differed in each setting. In Queensland, I selected three language groups – Meriam Mer (MM), Kalaw...
Kawaw Ya (KKY) and Kala Lagaw Ya (KLY). Each of these groups have speakers in communities on remote islands, where people still live a traditional lifestyle, and in an urban community setting, where traditional languages are still spoken by some but the traditional lifestyle is not a part of everyday living. As both of these communities have the same aspirations of ‘keeping their language strong’ they were selected to see whether their linguistic needs, practices and beliefs differed.

Map 3.1: Field study regions, showing detail of the Torres Strait Islands.

Western Australian remote and urban communities generally have linguistic support from language centres throughout the State. Therefore, in this State, I selected remote and urban communities, not to compare language communities, but to contrast and compare the linguistic needs and desires between communities that have the support of a language centre and those that do not, and then to compare these needs and attitudes to those in the other regions across northern Australia.

The selection of communities in the Northern Territory differed in that some remote communities have the support of a language centre, some have the support of a literacy production centre in the local primary school and others do not have any
linguistic support at all. I chose communities throughout the Northern Territory that had these different supports to compare and contrast their needs and attitudes across the Northern Territory and then across northern Australia.

Tables 3.2 to 3.5 provide a breakdown of the participating communities first by State or Territory then by region (for ease of reading I have provided four tables instead of one). The numbers of participants, interviews, languages represented by participants and organisations are listed by region. The language centres, educational institutions and other organisations that participated in the project are also listed by region. I conducted 74 interviews with 98 participants; seven were group interviews, which included more than one participant. Chapter 5 provides further details on the linguistic, social and geographical details of all of the communities and organisations that participated in this research project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Territory</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Informants</th>
<th>Languages of informants</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th># informants / # of interviews</th>
<th>Participating organisations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>Central Australia Region</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Alyawarr Arrernte Kayetye Wambaya Warlmanpa Warlpiri Warumungu</td>
<td>Tennant Creek</td>
<td>13/6</td>
<td>Papulu-Appurr Kart Language Centre. Council of Elders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Amperlatwatya</td>
<td>1/1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2: Northern Territory Central Australian Region including number of Participants, names of institutions and number of interviews by region.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Territory</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Informants</th>
<th>Languages of informants</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th># informants / # of interviews</th>
<th>Participating organisations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>Top End Region</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Barrara Djambarrpu yngu Mara Murrungun Ngandi Nunggbuyu also known as Wubuy Rembarraŋgarrayi Tiwi Wagilak Yoŋgu Matha</td>
<td>Batchelor</td>
<td>1/1</td>
<td>Batchelor Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TIWI Islands</td>
<td>6/4</td>
<td>Murrupuriyana-nuwu Catholic School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Numbulwar</td>
<td>11/5</td>
<td>Numbulwar Primary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ngukurr</td>
<td>8/4</td>
<td>Ngukurr Primary School, Katherine Language Resource Centre (Ngukurr)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td>2/2</td>
<td>Katherine Language Resource Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Maningrida</td>
<td>6/3</td>
<td>Maningrida Primary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Galiwin'ku</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>Galiwiniku Primary School, Gawa Christian School, Djambarrpuy-ngu Bible Translation Centre - ARDS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Darwin</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>SIL NTDEET Charles Darwin University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3: Northern Territory Top End Region including number of Participants, names of institutions and number of interviews by region.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Territory</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Informants</th>
<th>Languages of informants</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th># of informants / # of interviews</th>
<th>Participating organisations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>The Pilbara Region</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Kariyarra Nyangumarta Warnaman</td>
<td>Port Hedland</td>
<td>6/5</td>
<td>Pundulmurra College – Pilbara TAFE. Wangka Maya Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Kimberley Region</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Bunuba Djaru Kija Kukatja Mirriwoong Worrora Ngayjarra</td>
<td>Broome</td>
<td>2/2</td>
<td>University of Notre Dame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mowanum</td>
<td>1/1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Halls Creek &amp; Fitzroy Crossing</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>Kimberley Language Resource Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kununurra</td>
<td>7/7</td>
<td>Mirina Dawang Woorlab-Gerring Language and Culture Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Balgo</td>
<td>2/2</td>
<td>Lurnpa Catholic School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.4: Western Australian Region including number of Participants, names of institutions and number of interviews by region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Territory</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Informants</th>
<th>Languages of informants</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th># of informants / # of interviews</th>
<th>Participating organisations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>Torres Strait</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>KKY KLY MM Yumpla Tok</td>
<td>Waiben (Thursday Island)</td>
<td>1/1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mer (Murray Island)</td>
<td>7/6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern QLD</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>KKY KLY MM Yumpla Tok</td>
<td>Cairns</td>
<td>1/1</td>
<td>Cairns TAFE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Townsville</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.5: Queensland Region including number of Participants, names of institutions and number of interviews by region.
As I was based in Alice Springs, all fieldwork started from there. Travel to Queensland, around the Torres Strait and through the Top End islands was by small aircraft with the exception of driving from Cairns to Townsville and back. On the longer flights, I flew in large commercial aircraft; for example, from Alice Springs to Darwin and back, and Alice Springs to Cairns and back. The method of travel around Western Australia and most of the Northern Territory was by four-wheel-drive vehicles. Map 5.1 shows how the research project incorporated regions in each State and Territory in the northern half of Australia, and the methods of travel to each one. The overall fieldwork included four major field trips: three took between 4 and 6 weeks each and the other one was nearly a week. Smaller one to four-day trips were made throughout Central Australia.

As the vast majority of Indigenous linguistics graduates from the participating educational institutions were spread across the three States/Territory of the northern half of Australia and represented many language groups, I assessed the impact of linguistics training with graduates and their communities in each State/Territory. I interviewed 98 participants, including 70 Indigenous Australians, representing 31 Australian Indigenous languages and 28 NILRs, in 22 Indigenous communities across the northern half of Australia (Tables 3.2 to 3.5).

3.3. Interview Technique and Analysis

Participants were interviewed using standardised open-ended questions (Patton, 2002: 344 - 347) as discussion points. Appendix IV provides a list of all of the discussion points used in interviews with Indigenous participants and Appendix V provides those used with non-Indigenous participants.

The interview questions were designed to stimulate discussion on topics relating to linguistics courses and the effectiveness of such training across a diversity of communities in northern Australia. The question/discussion topics related to the training of ILRs, what graduates do with their linguistic skills and what effect they have on the documentation or maintenance of Australia’s endangered languages. The interview questions or discussion topics looked for other factors that enhance or constrain an ILR when working in the field and included:
➢ whether the linguistics training the Indigenous students received was appropriate to their needs when documenting or maintaining their language in the field;
➢ whether they needed to acquire additional or different skills to assist in documenting or maintaining their traditional languages once they work in the field;
➢ whether ILRs not using their linguistic skills on language projects, use them in other ways;
➢ the types of programmes that trained Indigenous language researchers work on when they complete their training;
➢ the role they have in these projects;
➢ whether they initiated new language programmes in their communities to assist in the maintenance of their languages or whether they act as assistants to other linguists; and,
➢ the effects these language programmes have on the community.

Graduates of linguistics courses were asked open-ended questions that encouraged them to reflect on their training and any linguistics projects they had worked on since completing their study. Participants could provide as much or as little detail to the questions that they wanted to; they were not pressured to answer the question if they were uncomfortable in any way. Graduates who had not worked as ILRs on their traditional language were asked a series of open-ended questions to ascertain whether they were using their linguistic skills in other areas of employment and if so, the type of work they were doing. Community Elders and language centres were interviewed in a similar manner with questions relating to their beliefs about the current status of their traditional language. To ascertain the perceived impact that linguistics training had on endangered languages, community Elders were also asked about the current and previous language programmes that ILRs have worked on, and whether these language projects have assisted in the maintenance or documentation of their language, and what made, or did not make, the project successful.

NILRs were interviewed using discussion points (Appendix V) similar to those asked in the consultation group interviews described above. Some of the participants in this group not only participated in the interview but also either e-mailed or telephoned me
with follow-up comments. Two NILR participants chose to write their comments rather than be interviewed and therefore the questions and discussion points were e-mailed to them and they returned their comments back to me by e-mail.

Participants who had worked on a language project were encouraged to show me any language materials they had produced as a result of that project, so as to assess the types of work they do and to gain a picture of how they apply their linguistic skills. Due to ownership and confidentiality reasons the language materials were not copied or taken from the field; they were evaluated at the time of interview.

While I was in the field other community members, who had not previously been selected to be involved in the project, asked to participate as they thought they had relevant and important points to contribute. These people were then formally invited to participate in the project and were provided with the relevant project details before signing a consent form. Their comments are included in the analysis.

The interview questions/discussion points were designed by using a combination of some of the features of Patton’s (2002: 342-348) three qualitative interview approaches:

- the informal conversational interview;
- the general interview guide approach; and,
- the standardised open-ended interview.

By using aspects of these techniques the interviews were designed to be flexible enough to explore other issues brought up by the interviewee but structured enough to ensure all relevant topics were covered in a comfortable, relaxed and open manner.

Patton’s informal conversational interview technique is designed to allow maximum flexibility in following up information immediately after it is raised in the interview rather than following a fixed set of questions. This interview technique is particularly good for use when the “fieldworker does not know beforehand what is going to happen, who will be present, or what will be important to ask” (Patton, 2002; 342). The general interview guide approach allows the interviewer to prepare a list of questions, issues and topics to be discussed so that each interview follows the same
pattern of interview, covering the same topics, issues and questions whilst being flexible enough to spontaneously explore subjects in more or less depth with the interviewee. The general interview guide “helps make interviewing a number of different people more systematic and comprehensive by delimiting in advance the issues to be explored” (Patton, 2002; 343). A standardised open-ended interview requires questions to be carefully and fully worded so that each interviewee is asked the same questions in the same way with the same stimuli and probes (Patton, 2002: 344).

Incorporating parts of all three of these interview styles allowed me to have a guided casual, natural conversation with interviewees whilst ensuring all the relevant topics and issues were discussed. In addition, it ensured that any questions asked were open-ended so that the interviewee could provide as much or as little detail as they were comfortable with. By using this combined technique, each interview took the form of a casual conversation, with all parties discussing the relevant topics but not answering direct questions. No two interviews were alike and the interviewees dominated much of the discussions.

The vast majority of interviews were conducted in the participants’ home communities and in a place within that community nominated by the participant. Apart from the interviews in language centres and remote community schools, all interviews were conducted in open spaces, under trees in the desert, on beaches along remote coastlines, outside community stores or at airstrips; very few interviews were carried out in-doors. Interviews with language centre staff were conducted in an office within the language centre. Similarly, most interviews with ILRs working in schools were conducted within the literacy production centre or outdoors in a staff area. All interviews were confidential, face-to-face, and, apart from the seven group interviews, were conducted one-on-one. This approach allowed the participant to say what they wanted to say without worrying about what other community members might think about what they said or that they might be saying something the rest of the community did not want to be discussed with outsiders.

Due to confidentiality requirements, all personal or identifiable details of each participant, including names, language groups, and community names, have been
removed from all quotes used in this thesis; some have been replaced with pseudonyms and put in square brackets, for example [Sarah]. All recordings have been coded to hide the identity of participants; although some were happy for their name to be used, many did not want to be identified. In addition, to protect the identity of the participants at their request, quotes in this thesis are not referenced but are coded using the coding system shown in Table 3.6. The code provides relevant details of each individual participant but also protects their identity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant number</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01 to 28</td>
<td>Indigenous Language Researcher</td>
<td>1 to 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Indigenous</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elder</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other community member</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trainer/Lecturer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.6: Codes used to refer to research participants in this thesis. The characters underlined are those used to refer to that identifying feature of the participant.

An example of use of this code is ‘13IL1’, which refers to participant 13 who is an Indigenous person, was a Language Researcher at time of participation and is from region 1. Another example would be 60NO6: participant 60 who is Non-Indigenous, participated as an Other community member and is from region 6 (see section 3.1 for the names of each region). The region number usually represents the region that the participant was interviewed in.

The participant referred to by each code is known only to me; identities have been stored separately to the recordings so there can be no accidental identification. These codes will not be made public at any time, as agreed with all participants. As explained in detail to the interviewee, I only recorded the interviews so I could have an accurate record of the discussion. I emphasised to participants that the interviews were confidential and that no one else had access to them and that I would not let anyone else listen to the interview. This proved to be an essential procedure for the project. During the interviews many participants said ‘I am only telling you this because I know no one will know I said it’, which strongly indicates that maintaining confidentiality was very important, and that my data and analysis are much richer as
a result. Accordingly, due to interviewees' concerns about confidentiality, I have not provided full transcriptions of the interviews with this thesis.

All interviews were recorded using an Olympus DS-3000 digital voice recorder. This recorder, slightly bigger than the palm of my hand, was unobtrusive when used during interviews and therefore did not intimidate any of the interviewees. The recorder was turned on once the participant felt comfortable enough to start the interview and only after they were sure that the information they provided would be treated as confidential.

The interviews were transcribed using the Olympus AS-4000 transcription module, which is an integrated transcription computer programme that automatically opens a Microsoft Word document when opening a recording to allow easy transcription using a foot control and all the other usual operations of a transcriber. This transcription module sorts, files, codes and provides easy access to all recordings and transcriptions in one very useful programme. All interviews were transcribed and listened to a minimum of four times: initially during recording, during transcription, during checking of transcription and again during the sorting of the transcription. Each transcription was analysed by categorising each interview according to discussion points (Appendix IV and V) and other relevant points raised during interview and then entered into a master document that contained relevant headings and subheadings. This document became the basis for the writing of this thesis.

To ensure I knew the data intimately I decided to analyse it manually rather than using a computer software program, such as NVivo. Manually analysing the data meant reading and rereading each transcription which helped to provide a detailed understanding of the participants’ comments and therefore a more detailed analysis. To analyse the interviews manually, I developed a table using the headings relating to discussion points across the top of the table; then, underneath in columns, as I transcribed the interviews, I wrote the index number (I#) on the recording with a general comment or summary on what the interviewee said (Table 3.7). The relevant participants’ code was entered above each table and a general comments section was added to the end of the table. This comments section was used to record any comments made by participants that did not match one of the headings in the table.
also used this general comments section to add reminders or comments for myself to use when I analysed the data. Every factor discussed during the interview was placed on the table under the appropriate heading or in the general comments section with the relevant index number in the original audio recording. Index numbers referred to the section of the recording and transcription so I could easily access sections of the interviews so as to re-listen to them to confirm aspects of the discussion. Table 3.7 provides an example of the master Microsoft Word document created to analyse the interview data; it does not include all headings and the data provided in the table were randomly selected from different interviews and are not necessarily those of the participant referred to at the top of the figure. Each factor and relevant comments were compared and contrasted and then summarised for inclusion in the thesis. One or two interview quotes of each factor were selected to include in the thesis as evidence to support the discussion and to show that the attitudes and beliefs were those of the participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ILR Preferred Name</th>
<th>Courses offered in Aust</th>
<th>Why ILRs don’t use their training or drop out</th>
<th>Training needed</th>
<th>Community issues</th>
<th>Important skills for teaching ling courses</th>
<th>What language ILRs document</th>
<th>Did people receive the skills they needed during the training or did they need more on-the-job</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11 Not linguist unless had academic training.</td>
<td>I3 Pundulmurra IAD – gave great detail on the course</td>
<td>Courses should be modular and taught out bush</td>
<td>I4 Lack of literacy</td>
<td>I6 Employment patterns attuned to the reality of their lives.</td>
<td>I10 Lack of support. Funding disrupted lives people moving. Troubled relationships, fights – a heap of reasons.</td>
<td>I15 Large groups – doesn’t matter what language. Research Skills Good Literacy reading Critical reading. Comparative linguistics. Good individual and group support. Need more analytical skills.</td>
<td>I17 Jealousy between language and non-language speakers. Teachers speak the language so most of the work is done in language rather than English. Work with contrasting of sounds e.g. minimal pairs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.7: Sample interview analysis document for each interview.
In summary, the combined interview technique was used in 74 interviews, resulting in a little over 48 hours of recorded material from 22 Indigenous communities across northern Australia. The communities represented a variety of language groups and geographical areas in two States and the Northern Territory. Each interview was transcribed and analysed through a meticulous method of ensuring all participants’ comments were assessed and entered into a participant analysis document. Each document was compared and assessed according to topic and summarised in a master document, which became the basis for writing the results section of the thesis, Chapter 6, Chapter 7 and Chapter 8.

3.4. Limitations of the Research

Research limitations were minimal, and care was taken to minimise their effects on the data collection and the analysis. Even so, there were potential limitations to the research and unavoidable gaps in the data.

A potential limitation to the research methodology was that I had a prior relationship, as a CALL lecturer, with many of the participants. While certainly an advantage in some respects, this could have influenced some of the graduates’ responses; for example, some graduates may not have been willing to talk badly of CALL or its courses. However, I believe that my role as a CALL lecturer also enhanced the project and the participants’ responses. As I had developed trusting relationships with many of the participants, they were comfortable enough with me to criticise aspects of the courses and their lecturers. Such criticism also provides evidence that I was told the views of the participants and not what they thought I wanted to know. Generally, remote traditional people are quite shy in cross-cultural exchanges and do not criticise; they often say what they think you want to hear unless they know you. In addition, as I was known in many of the communities from visits as a CALL lecturer, other community members were comfortable enough to ask if they could participate in the project. Again, this is unusual as remote community people are usually quite shy in the presence of outsiders.

Some data gaps were unavoidable. Even though much effort was put into collecting data for every year that a linguistics course was offered and awards were presented by SAL and CALL, there is a three-year gap in the data collected from 1990 to 1992.
This period follows the merger of SAL and CALL but it is unclear why there is a gap in the records. As a result, no data for this period are provided in this thesis. It is also important to point out that the number of awards presented by Batchelor could have been higher than stated in this thesis. This is because the data collected were not always accurate and because Batchelor Institute’s graduation booklets usually only listed the awardees who actually attended the graduation ceremony (those who did not attend had their awards posted to them, but there was no record of these available). I compared the Batchelor Institute graduation booklets with Batchelor Institute’s student database to see if I could find some of the graduates who had their awards posted to them, but very few of these students had any details provided in the graduation sections of the database. Also, most students were only presented with one award during the duration of a course, which was usually on the completion of an entire accredited course rather than at the completion of a stage or unit of a CALL course, unless they attended a graduation ceremony. As students were only funded to travel to one graduation ceremony they usually only attended one at the completion of their accredited course.

Other gaps in the data collected from Batchelor Institute and SAL included the absence of gender and language details for some graduates. I collected as much of this data as possible during field trips, through observation or question, but not all.

The data relating to the SIL and Cairns TAFE courses only included total numbers of graduates, not their gender or traditional language affiliation. Therefore, section 4.3 in the findings, which discusses gender and language, only refers to graduates of CALL and SAL.

Apart from the points noted above, there were few limitations or gaps in the research. The main gaps in the data were a result of the lack of detail available on graduates and courses from participating educational institutions. Despite these gaps, the analysis does provide a thorough understanding of the types of linguistics courses specifically designed for Indigenous Australians available in Australia, as well as the number of people graduating from the courses and the level of the course they graduate from.
3.5. Ethical Clearances

Before starting this research project, ethical clearances were obtained from three educational institutions: Charles Darwin University, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education and the Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training.

Ethical clearance was applied for and granted from Batchelor Institute’s Research and Ethics Committee to access its data and staff within the areas of CALL, the student statistics office and senior management. Approval was granted on the condition that I gained consent from the individual sections and staff to work with me on this particular project as well as to negotiate an appropriate way to collect the data. Individual consent was gained from the Registrar, a student records officer, the Alice Springs campus Co-ordinator and three CALL staff. Consent from the registrar and the Alice Springs co-ordinator was required as they were the people in charge of the relevant sections and staff that I needed to work with. At all times the heads of each section were informed of the data collected and at the completion of this stage of the project each head of section was shown the data collected to ensure that there was no breach of confidentiality. I interviewed the three CALL staff to gather details about their teaching practices and personal views of the linguistics training of Indigenous adults and the effectiveness of linguistics training on Australia’s endangered languages.

As Charles Darwin University (CDU) is the education institution through which this PhD is being undertaken ethical clearance was required from its Human Ethics Committee. Approval was granted and all terms and conditions were abided by. CDU’s ethical approval included the approval of the research project overview for participants (Appendix I), the plain language statement (Appendix II), consent form (Appendix III), and the interview discussion points (Appendices IV and V).

Following the AIATSIS (2000) guidelines for ethical research in Indigenous studies, it was made clear in all ethical clearance applications and consent forms that ownership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and cultural heritage
is retained by the informant and is acknowledged in the research findings and in the dissemination of the research.

All intellectual property complies with the AV-CC (Australian Vice Chancellor’s Committee) guidelines on authorship, and the CDU policy on Intellectual property.

During initial discussions with individual research participants it became obvious that I would need to visit some of the graduates within their workplace, not just in their home community, as much of the work they had done and the equipment they used, which they wanted to show me, was housed in their workplace. Most workplaces just required consent from a management committee or the director. However, to interview graduates working with Northern Territory schools, ethical clearance was required from the Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training (NTDEET). This clearance was granted on the condition that consent was gained from the area’s regional linguists, the individual school’s principal and the relevant graduates. I was also required to report back to a designated person within NTDEET once I had completed my fieldwork in these areas. All of these conditions were met.

To enter the Northern Territory Top End Indigenous communities I required a permit from the Northern Land Council. This permit is usually granted after the Northern Land Council approves the research project and provides ethical clearance; however, based on the ethical clearances I had already obtained from CDU, Batchelor Institute and NTDEET, the Northern Land Council issued the permit with the condition that consent was gained from individual community Elders or Council and the individual participants. I was also required to abide by certain behavioural conditions: for example, not to take alcohol into any community and not to visit sacred sites without prior approval. All conditions were abided by at all times.

Consent was required from all graduates, communities, individual participants and language centres. The plain language statement and consent form, which was approved by both Batchelor Institute and CDU, was used to gain consent from all participants. The approach taken to gain permission to visit a remote Indigenous community to interview relevant people was firstly to ring the graduate of the
community to see if s/he was happy to participate in the research project. If this person was happy to participate we arranged a suitable date to meet face-to-face. I repeated this process with everyone from that particular community. Once I had spoken to all potential participants in a community I contact their community council to discuss the project and request permission to visit their community. All community councils required the consent of Elders for me to visit their community and to conduct this research. Therefore, after initial discussion, I either posted or e-mailed them the research projects outline, plain language information sheet, a copy of the consent form and a cover sheet requesting approval to visit and conduct this research. This letter also included the names of the community members who had agreed to participate in the project, as well as the dates we had agreed to do the interviews. Approval times varied between communities. Some communities responded to my request within days; others took weeks or months to respond. Once approval was granted, I confirmed the dates with the interviewees and the community councils. I always asked the graduate and community council to suggest anyone else that they thought I should speak to about this project and they were usually happy to suggest people; I always contacted these people prior to my visit and usually they were happy to participate in the project. However, it was not unusual for other community residents to ask to participate in the project once I arrived in the community. Most of these people initiated conversations about language programmes and linguistics work with me or asked me to interview them as well as they felt they had something to contribute to the project. As a result, I collected much more valuable data than if I had only interviewed those I thought should participate.

The process of gaining consent to visit language centres was the same as gaining consent from Indigenous communities. Firstly, I rang the graduate and then the senior language researcher to discuss the project and to see if they were interested in participating. I then sent the senior language researcher, who was usually the language centre’s coordinator, a written request to visit and interview staff: this request always included a copy of the plain language statement and consent form (Appendices II and III). This request was then passed on to their Indigenous Council. Approval to visit the language centre and interview staff was granted by all the language centres I approached. Similarly to visiting Indigenous communities, I
always interviewed more people than initially intended. Even though I visited the
language centres to interview the centre’s ILRs, I also interviewed community
Elders, usually the Chair of the language Centre, NILRs and other people interested
in language work.

Obtaining consent to visit ILRs and Elders in urban areas was quite different to
gaining consent from all other participants. As there were no councils, principals or
governing body to request approval from, I contacted the potential participants
directly and negotiated the visit directly with him/her. This person usually
recommended other people who might like to participate in the project. Based on this
recommendation I would contact the other people and negotiate participation and
dates directly with them. I posted each person who agreed to participate a copy of the
project overview, plain language statement and the consent form (Appendices I, II
and III), then approximately one week later, when they had had time to think about
the project and decide whether or not they wanted to participate, I would contact
them again to confirm their participation. Again, once I was in the region doing the
interviews I ended up interviewing more people than initially expected.

I usually had to travel hundreds to thousands of kilometres to visit these
communities, so I could not get the consent forms signed prior to the day of the
interview. I always ensured the consent form was signed when I first met with the
interviewee but after I had re-explained the details of the research project and before
the interview. In all communities I visited I interviewed graduates, ILRs, Elders and
other community members interested in participating in the project. Consent forms
have been signed by all participants of the project.

Every language researcher, community, language centre and school I asked to
participate in this project agreed to participate, with the exception of one Top End
school. This school initially agreed to participate and I had organised the visit with
all the participants in this community and the Community Council. However, they
had a change of principal who withdrew consent, therefore I could not visit this
community.
In short, approval was required from every person and organisation involved in the project. This included four ethics clearances from organisations, 102 individual approvals (98 participants and four organisational staff to assist in collecting institute data), 8 remote community school approvals, 10 remote Community Council approvals, and 9 organisation approvals (not a full ethics clearance). In total, 133 separate approvals were required, and gained, to conduct this research project.

3.6. Discussion

The research data for my research project consisted of both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data collected from the educational institutions was analysed using Excel software (section 3.1). The qualitative data came from an external evaluation (see section 2.3) through interviews (section 3.3) to see how many graduates have been recruited in the field and to assess what graduates did with their linguistic skills once they stopped linguistics training. Ideally, to get this information one would have done a longitudinal study to see what graduates do. As I could not do a longitudinal study I chose to interview people directly, which proved to be beneficial as I was able to interview more people across a vast geographical area and across many more language groups than I could have done in a longitudinal study. In addition to obtaining this data, I also gathered the views of the people doing the training as well as the views of other members of the community on the degree to which they perceived the training was benefiting the language within their own community.

The project ended up becoming much bigger than originally planned, resulting in many more people having the opportunity to discuss vital linguistic beliefs in more detail than they have probably ever had before. Such detailed data has provided a much richer and convincing research project, which may help in changing the status quo of linguistics training and linguistic attitudes, and in providing appropriate practices in linguistics curriculum and government policy.

The research design for the project had to be culturally appropriate as well as to meet all the ethical requirements of Indigenous and non-Indigenous government and non-government organisations and educational institutions. It also had to be ethically and morally appropriate for remote Indigenous Australians who have varying degrees of
English, education, literacy and understanding of western research protocols. This project encroached on an ancient Indigenous culture, therefore I had to ensure that participants’ culture, beliefs, practices and confidences were not compromised in any way by my western research practices. This was quite challenging but achievable due to detailed planning during the early stages of the project, and clear discussions with many of the project participants. In addition, my experience, prior knowledge and the relationships I had developed over a period of nearly fifteen years living and working with remote Indigenous people across northern Australia contributed substantially to the success of the data collection.

All participants were selected after the analysis of the graduate data that were collected from the various educational institutions, discussed in Chapter 4. The graduates represented over forty languages and a diversity of communities in each State and Territory across the northern half of Australia. This allowed me an effective way to assess the extent and ways linguistics training assists in the documentation and maintenance of Australia’s endangered languages according to Indigenous Australians themselves, across a diversity of linguistic environments across each State and Territory of northern Australia. I spoke to at least one graduate from as many language groups as I could in communities where their traditional customs, values and beliefs were still practised and their languages are still spoken; in many places children are still learning their traditional language as a first language. In each State/Territory I also compared and contrasted the linguistic needs and aspirations of remote Indigenous people with that of Indigenous people in urban areas.

As the analysis for this project incorporated both qualitative and quantitative data I have presented the results separately. The analysis of the quantitative data, which comprises solely the data collected from the educational institutions, is provided in the next chapter (Chapter 4). As the majority of the interview participants were selected from the graduate data provided by the participating educational institutions, a detailed discussion on the participants and their communities is presented (Chapter 5) before the analysis of the qualitative data (Chapters 6, 7 and 8).
CHAPTER 4. LINGUISTICS TRAINING AND GRADUATES
Chapter 4. **LINGUISTICS TRAINING AND GRADUATES**

This chapter discusses the different types of linguistics training that Indigenous Australians undertake to work on language documentation and maintenance projects across northern Australia. Section 4.1 discusses formal accredited linguistics courses. It provides much of the data on the courses, awards and graduates that was collected from each of the participating educational institutions and individuals that provided data on accredited linguistics courses designed specifically for Indigenous Australian adults. The data set is discussed in detail by each individual institution, its courses and number of graduates per course. Section 4.2 discusses on-the-job linguistics training. Section 4.3 provides additional analyses relating to the gender and language groups of the graduates. A north Australian-wide picture of linguistics training and graduates, their languages and gender, and figures on the numbers of ILRs that participated in this study who undertook the different training options is synthesised in section 4.4.

### 4.1. **Courses and Graduates by Institution**

This section provides a breakdown of the awards presented by each participating education institution; they are discussed in the order of the date the institution started delivering courses. The School of Australian Linguistics is discussed first as it started to deliver their linguistics courses in 1974 (Section 4.1.1). The school was transferred to Batchelor College in 1990 and changed its name to the Centre for Australian Languages and Linguistics, whose courses and graduates are discussed in section 4.1.2. Section 4.1.3 looks at the course offered by the Summer Institute of Linguistics, which started delivering its courses in 1997. This is followed by a discussion on the courses offered by Cairns TAFE (Section 4.1.4), which ran for approximately three years from 1998. The last two subsections, 4.1.5 and 4.1.6, discuss the courses offered by the Pilbara TAFE and the Institute for Aboriginal Development.

#### 4.1.1. **School of Australian Linguistics 1974 – 1989**

The School of Australian Linguistics (SAL) was established in 1974 to support bilingual education programmes in the Northern Territory. Black and Breen (2001: 161) believe its establishment was inspired by the late Ken Hale, who strongly
stressed “the importance of enabling speakers of Indigenous languages to undertake linguistics studies of their own languages”. SAL was a part of the Darwin Community College (later known as Darwin Institute of Technology) and was originally based in Darwin to be close to a large population of language speakers (Cooke, 1989; McKay, 1991: 39). However, in December 1974, Darwin was devastated by Cyclone Tracy and SAL was moved to the township of Batchelor, one hundred kilometres south of Darwin. In 1981, SAL opened an annexe in Alice Springs (School of Australian Linguistics, 1989: 11) to cater for Indigenous adults across the central desert.

SAL, the quiet achiever, was the only higher education organisation at that time that offered tertiary courses in Indigenous languages specifically designed for Indigenous Australians (McKay, 1991: 37). The first courses taught by SAL, in 1974, mainly focused on developing basic vernacular literacy skills, but did include basic linguistic skills. These courses were not accredited. SAL’s first course consisted of seven Indigenous Australian adults who travelled to Darwin from remote Indigenous communities across northern Australia, including Thursday Island in far North Queensland, Bamyili and Numbulwar in the Top End of the Northern Territory and Yuendumu in Central Australia (Cooke, 1989).

SAL’s courses were designed to teach several people from one language group at a time with workshops on campus and in the students’ home community. This enabled the lecturer and the students to focus on that one language, which the students spoke and were quite familiar with, resulting in intensive linguistics training. In classes with more than one language group, students were divided into their separate language groups for those parts relating to their particular language (informant 89NL/T6). Graduates of SAL’s language and linguistics courses could use their skills in a variety of related linguistic areas. Such areas include preserving, reviving or strengthening the languages in their home community through supporting bilingual education programmes, recording their own cultural heritage and by developing literature in the vernacular (McKay, 1991: 37).

Students of SAL generally had very low levels of formal mainstream education. Their literacy levels were generally very low compared to non-Indigenous tertiary
students, usually at middle primary school level, and they were usually first language speakers of an Australian Indigenous language, with English as at least a second if not fourth or fifth language. However, students did have considerable maturity and expertise in their own languages and culture (McKay, 1991).

SAL delivered unaccredited courses until 1979, when they developed and accredited their first officially recognised courses. Ultimately, SAL offered five accredited language and linguistics courses, between 1974 and 1989. These courses included the Certificate of Literacy Attainment, Certificate in Transcription, Certificate in Literacy Work and the Certificate in Linguistics (course codes are listed in Table 4.1 and, for ease of reading, are used in the rest of this chapter). Each course built on the previous one and usually required up to nine weeks of full-time study (School of Australian Linguistics, 1989: 11). To complete the picture of courses offered by SAL it also offered an eight-week Certificate course in Translation/Interpreting between 1980 and 1984, producing 28 graduates (School of Australian Linguistics, 1989: 12).

While interpreting and translation courses provide the fundamental skills required and used in the Australian legal and medical fields, the skills taught and required are different from those that are required for documenting and maintaining languages. Therefore, this thesis has not incorporated any details relating to such courses offered by SAL and the other participating institutions or their graduates from any of the Australian educational institutions that offered such courses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Name</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CLA</td>
<td>Certificate of Literacy Attainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTS</td>
<td>Certificate in Transcription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLW</td>
<td>Certificate in Literacy Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLN</td>
<td>Certificate in Linguistics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: SAL course codes and course names.

In 1985 SAL courses were reaccredited due to the students’ low English literacy levels and their high levels of Indigenous language and cultural knowledge (McKay, 1991: 49) (see also section 6.1 for further discussion on students literacy skills). SAL also developed a stand alone ‘Preliminary Course’ that included some vernacular literacy but focused mainly on English literacy (89NL/T6). However, this course is
not relevant to this research project therefore has not been included in the following figures.

As SAL did not accredit any course until 1980, and there are no details of students prior to 1980, the data presented in the rest of this section only relate to the period between 1980 and 1989 and only include the CLA, CTS, CLW and CLN courses. Figure 4.2 provides a breakdown of all the awards SAL presented from 1980 to 1989.

The CLA was the first level of the four courses offered by SAL. It aimed to provide graduates with effective study skills and skills in reading and writing an Indigenous language at effective levels. My data analysis shows that 232 awards were presented to 229 students for the CLA course. Three of these students received two awards each for the CLA course, for reasons not mentioned in the newsletters or review reports. The CLA had the most graduates of all of the SAL’s courses, (Figure 4.1). Of these 229 students, 61, or 26%, went on to do further study with SAL; 32 of these students were subsequently awarded the CTS and 29 the CTS & CLW. Eight of these 229 students were awarded certificates for all four of SAL’s accredited courses.

The CTS, the second level of the four courses, provided basic transcription skills, and further developed students’ vernacular reading and writing skills. This course was offered eight times between 1980 and 1989 producing 75 graduates (Figure 4.1). Thirteen of these students did not undertake the prerequisite course, the CLA, presumably due to their prior knowledge or experience.

The third level course, the CLW, which was offered seven times during the same period, resulted in 45 Indigenous Australian adults (Figure 4.1) graduating with the skills to prepare short books, newspapers and other materials to support bilingual programmes and to do basic translations. The CLN, which was SAL’s highest level course, provided skills in analysing and describing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, including dictionary work, and in developing vernacular teaching materials (McKay, 1991; School of Australian Linguistics, 1984). The CLN was only offered once in 1987, producing eight graduates (Figure 4.1).
During SAL’s ten-year period of delivering accredited linguistics courses the number of awards presented depended on the number of full-time teaching staff in the previous year (School of Australian Linguistics, 1989). There were eight full-time staff members working with SAL in 1985, which resulted in the high number of graduates in 1986 and 1987, as can be seen in Figure 4.2. The reduction in awards in the last years of SAL’s operations was probably due to the cutbacks in staff – in 1988 there were only five full-time staff; the low number of staff may also explain the lower number of awards in the early 1980s (Cooke, 1989: 4; School of Australian Linguistics, 1989: 4).
Figure 4.3 shows the breakdown of the highest-level qualification SAL’s 258 students received by year and by course. For 168 students, the highest award received was for the completion of the CLA. Forty-five students’ highest-level award was for the completion of the CTS, 37 for the CLW and eight for the CLN.

The preparation papers for the SAL review report (Cooke, 1989) state that between 1980 and 1989 SAL taught 2,051 students from over 100 language groups and awarded over 400 certificates to approximately 300 students representing over 40 languages (School of Australian Linguistics, 1989: 5). These figures include 28 awards for its Certificate in Translation and Interpreting. According to the data I collected and analysed for this research project, SAL presented 360 awards to 258 Indigenous Australians between 1980 and 1989, as shown in Figure 4.1. These figures do not quite match those stated in the SAL review report. There is a difference of twelve awards between the SAL Review Report and my findings: I found sixteen less awards presented for the CLA and two more presented for each of the CTS and CLW. I cannot find an explanation for this difference but it does not affect the general conclusions of my study.

On the 1st of July 1989, SAL was formally transferred in its entirety to Batchelor College (School of Australian Linguistics, 1989) to become a Centre within Batchelor Institute’s School of Community Studies. It changed its name to the ‘Centre for Australian Languages and Linguistics’ in April, 1990 (School of Australian Linguistics, 1990).
4.1.2. Centre for Australian Languages and Linguistics 1993 to 2004

In the mid 1960s, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (Batchelor Institute) started as a small annexe within a government boarding school in Darwin, offering short courses for Aboriginal teacher aides and assistants. In 1974 it moved to the small township of Batchelor and in 1982 was named Batchelor College. In 1988 the Commonwealth Government gave it recognition as a higher education institution. Since then Batchelor Institute grew so much that it had opened campuses and annexes across Australia (Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, 2005). Batchelor Institute is one of Australia’s few education organisations that is accountable to Indigenous communities and governed and managed by Indigenous Australians (Ramsey et al., 2004). Batchelor Institute is specifically designed to cater for the educational needs of Indigenous adults in a culturally appropriate manner.

Batchelor Institute offers many courses at the Vocation, Education & Training and Higher Education levels. Batchelor Institute’s Centre for Australian Languages and Linguistics (CALL) offers both Vocation, Education & Training and Higher Education courses in Indigenous languages and linguistics. These courses follow Batchelor Institute’s “Both Ways” philosophy, which brings together “Indigenous Australian traditions of knowledge and Western academic disciplinary positions and cultural contexts” (Ramsey et al., 2004). Their method of delivery is a “mixed mode” method combining community-based workshops and research, field study and supervised work experience with short, intensive residential workshops at a number of Batchelor Institute’s campuses or annexes (Ramsey et al., 2004). In its prime, CALL had lecturers based in Alice Springs, Batchelor, and Darwin in the Northern Territory, Kununurra in the Kimberley Western Australia, and on Thursday Island in the far north of Queensland to service all of the Torres Strait islands. Today, 2008, CALL only has representatives in the Northern Territory but still continues to cater for students from all States and Territories in Australia.

CALL’s philosophy is for students and lecturers to work in partnership throughout the course, share knowledge and expertise and to learn and be strengthened from one another’s expertise and knowledge.
Students bring with them the knowledge of their traditional language and culture and the lecturer brings the linguistic knowledge about languages. Together students are taught how to analyse their languages linguistically so they themselves can maintain, document and/or revive their own languages and lecturers strengthen their linguistic knowledge of individual Australian Indigenous languages, which in turn strengthens their teaching skills. This both-ways philosophy in CALL’s operations provides equal status for both students and lecturers (Caffery, 2003a).

The number of students CALL taught between 1990 and 1993 is unknown due to the changes in administrative records during that period (see section 3.1.2 for details). However, Batchelor Institute’s student database shows that 335 students enrolled in a CALL course between 1997 and 2004 with 40, or 12 %, graduating with a qualification. During my time as CALL co-ordinator (1999-2004), we had 100 to 150 enrolled students per year across all courses. According to my Coordinator records, CALL had 140 students enrolled in the Diploma and Advanced Diploma; 122 in the Diploma, 18 in the Advanced Diploma with two of these students cross-enrolled (enrolled in the 2nd year of the Diploma and in the Advanced Diploma). The first year of the Diploma course always had higher student numbers than for the other years of the course. By the final year, the Advanced Diploma of Arts (Languages and Linguistics), the numbers dropped significantly to between 6 to 12 students. Unlike at SAL, the entry levels for CALL’s courses over the years became quite unrealistic for many remote Indigenous adults (see section 6.1 for further discussion on course entrance requirements and literacy skills). As a result, the clientele changed from remote traditional people, who generally spoke a traditional language as a first language, to more urban-based Indigenous Australians, who had higher levels of literacy and usually did not speak a traditional language but who could cope well with the newly accredited courses.

To cater for the former group of students CALL introduced two certificate level courses that were designed specifically for remote Indigenous people whose language is still spoken but whose western-style literacy is low. These courses, the Certificate I in Own Language Work and Certificate II in Own Language Work
(Caffery, 2002a; Caffery, 2002c), have become quite successful for CALL and remote Australians (personal communication with CALL staff). However, as the courses were only introduced in the year prior to this study it was too early to assess their effectiveness, and they have not therefore been included in this thesis (see Higginson, 1990: 52, for further discussion on the time required to assess effectiveness).

All CALL higher education courses aimed to provide students with the skills to document, maintain or revive their traditional languages. For example, the Advanced Diploma of Arts (Language and Linguistics) aimed to enhance students’ linguistic knowledge, linguistic analytical abilities and technical skills so that they could record, analyse, document and produce resources for their own languages, thus assisting in the maintenance of Australia’s Indigenous languages (Caffery, 2003). By the end of this course, students should have learned fundamental linguistic skills which they could apply to data from their own language as well as other Australian Indigenous languages. Graduates also should have gained the skills to:

- linguistically analyse a language;
- perform linguistics research;
- document, maintain, reclaim, revitalise a language;
- produce language materials;
- explain the relationship between language and culture; and,
- explain language change.

As I could not access data relating to CALL courses prior to 1994, the following information only relates to CALL’s courses and graduates between 1994 and 2004. During this time, CALL presented 99 awards (Figure 4.4) to 75 students. Of the 75 people who received an award, 55 received one award, seventeen people received two and three people received three awards.
The course codes used in the rest of this section are provided in Table 4.2. These are the same codes I used when searching for data on Batchelor Institute’s student database.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AD-ALS1/2/3</td>
<td>Associate Diploma of Arts (Language Studies) Stage 1, 2 or 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AD-ALS</td>
<td>Diploma of Arts (Language Studies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-ALS</td>
<td>Diploma of Arts (Language Studies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AV-ALS</td>
<td>Advanced Diploma of Arts (Language Studies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-ALL</td>
<td>Diploma of Arts (Languages &amp; Linguistics)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: CALL course codes and course names.

To complete the picture of CALL courses, CALL offered an interpreting course that provided interpreting skills to those fluent in both their traditional language and English. As with the SAL interpreting and translation course, this one was offered for a specific purpose other than for linguistic documentation and maintenance and therefore it is not included in this research project.

CALL also offered a course called the Graduate Certificate in Applied Linguistics. This course taught a mix of teaching and linguistic skills to graduates of either a CALL or a teacher education course. This course was only offered once in 1998, producing two graduates. As with the interpreting and translation courses, this course
has not been included in this research project as the objectives of the courses were for a purpose other than for linguistic documentation and maintenance.

4.1.2.1. Associate Diploma of Arts (Language Studies)/Diploma of Arts (Language Studies)

In 1992, CALL introduced its first higher education courses: the Associate Diploma of Arts (Language Studies) (AD-ALS1/2/3) and the Diploma of Arts (Language Studies) (AD-ALS). These courses were designed and delivered in four stages so that students had the option of exiting with an award at the end of each stage. Students exiting at the end of the first level of the course, stage one, were awarded a ‘Statement of Attainment in Language Studies: Stage 1’. Students who exited after completing the first two years of the course were awarded a ‘Statement of Attainment in Language Studies: Stage 2’. Those exiting at the end of third year of the course were awarded an AD-ALS3. Those who completed all four stages were awarded the AD-ALS’ (CALL, 1992: 5).

Seventeen students were awarded with a ‘Statement of Attainment: Stage 1 (Figure 4.4). One of these students went on to complete stage one of the next accredited course, the D-ALS. Another went on to complete the whole D-ALS course and graduated in 2003.

Nineteen students were awarded a ‘Statement of Attainment: Stage 2’ (Figure 4.4). Two of these students went on to complete the D-ALS1; four finished the D-ALS and four completed the AV-ALS.

Ten students completed the AD-ALS3 (Figure 4.4). Two of these graduates went on to complete the entire AD-ALS accredited course (Figure 4.4), while one went on to complete the D-ALS and another one finished the Advanced Diploma of Arts (Language Studies). Neither of these students went on to do any further linguistics study with CALL.

During the five-year accreditation period, 1993 to 1998, of the AD-ALS a total of 48 awards were awarded to Indigenous Australians who completed one or more stages of the course. Twelve of these graduates went on to do further study with CALL:
three of these completed the D-ALS1 and nine completed the whole D-ALS. Figure 4.5 provides details of the number of awards each year during the accreditation period of the AD-ALS.

The highest-level award which was received by fifteen of the 75 CALL students was the AD-ALS1. The highest-level award obtained by nine students was the AD-ALS2. The highest-level award for six graduates was the AD-ALS3, and two people achieved as their highest-level course the full-accredited courses AD-ALS.

4.1.2.2. Advanced Diploma of Arts (Language Studies)

The Associate Diploma (Language Studies)/Diploma of Arts (Language Studies) course was rewritten, renamed and reaccredited in June 1998. This new course was called the ‘Advanced Diploma of Arts (Languages Studies)’ (AV-ALS). This course was designed and delivered in three stages, 800 hours per stage, with exit points at the end of each stage. Students who completed stage one were awarded Statement of Attainment (AD-ALS 1). Students who completed stage two were awarded with the AD-ALS and those completing the whole accredited course were awarded with an AV-ALS (CALL, 1998: 5).

Figure 4.6 shows that sixteen students graduated from stage one of the two-year AD-ALS course, and received a ‘Statement of Attainment: Stage 1’. Two of these students went on to complete the entire AV-ALS course. Fourteen students graduated with the qualification AD-ALS. Six of these graduating students went on to complete
the AV-ALS. Seventeen students graduated with the full qualification of the AV-ALS. A total of 47 students graduated from at least one stage of the AV-ALS course.

During the five-year accreditation period of the AV-ALS, 1999 – 2003, a total of 47 awards were awarded to 37 people who completed one or more stages of the AD-ALS or AV-ALS, as shown in Figure 4.6. Even though the course was not delivered in 2004, two people were awarded the AV-ALS in 2004 for completion of the course in 2003.

![Figure 4.6: Awards presented during the Diploma/Advanced Diploma of Arts (Language Studies) (AV-ALS) accreditation period.](image)

The highest-level course completed by 22 of all CALL graduates was for either the whole or part of the accredited course AV-ALS. Fourteen students achieved the D-ALS stage 1 as their highest-level: six in 1999, four in 2000, one in 2001 and three in 2003. Eight students graduated with the full D-ALS as their highest-level award: four in 1999, one in 2001 and three in 2003. For seventeen students their highest-level award was the entire AV-ALS: three graduated in 1999, four in 2001, seven in 2002, one in 2003 and two graduated in 2004.

**4.1.2.3. Diploma of Arts (Languages and Linguistics)**

Due to the five-year accreditation period of CALL courses, the AV-ALS course was again rewritten, renamed and reaccredited in 2003. This resulted in two distinct level courses: the Diploma of Arts (Languages & Linguistics) (D-ALL) and the Advanced Diploma of Arts (Languages & Linguistics) (AV-ALS).
The D-ALL was introduced in semester one in 2004, which was when this research took place. There were no figures representing the number of people who undertook or graduated from that course except for two students who were near completion of the AV-ALS in 2003 and completed their outstanding units in semester one 2004. As these students graduated in 2004 they were awarded the D-ALL (Figure 4.4).

As there were no graduates at the time of research for the Advanced Diploma of Arts (Languages & Linguistics), this course is not included in any discussion or analysis in this thesis.

4.1.2.4. Additional CALL Graduate Information

Of the 75 Indigenous people who received a CALL award, 37 graduated with a full qualification; they completed an entire accredited course, not just the stages. Six people graduated with an AD-ALS3; two with an AD-ALS; eight with a D-ALS and seventeen with an AV-ALS. Two people graduated with a D-ALL, and two with the GCAL.

![Figure 4.7: Number of awards presented for completion of a full CALL qualification by course and year between 1999 and 2004.](image)

An unusually high number of students graduated from the AV-ALS in 2002, as seen in Figure 4.7. This was due to the intake of students who had completed their Diploma in Language Studies at Cairns TAFE (as discussed in 4.1.4). These students could not undertake further study in a linguistics course specifically designed for Indigenous Australians at Cairns TAFE, or anywhere else in Queensland, so they enrolled in the CALL course to further their studies. Four of the seven students who
graduated from the CALL Advanced Diploma in 2002 were graduates from the Cairns TAFE Diploma of Language Studies.

4.1.3. Summer Institute of Linguistics

The Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) is an international organisation that helps to develop the world’s lesser-known languages. The bulk of their work focuses on the translation of the Bible into many of the world’s Indigenous languages (SIL International, 2006). SIL first started offering translation courses in Australia in 1996. In the same year the late Dr. Christine Kilham organised a meeting, which was held south of Darwin, to discuss the training SIL had been providing and to see if it was meeting the communities’ needs. This meeting also provided an opportunity for translators from different language groups to discuss their work and to support one another. During this meeting Dr Kilham found that people not only wanted training but also recognition for the translation work they were doing (SIL International, 2000; 84NT6). As a result, SIL developed and, in 2000, accredited the Certificate III in Translation (Indigenous), commonly referred to as the CIT.

The CIT comprised twenty-five modules that cover the basic principles needed to do translation work. It is written for adult speakers of English as a second language with minimal formal education, especially traditional Indigenous Australians. The focus of the course was on language discovery through analysing the differences between how English and their traditional language handle the same grammatical concepts. The course consists of 460 nominal hours comprising four core study areas:

- Background and introductory studies;
- Translation at discourse and sentence level;
- Translation at phrase and word level; and,
- Audience and style.

The total delivery time was 16 weeks and the course was offered in one to two week blocks, spreading the training over two to three years (SIL International, 2006b). However, students could exit the course after completing one or more of the units with a Statement of Attainment for the units completed. Modules of the course were delivered both on campus in Darwin and in the students’ home community.
This translation course has been included in this project’s analysis, unlike the interpreting and translation courses offered by SAL and CALL. The reason for this is that it focuses on written translation skills rather than oral translation skills and SIL students are taught a variety of other linguistic skills that can be transferred to any language maintenance and documentation programme in the community. I met and interviewed ILRs who had trained with SIL but worked in other language programmes, whereas I did not meet graduates of a SAL or CALL interpreting programme who did this.

A total of 55 students enrolled in the CIT course between 1997 and 2004 (84NT6). As shown in Figure 4.8, 41 students graduated with the full qualification of the Certificate III in Translation (Indigenous) (CIT) and seven with a Statement of Attainment (SoA). Due to personal and community reasons (see Chapters 6, 7 and 8), seven of the 55 students who had enrolled in the course did not complete any of the units (84NT6).

![Figure 4.8: Number of SIL awards presented by SIL per year: Awards include completion of the full Certificate III in Translation (CIT) and Statement of Attainment (SoA) for partial completion of the CIT.](image)

From my observation, graduates of the SIL course were the only graduates of a linguistics course that could and did work on language documentation and maintenance programmes in a variety of places across the community. I spoke to graduates of SIL courses working in their local community school, on community language documentation and maintenance projects, on bible translation projects and as general translators and interpreters. Due to the success of the CIT course SIL
International now offers the course to Indigenous people in other countries, particularly in Papua New Guinea.

4.1.4. Cairns TAFE

As Cairns TAFE did not have any records of the language and linguistics course they offered, or of the students who undertook or graduated from the course, the following information comes from an interview with the person who developed and delivered the Cairns TAFE language and linguistics course (participant 12IT2).

The Cairns TAFE course was a result of the 1991 recommendations of the Australian Federal Government’s Royal Commission Report into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. One recommendation was that Indigenous people, particularly those in isolated areas, be given access to language and culture courses. According to the report, by undertaking such courses Indigenous people could reinforce their understanding of their cultural heritage to give them a greater sense of identity. The Federal government allocated funds for the development and delivery of such programmes. In the early 1990s Cairns TAFE received some of this funding to do a language needs survey in North Queensland. One recommendation from this survey was to set up a language and linguistics course specifically designed for Indigenous Australians wanting to document, maintain or revive their traditional language. Cairns TAFE provided funds to establish a committee, with representatives from a number of Indigenous communities, language groups, and organisations, to develop the course. They developed and accredited the Diploma of Arts (Language Studies) and started to deliver it in semester 2 1998. It was a general course offering basic linguistic skills and included modules to help people teach language, develop curriculum materials to help them teach language and undertake fieldwork. The course started with approximately fifteen Indigenous adults, who were generally from the stolen generation, from all over Queensland. The course ran for about four years and all units of the course were delivered on campus in Cairns at Cairns TAFE.

Many students only did part of the course, but as it offered four exit points students were awarded certificates for the completion of certain stages. Those who completed the first semester of the course were awarded the Certificate I in Language Studies. Students who completed the first year (first and second semester) of the course were
awarded the Certificate II in Language Studies and those who completed the first three semesters of the course were awarded the Certificate III in Language Studies. Students who completed the full two-year course were awarded the Diploma of Arts (Language Studies).

Cairns TAFE offered the Diploma of Arts (Language Studies) for approximately four years with fifteen to twenty people starting the course each year. Although approximately thirty students graduated from the course, with a Certificate level course or from the full Diploma, Cairns TAFE stopped delivering it because student numbers were below their required number to run the course.

The course ran for about four years… I think they stopped the course because it wasn’t successful enough in terms of student numbers… and because we were meeting a small community’s needs. (12IL/T2)

However, compared with the number of graduates from similar courses offered by the other participating educational institutions, it would appear that 30 graduates in three to four years is a good number of graduates for a linguistics course (for comparison see Figure 4.5, Figure 4.6 and Figure 4.8).

4.1.5. Pilbara TAFE

As was the case with Cairns TAFE, Pilbara TAFE did not have any available records of the courses they offered or of the students who undertook or graduated from the courses, as discussed in section 3.1.5. Therefore, the following information has been obtained from interviews with two lecturers of the courses (participants 16IT3 and 17NIT3).

Pilbara TAFE, formally Pundulmurra College, is based in South Hedland in Western Australia. It has offered linguistics courses specifically designed for Indigenous people of Western Australia since 1990. The Certificate in Aboriginal Language Work, the first linguistics course offered by Pundulmurra, was initiated by Indigenous and non-Indigenous language researchers at the Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre Conference in 1988 (Thieberger, 1991: 17). The aim of this course was to train Aboriginal people to read and write their own languages and to produce literature on their languages themselves.
At the time of interview, Pilbara TAFE offered a Certificate III: Indigenous Language Work and a Certificate IV: Indigenous Language Work. Both of these courses were one-year full-time courses and consist of 32 units of work to be completed in 505 hours. However, in reality the students usually took two to three years to complete the course (see section 6.4). The courses provided basic linguistic knowledge through core units, such as phonology, morphology, history of Indigenous languages and transcribing and recording. The courses were generally offered to Indigenous adults from central Western Australia.

The delivery method of these courses was through ‘block release’, regular weekly or fortnightly workshops, designed for multi-lingual groups. All workshops were delivered on campus in South Hedland. There were an estimated 30 students enrolled across both linguistics courses at the time of interview. The students basically follow their own interests throughout the course, working on a project that they nominate. The lecturers build individual student linguistic skills by building on their chosen project. Pundulmurra staff members believe that they fill a gap in Indigenous adult linguistics education as no other education institution, at the time, offered linguistics courses at the certificate level. Staff members argue that with the low literacy levels and English language skills of those wanting to train as ILRs, there is more demand for lower-level courses rather than at the higher education level that other Indigenous educational institutions offer.

4.1.6. Institute for Aboriginal Development

The Institute for Aboriginal Development (IAD) also did not have any available information on the linguistics courses offered or the students who undertook them, so the following information came from an interview with one of their previous lecturers, participant 51NT5.

Over the years, IAD had offered a few linguistics courses designed specifically for Indigenous people of Central Australia. These courses have been a result of dedicated staff devoting their time and knowledge to teach these courses. Each of the courses were short term and did not provide any formal recognition for participants. Very little is known about these courses and therefore they are not discussed any further, as discussed in section 3.1.6.
4.2. On-the-job Linguistics Training

This study found that there are two main types of linguistics training for ILRs across northern Australia: formal and on-the-job. I introduce on-the-job-training here rather than in later chapters to complete the picture of linguistics training across northern Australia. Much of the data relating to this type of training was obtained from participants during interviews, therefore details are provided in the following results chapters (Chapters 5 – 8).

‘Formal’ training, for the purpose of this thesis, is defined as training delivered through one of the six educational institutions discussed in section 4.1. ‘On-the-job’ training is defined as training undertaken within the ILRs’ workplace, which includes language centres, community schools, and one-off projects with an NILR, unless stated otherwise. In places where an ILR can gain employment as an ILR, they often undertake a combination of both formal and on-the-job training. Any other training discussed in this thesis will clearly state where and by whom the training is undertaken. Section 4.4 compares the number of ILRs involved with this project who had undertaken formal or on-the-job training or both. Section 7.1 discusses, from the perspective of Indigenous Australians and language centre staff, the effects and benefits of each type of training on Indigenous language documentation and maintenance.

4.3. Gender and Language

Across Australia, Indigenous women are more likely to participate in higher education than Indigenous men (Encel, 2000: 3). To see if this was the case for linguistics courses specifically designed for Indigenous people, I analysed the gender details of CALL and SAL graduates (these were the only institutions that provided the relevant details). I also analysed the gender of this project’s participants to compare the gender difference between those who undertook linguistics training and those working on linguistics projects on the field. This section provides the results of these analyses. This section also provides a discussion on the number of graduates from individual language groups and the patterns found between the number of graduates and the vitality of a language group.
4.3.1. Gender

This study found it was the case that more Indigenous women undertake study in linguistics courses specifically designed for Indigenous Australians than Indigenous men do. Of the 333 SAL & CALL graduates, 328 provided gender details (five graduates, or 2%, did not provide gender details). Of the 328 graduates, who did provide gender details, 65% were female (Figure 4.9). Of SAL’s 253 graduates who provided gender details 61% (155) were female compared to 39% (98) males, whereas 77% (58) of CALL’ graduates were female compared to the 23% (17) who were male.

Of the 22 participating ILRs who had had formal linguistics training and were working at the time of interview in this project, only three were male. Also, of the project’s 70 Indigenous informants, 52 were female and 18 were male (74% female compared to 26% male). My overall project had 68 females (16 non-Indigenous), 69.5%, compared to 30 males (12 non-Indigenous) 30.5%. This shows that language documentation and maintenance related activities, within and outside remote Indigenous communities where Indigenous languages are still spoken, have a higher involvement of females than of males. This was not simply a bias caused by me being a female interviewer as this factor was observed over the past 15 years by me and was clarified by participants in this project (see section 8.1).
4.3.2. Language

While there were 258 SAL graduates, only 138 provided details of their language group. Language data were only available for SAL students who graduated from at least one course between 1980 and 1985, with the exception of six graduates who graduated from their first course after 1985 where their language details were known to one of the project participants or myself. The language data for these participants were gathered from SAL’s tenth Anniversary newsletter *Ngali* (School of Australian Linguistics, 1985). The 120 SAL graduates for whom no language details were available had graduated after 1985. Table 4.3 provides details of the Indigenous language groups represented (where known) and the number and gender of SAL graduates from that language group.

SAL had large numbers of graduates from the Top End of the Northern Territory, 65 (47%), and the Torres Strait or Northern Queensland, 41 (30%) compared with Central Australia (21%) and Western Australia, 2%. This was probably because all SAL staff members were based in the Top End of the Northern Territory, with the exception of one who was based in Alice Springs. However, given there was only one lecturer there, Central Australia had a large number of graduates. The gender balance of these graduates from known language groups (Table 4.3) was fairly even with 71 (51.4%) females and 67 males (48.5%), even though SAL presented more awards to females than males as shown in Figure 4.9.

Table 4.4 provides a list of the Indigenous languages represented by 55 of CALL’s 75 graduates broken down by gender. Of the 20 graduates whose language was not included in this analysis, 13 identified their language as ‘Aboriginal’, one as ‘English’ and six did not provide any language details on their enrolment form.

The majority of CALL’s graduates in Table 4.4 are from Central Australia, 61.8% (34 of the 55). Of the 55 CALL graduates from known language groups, 73% were female, again highlighting that more females than males are involved in Indigenous language activities.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Name</th>
<th>Speaker #</th>
<th>Grad s</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>M</th>
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<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>2000</td>
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</table>

SAL overall totals: 29 Languages represented: 138 Graduates of known languages: 71 females; 67 males

Table 4.3: Language and gender of SAL graduates (where known). Number of speakers as listed in the NILS Report 2005 except those marked with an asterisk. Figures marked with an * are 1983 figures from Black (1983) and listed on the Ethnologue (Gordon, 2005). The Ethnologue includes speaker numbers for Marrakulu with Djapu speaker numbers as it is a dialect of Djapu (Gordon, 2005). Luritja is listed on the Ethnologue as Pintupi-Luritja.

Overall, 40 Australian Indigenous languages were represented across the 193 graduates that named their traditional language: four from Northern Queensland; six from Northern Western Australia; nine from Central Australia and 21 from the Top End of the Northern Territory (Table 4.3). SAL graduates represented 29 Australian Indigenous languages and CALL graduates represented seventeen. All of these languages are endangered (AIATSIS and FATSIL, 2005) and have 3000 or less speakers; eleven have fewer than a hundred speakers (Caffery, 2003b).
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Language Name</th>
<th>Speaker #</th>
<th>Grads</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>M</th>
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<th>Speaker #</th>
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<td>200</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanggakurunngurr</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Western Arrernte</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Warlpiri</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Warumungu</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TE Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>CA Total</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CALL overall totals: 17 Languages represented: 55 Graduates of known languages: 40 Females; 15 males

Table 4.4: Language and gender of CALL graduates (where known). Number of speakers as listed in the NILS Report 2005, except those marked with an asterisk, which came from the Ethnologue (Gordon, 2005). Arrernte speaker number includes Western and Eastern Arrernte speakers.

4.4. Summary of Linguistics Education Across Northern Australia

This section brings together all of the graduate data outlined above to provide a holistic picture of linguistics awards presented to Indigenous Australians by four of the six Australian educational institutions that have offered linguistics courses specifically designed for Indigenous Australians since 1974. Data from IAD and Pilbara TAFE are not included in this section, as discussed above.

The total number of known linguistics awards presented across northern Australia by SAL, CALL, SIL and Cairns TAFE between 1974 and 2004 was approximately (as Cairns TAFE figures were approximate) 537, as shown in Figure 4.10. These awards were presented to an approximate total of 411 Indigenous adults (Figure 4.11). Some of these students received two or more awards, usually from the same institution.

SAL presented 67% of all awards, 360 awards to 258 Indigenous Australians: CALL
presented 99 awards to 75 Indigenous Australians: SIL awarded 48 Indigenous Australians with one award each. Cairns TAFE gave approximately 30 awards to 30 Indigenous Australians. The awards presented included Statements of Attainment, Certificates, Associate Diplomas, Diplomas, Advanced Diplomas and Graduate Certificates.

![Bar chart showing Linguistics awards presented by four educational institutions between 1980–2004 (excluding CALL 1990–1993).]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Awards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SAL</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CALL</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIL</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cairns TAFE</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.10: Linguistics awards presented by four educational institutions between 1980–2004 (excluding CALL 1990–1993).

Of the 411 graduates (Figure 4.11), 62.7% graduated from SAL during the last 10 years of its operation: 18.2% studied with CALL over an eleven-year period. 11.6% studied with SIL over a nine-year period, and 7.3% with Cairns TAFE over, roughly, a four-year period.

![Bar chart showing Linguistics graduates from four educational institutions between 1980–2004 (excluding CALL 1990–1993).]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Graduates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SAL</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CALL</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIL</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cairns TAFE</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.11: Linguistics graduates from four educational institutions between 1980–2004 (excluding CALL 1990–1993).
Figure 4.11 shows that there were approximately 3.6 SAL graduates to every one CALL graduate in their respective ten-year periods of delivery. SAL usually offered short eight-week intensive courses often to one language group at a time (even though more than one course was offered at a time). In addition, these courses were often taught in the students’ home communities. Similarly, SIL delivered short intensive courses in the students’ home communities. By comparison, CALL offered longer courses, one to three years, usually delivered on one of Batchelor Institute’s campuses to several language groups at a time. Batchelor Institute’s delivery method required students to travel long distances and spend long periods away from their home community each year. Its multilingual teaching method, which accommodated many different language groups in the one class, also meant that the courses were not as language specific or as intensive as SAL and SIL’s teaching method.

Figure 4.12: Awards presented to Indigenous Australians in total from the four participating educational institutions by course and year between 1980 and 2004 (excluding CALL 1990 - 1993).

Figure 4.12 shows the number of all awards presented each year, by course, between 1980 and 2004. The figure does not include the Diploma of Arts (Language Studies) awards presented by Cairns TAFE as no breakdown was available at the time of this research. All awards presented between 1980 and 1989 were for the completion of a SAL short course. Awards were presented between 1994 and 2004 to Indigenous Australians who completed a minimum of a one-year CALL course, with the exception of the SIL CIT course, which represents awards presented to those who completed the SIL CIT course in 1998, 1999, 2001 and 2003. As no data were
available from Batchelor Institute for the years between 1990 and 1993 there is a gap in the figure, as discussed in section 3.4.

From 1980 to 2004, as shown in Figure 4.13, a total of 153 awards were presented to Indigenous Australians who completed an entire accredited course.

![Figure 4.13: Total number of awards presented for completion of a full qualification by course between 1980 – 2004.](image)

Figure 4.13 does not include awards presented to those who received a Statement of Attainment or an award for completion of an individual unit or part of a course.

Forty-five Indigenous Australians completed a full qualification with SAL in the ten-year period between 1980 and 1989; 37 with CALL in the eleven-year period between 1994 and 2004; 41 with SIL in a four-year period between 1998 and 2003; and 30 with Cairns TAFE in a four to five-year period between 1998 and 2001/2. Even though it was unusual for students to study with more than one institution, some students did. Three students who studied with SAL then continued their study with CALL. All three students completed the CLA; one completed the CLA in 1984 and completed the CTS and the CLW in 1985, then ten years later completed AD-ALS3 in 1995 and the D-ALS in 1997 with CALL. Another student finished the CLA in 1986 then went on to complete the AD-ALS3 with CALL in 1994. The third student completed the CLA in 1989 then ten years later, in 1999, finished the first stage of D-ALS. As Cairns TAFE did not offer a higher-level course in linguistics, approximately fourteen graduates of the Diploma of Arts (Language
Studies) who wanted to do further study in the discipline travelled to Batchelor Institute to undertake the AV-ALS. Five of these students completed the AV-ALS with CALL; four were awarded the AV-ALS in 2002 and one in 2003. Between the participating educational institutions, approximately 2,511 Indigenous Australian adults enrolled in one of the linguistics courses between 1980 and 2004. Of these students 411 (24%) graduated with a qualification: 37.2% (153) graduated with an award for the completion of an entire accredited course.

The majority of graduates, where known, were female, 213, compared to 115 who were male. SAL had a gender ratio of approximately 2.5 females to one male whereas CALL had a ratio of 4.44 to 1. Through personal discussions with many of the CALL students, I found that many of the female students were aged over 35 years and had adult children, and therefore, they argued, they had time to study. However, I also found that these women, having raised their children, saw the need to maintain their languages. They could see that their languages were dying and it is usually the mother or grandmother who spends the most time with children (Simpson & Wigglesworth, in press), so on a day-to-day basis it is they who pass language and culture to the younger generations. These factors contribute to the higher number of female students.

Forty Indigenous languages were represented by the 411 graduates across northern Australia, with the bulk of them, 21, from the Top End of the Northern Territory. Of these forty languages, two had approximately 3000 speakers, one had 2100 speakers, four had between 1000 and 2000 speakers, nine had between 100 and 900 speakers and eleven had less than 60 speakers according to speaker estimates in the 2005 NILS Report. All of these languages are spoken in remote localities, and eleven are listed as strong languages in the NILS Report (AIATSIS and FATSIL, 2005) (see section 2.1.3 for more detail on strong languages and Map 2.1 for their distribution). Of the 411 graduates, 71 came from the Top End, 63 from Central Australia, 50 from Queensland and nine from Western Australia.

Of the 411 graduates, I interviewed 22 who were working as ILRs (Table 4.5). From my own knowledge and talking to participants of this project, very few of the others who had undertaken linguistics training were working in the field. I have explicit
knowledge of one male with formal linguistics training who was working in the field at the time this research project was undertaken. I am aware of a small number of others working in the Northern Territory. The number of graduates employed in linguistics is very small and the number has reduced since this study took place as five of the graduates (also participants of this project) two who were employed at the time, have died and another has stopped working in the field due to family illness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Indigenous Participants working as ILR at time of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ILRs with formal training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torres Strait</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainland QLD</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilbara</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kimberley</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Australia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top End</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5: Number of ILRs working at time of interview and the types of training they had undertaken. * indicates Elders.

Of the 70 Indigenous participants in this project (see Chapter 5 for details on the participants and their communities), 61 had some linguistics training, including short SAL courses from as far back as the 1970s, or on-the-job training (Table 4.6). Thirty-nine had undertaken some formal training, including two who had undertaken a mix of formal and on-the-job training. Three participants had completed formal training through a mainstream Australian university: one completed a Degree in Linguistics, one had completed a Masters in Linguistics, and another had completed a Degree in Education that included some linguistics training. Only one of these three university graduates had undertaken a short linguistics course (with SAL). All three were teaching linguistics to Indigenous Australian adults through one of the participating educational institutions at the time of interview. Two Pilbara TAFE students are included in Table 4.6 even though they had not graduated from a linguistics course because they were employed as ILRs at time of interview, and were undertaking a mixture of formal and on-the-job training. Twenty-two ILRs had received on-the-job training and were working in either a community school or a language centre, with the majority working in a community school in the Top End. Six of these ILRs are
Elders who provide oral histories and other stories at their local language centre. Their training had only included using a recorder to record their own oral histories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>IPs</th>
<th>IPs with linguistics training</th>
<th>IPs working as an ILR</th>
<th>IPs not working as an ILR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CALL grads</td>
<td>SAL grads</td>
<td>University grads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torres Strait</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainland QLD</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilbara</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kimberley</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Australia</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top End</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6: Types of training undertaken by ILR Indigenous Participants (IPs) in my research and number of trained ILRs currently employed as an ILR. * indicates Elders.

Half of the forty-four Indigenous participants who were employed as ILRs at the time of interview had undertaken formal training, and in some cases had also received on-the-job training, whereas the other half had only received on-the-job training (Table 4.5).

4.5. Discussion

Chapter 4 has provided an analysis of linguistics training over a thirty-year period, 1974 to 2004. Five educational institutions have provided such training through accredited courses, and these have been supplemented by the language centres and individual NILRs that have provided on-the-job training. I do not have figures on the number of Indigenous people who have been trained on-the-job other than those who participated in this research project, and who are shown in Table 4.5.

My figures come from the educational institutions that have offered accredited courses. Over the thirty-year period, where records are available, 411 Indigenous Australians undertook some linguistics training. This is an average of 13 graduates per year. Sixty-three percent (258) of graduates completed training during 1980 to
1989, all from one education institution, SAL. During 1994 to 2004, 37% (153) of graduates, from three different educational institutions, completed linguistics training: 18% (75) with CALL, 12% (48) with SIL and 7% (30) with Cairns TAFE. It is clear from the figures that SAL trained the highest number of graduates during its ten years of delivering accredited linguistics courses. The number of graduates of linguistics courses substantially dropped during the ten year-period prior to this study, 1994-2004.

It is vital for the future of Australian Indigenous languages to find out why few Indigenous people are undertaking linguistics training that is specifically designed for them; especially from the people who are losing their heritage language, and in many cases their first language. I hypothesise that few people are undertaking such training because:

- literacy levels for the courses are too high for remote Indigenous people who have had limited access to primary and secondary schooling (section 6.1);
- each language group/region has different documentation and maintenance needs (section 7.1);
- each region has different linguistic and funding supports (sections 7.1 and 8.3); and/or,
- each region’s residents have different attitudes to their traditional languages (section 8.2).

If this hypothesis was found to be correct, through the interview process (section 3.3), it could suggest that a different training method is required for each of these regions. The best people to discuss these issues with were considered to be the graduates of the linguistics courses, Elders and staff of Indigenous linguistics organisations and educational institutions.

After analysing the available data on the graduates of linguistics courses, particularly those from CALL, I looked at the regions that the graduates lived in to work out potential participants for this project. After analysing the data, I found that graduates came from right across northern Australia and that I knew many of the graduates, which would help to discuss the issues in more detail and more honestly, as noted in section 3.2. I then went about collecting the appropriate approvals, as discussed in
section 3.5, before starting to interview participants. The results of the interviews are discussed in Chapters 6 to 8. The following chapter, Chapter 5, provides details of the participants of this research project and of their communities.
CHAPTER 5. PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR LANGUAGE COMMUNITY
This chapter describes the participants of this research project, their communities and their language groups. The information on the participating individuals, communities, languages and organisations are discussed by State/Territory then region, starting with Northern Queensland, the Torres Strait Islands and mainland Northern Queensland (section 5.1), followed by Western Australia (section 5.2) including The Pilbara and the Kimberley. The Northern Territory participants and their communities are then discussed in section 5.3 dealing first with the Top End region and then the Central Australian region. All speaker numbers stated in this section are the estimates given by the NILS 2005 report (AIATSIS and FATSIL, 2005) unless stated otherwise.

Map 5.1: Map of research areas and travel routes across northern Australia. Solid lines indicate driving routes and dashed lines indicate flying routes.
5.1. Northern Queensland

Torres Strait Islanders in both urban and remote communities were selected from Northern Queensland; the two regions and their individual communities are discussed in this subsection along with details of the language groups. In Northern Queensland, I conducted twelve interviews with thirteen Indigenous participants representing four language groups.

5.1.1. Torres Strait Region

The Torres Strait is situated just north of Cape York Peninsula in far North Queensland, as shown in Map 5.2. The main traditional languages spoken in the Torres Strait are Kalaw Kawaw Ya (KKY) with approximately 800 speakers, Kala Lagaw Ya (KLY) with 700 speakers, Meriam Mir (MM) with 160 speakers and Muralag (speakers included in KKY numbers). The common language now spoken by younger generations is the creole Yumpla Tok (also known as Broken or Torres Strait Broken, not shown on Map 5.2). My field trip in the Torres Strait was first to Ngurapai (also known as Horn Island) then to Waiben (also known as Thursday Island) where I spent several days interviewing ILRs from both the Kalaw Lagaw Ya and Kalaw Kawaw Ya language groups. I also spent time with the CALL lecturer based on Waiben discussing CALL’s Torres Strait programme, her opinions about the course and its impact on the Torres Strait languages.

The next participating community in the Torres Strait was Mer (also known as Murray Island) where I spent several days interviewing and talking to ILRs, Elders and other interested community members. The traditional language of Mer is Meriam Mir. Prior to this PhD field trip I had travelled to other Torres Strait Islands and I have used the knowledge and the observations I gathered at that time in this research project. The Islands previously visited for language research were Saibai, Mabuiag and Purma. Any knowledge gained during these trips is provided in the discussion at the end of each chapter and is clearly identified.
In the Torres Strait I conducted seven interviews with eight participants, all Indigenous (Table 3.5). Six, whom I had known for several years, were interviewed at length. Two other people, whom I had not previously met, asked if they could speak to me about their beliefs on the subject but did not want to be recorded. I had good discussions with these two people, one Elder and one middle-aged resident, and their comments have been used in this thesis. All participants were local Indigenous people. One had studied with SAL, three with CALL and two with both SAL and CALL. Only one of the participants was working as a language researcher at the time of interview.

5.1.2. Mainland Northern Queensland Region

Townsville is the largest tropical city in northern Australia with a growing population of 155,000. It is situated 340 kilometres south of Cairns in northern Queensland (see Map 5.2). Townsville is an urban environment where many Torres Strait Islanders live. This region was included in the project to compare and contrast participants’ linguistic views, needs and attitudes with people from the same language groups in the Torres Strait. In Townsville, I interviewed four Torres Strait Islanders who represented the KKY, KLY, MM and Yumpla Tok languages. Two of
these participants were in their final year of the Advanced Diploma of Arts (Languages and Linguistics) with Batchelor Institute; one is also an Elder.

I interviewed one ILR in Melbourne, Victoria, but have included her data in this region as this is where she lived and is where she taught linguistics for several years. This participant has postgraduate linguistics qualifications from a mainstream university. In total for the Queensland region, I conducted 13 interviews with twelve participants (Table 3.5).

5.2. Central/Northern Western Australia

Due to the vast distances between participating communities in Western Australia I drove from Alice Springs in the Northern Territory to each Western Australian community (see Map 5.1) in the Pilbara and then in the Kimberly. During this fieldtrip I drove 6000 kilometres, over 5,000 of these on dirt, sandy and corrugated roads in remote deserts to reach remote Indigenous communities. I completed 22 interviews with 23 participants, representing ten different languages. Four of these informants were employed as ILRs in language centres and five had trained as language researchers but were not working at the time of interview.

Map 5.3: Key towns and estimated localities of languages of participants in this research project in central and northern Western Australia (Pilbara and Kimberley, see Map 5.1).
5.2.1. The Pilbara

Port Hedland was the first major town that I visited during this field trip. It is an industrial urban town 1,760 kilometres north of Perth with a population of approximately 15,000 people and it focuses on the mining and export of iron ore. Port Hedland is the capital of the Pilbara and houses the head office of the Wangka Maya Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre (Wangka Maya, which was established in 1988 to support bilingual schools (Thieberger, 1991: 19) but now supports language documentation and maintenance programmes for over 30 Aboriginal languages in and around the Pilbara.

The staff at Wangka Maya is made up of a diverse group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people with various skills, including linguistic skills at various levels, fund raising, administration and publication. At the time of this research, Wangka Maya was a vibrant and inspiring language centre consisting of one senior linguist, one linguist, four permanent language workers and up to thirty language workers (the terms ‘linguist’ and ‘language worker’ are used in this section as these are the official titles of the staff. ILR and NILR are used elsewhere to refer to these people) funded through the Community Development Employment Programme (CDEP). CDEP is a Commonwealth government Indigenous employment initiative which provides funds to Indigenous communities and organisations in remote regions to employ unemployed Indigenous people, usually at a low rate of pay. These CDEP language researchers are called in on a needs basis, and seven of them are undertaking a linguistics course at Pilbara TAFE’s Pundulmurra campus based in South Hedland. Wangka Maya also engages up to eight contract non-Indigenous linguists or specialists on a project basis to do language work. Together they are running many different language projects on all 32 languages in the Pilbara and further north (Map 5.3). Wangka Maya’s focus was on language maintenance and documentation but it also participated in anthropological, land management and land title projects. Staff members worked on language analysis materials such as dictionaries, grammars and wordlists, as well as collecting and transcribing oral histories and children’s storybooks. The language centre produced language materials catering for all literacy levels and interests, many of these works are published through the language centre and were for sale there and elsewhere.
Wangka Maya was well funded, mainly from the Commonwealth Government and the mining companies in the Pilbara; therefore, staff had a greater opportunity to do more language research and documentation than was possible in other language centres in northern Australia. Wangka Maya was expanding its language centre to incorporate a cultural, anthropological and visitors centre.

I interviewed four people at the language centre, two ILRs, one NILR and one other interested language centre employee. I also participated in a training workshop and spoke to various other people associated with the language centre. The two ILR participants were mainly trained on-the-job with some training at Pilbara TAFE (see section 4.1.5).

The Pundulmurra Campus of Pilbara TAFE, which offers linguistics courses specifically designed for Indigenous people, is based in Port Hedland. The courses they offer are discussed in detail in section 4.1.5. I interviewed two language and linguistics lecturers at Pilbara TAFE, one Indigenous and one non-Indigenous; both have worked at Pilbara TAFE for many years. During my visit to Pilbara TAFE I also participated in a linguistics workshop and observed some linguistics training sessions.

Overall, I conducted five interviews in the Pilbara Region with three language researchers, two linguistics educators, and one other interested party; of these, three were Indigenous and three were non-Indigenous people (Table 3.4).

5.2.2. Kimberley, Western Australia Region

In the far north of Western Australia, approximately 600 kilometres from Port Hedland, is the Kimberley (Map 5.3). My first stop there was Broome. Broome is an urban environment known as the pearling capital of the world, with population of approximately 10,000 people. In Broome, I interviewed two NILRs who had worked in remote Indigenous communities documenting and maintaining languages and training Indigenous people with linguistic skills. Both of these participants are fluent in at least one Indigenous language and have worked and lived with Aboriginal people in remote communities for over thirty years. These two participants contributed much knowledge to the project as a result of their extensive time living
there and working on Kimberley languages. Both of these participants are now retired but are still working on Indigenous language projects. Both have published numerous linguistic materials on the languages of the Kimberley and one is currently writing language lessons for many of the languages he has been involved with over the years.

I then visited Mowanjum, which is an Aboriginal community located approximately 20 kilometres southeast of Derby. It is the largest Aboriginal community in the Derby area, with a population of between 270 and 300 people. The Mowanjum community has three main traditional languages: Wunambal (5 speakers), Worrora (4 speakers), and Ngarinyin (90 speakers). I interviewed one Indigenous Worrora Elder who has undertaken some formal linguistics training. This person was the only person in the area who had undertaken any linguistics study or worked as a language researcher on a language project and was the youngest of the four remaining Worrora speakers.

Kununurra is a town 1057 kilometres east of Broome. It has a population of approximately 5000 people. The traditional language of the Kununurra area is Miriwoong, which has an estimated 50 speakers. I visited the Mirima Dawang Woorlab-Gerring Language and Culture Centre (Mirima), which employs one NILR, two part time project-based NILRs, two full time ILRs and one part time non-Indigenous administrative officer. The centre is controlled by an all-Indigenous council and all council members are from the Miriwoong language group. The language centre only works on language projects relating to the Miriwoong language and land. I interviewed two ILRs and one NILR of the Mirima language staff, and one Indigenous council member. I also interviewed two previously employed Mirima ILRs who had trained at Batchelor Institute but no longer work on language projects. I also interviewed one NILR who was not working at the time but was heavily involved with Miriwoong language projects. Four of the five Indigenous participants interviewed in Kununurra had completed either the Diploma or Advanced Diploma of Arts (Language Studies) with Batchelor Institute. In total, I conducted seven interviews in Kununurra (Table 3.4).
Halls Creek is a predominately Indigenous urban centre approximately 350 kilometres south west of Kununurra. It has a population of around 1,300 people. The Kimberley Language Resource Centre is based in Halls Creek. Whilst in Halls Creek, I interviewed Elders, ILRs and community members at the Kimberley Language Resource Centre and in the wider community. The ILRs interviewed had either undertaken formal linguistics training or were trained on-the-job.

The Kimberley Language Resource Centre (KLRC) was established in 1984 as a result of a pilot project that surveyed speakers of languages in the Kimberley with an aim to support the continued use of these languages (Thieberger, 1991: 17). KLRC now has two offices, one in Halls Creek and another, smaller one, in Fitzroy Crossing. KLRC employs one non-Indigenous Language Development Officer (LDO) (commonly known as a linguist but referred to in this thesis as NILR) and several Indigenous Community Language Development Officers (CLDO) (commonly known as language workers but referred to in this thesis as ILRs except where I am speaking of their formal positions). KLRC works on the languages of the Halls Creek and Fitzroy Crossing areas, which include Kija (60 speakers), Jaru (250 speakers), Gooniyandi (60 speakers), Walmajarri (500 speakers), Kukatja (1000 speakers), Wanyjirra (50 speakers in 1990, current figure unknown) and Ngardi (10 speakers) (see Map 5.3 for locations). Due to being caught in the floods caused by cyclone Ingrid, I could not interview people in Fitzroy Crossing but I did interview their senior CLDO in Halls Creek. At KLRC in Halls Creek, I interviewed KLRC Council members, a senior CLDO, CLDOs and an LDO. KLRC also employed an Indigenous receptionist and administration officer as well as casual CLDOs. The KLRC works on many language documentation and maintenance projects with communities and under the direction of the speakers and Elders of the community, as well as on land management projects with other organisations. I also interviewed two formally trained ILRs who have completed the Diploma of Arts (Language Studies) at Batchelor Institute and had previously worked with the KLRC, but no longer work as language researchers. Thus, in and around Halls Creek I conducted five interviews and spoke to one other person. Four of the participants worked at the KLRC: two ILRs, one NILR and one council member. The other participant had formal linguistics training at Batchelor but now works for the community council.
Balgo is a remote Aboriginal community of around 500 people and is situated approximately 350 kilometres southwest of Halls Creek in the Great Sandy Desert, just off the Tanami Highway in Western Australia. Balgo does not have a formal language centre, but for many years the local priest linguistically analysed Kukatja and developed many Kukatja language resources for the community school’s Kukatja language programmes. All of these materials are housed in the school’s language centre, which is called ‘Luurnpa’ (meaning royal kingfisher). Whenever a schoolteacher wants to teach a language programme using Kukatja materials the Luurnpa staff either collate the required materials from current resources within the centre or develop them from the existing materials. There are two community members who occasionally help to develop new Kukatja materials; neither of these people have linguistics training but are fluent in Kukatja and are Kukatja Elders. I interviewed one Indigenous person who was formally trained in linguistics and one non-Indigenous person. I also spent time in Luurnpa discussing the school’s language programme with the co-ordinator and looking at their resources.

5.3. Northern Territory

The Northern Territory fieldwork was carried out in two major field trips and several shorter trips. As I lived in Alice Springs in Central Australia I was able to visit Central Australian communities in short one to four-day trips. The fieldwork around the Top End Region required a much longer trip. In total, I recorded 39 interviews with a total of 62 participants representing 17 languages.

5.3.1. Top End, Northern Territory Region

Darwin, the capital of the Northern Territory, was used as a base for all travel to the Top End communities (Map 5.4). The majority of the Top End participants were ILRs working in community-based schools. Many of these participants had undertaken some linguistics training with either SAL or CALL and were working in their local school’s literacy production centre producing vernacular language materials. Usually the language materials were produced for use by the schoolteachers to teach the local vernacular; however, in some schools the ILRs teach the children their traditional language, which often required skills not taught in a language and linguistics course, as discussed in Chapter 6.
The first community I visited in the Northern Territory was Nguiu, which is situated on Bathurst Island, one of the Tiwi Islands just north of Darwin. Tiwi is spoken by an estimated 2,100 speakers. Whilst in Nguiu I met with Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff from the Murrupurtiyanuwu Girls Primary School’s literacy production centre and observed various language projects. Murrupurtiyanuwu Primary is a bi-lingual school that teaches in the traditional language, Tiwi, in the first year of school (transition) using only five percent of the available curriculum time for English, building up to eighty percent at year six. Staff members in the literacy production centre have all been trained on-the-job to develop language-teaching programmes and have excellent computer and production skills. They produce many Tiwi books, CDs, DVDs and collect traditional stories to help teach the children of Nguiu their traditional language in the hope of keeping Tiwi strong.

In Nguiu, I interviewed four ILRs who worked in the school’s literacy production centre and had trained on-the-job. I also interviewed the non-Indigenous co-ordinator of the literacy production centre and the school’s Indigenous principal.

After flying back to Darwin I drove south to Katherine, Numbulwar and Ngkurr. In Katherine, approximately 310 kilometres south of Darwin, I visited the Diwurruwurru-Jaru Aboriginal Corporation (DAC) head office, which is the language centre for the Katherine region. It employs ILRs and NILRs as well as an Indigenous co-ordinator and administrative staff. Its main focus was the documentation and maintenance of the thirty-two languages of its region and it supports community-based language projects and school language programmes. It also archives language materials. At DAC, I interviewed one NILR and one Indigenous senior staff member.

Numbulwar is a small remote community situated on the west side of the Gulf of Carpentaria in the southeast Arnhem Land. It has a population of around 1,200. Several languages are spoken in the community and taught at the school, including Nunggubuyu (commonly known as Wubuy) with 44 speakers, Ngandi with nine speakers, Ritharrngu with 66 speakers and Wagilak with 57 speakers. I interviewed six ILRs and one NILR at the school’s literacy production centre. Two of these ILRs also worked on a Bible translation project. I also interviewed two other ILR and two NILRs working on the Bible translation project. Five of the ILRs had undertaken
linguistics training with either SAL or SIL (see Chapter 4 for further details on SAL and SIL).

Map 5.4: Key towns and the localities of the languages of participants in this research in the Northern Territory (Top End and Central Australia, see Map 5.1).

Ngukurr is also situated in the southeast of Arnhem Land on the Gulf of Carpentaria. Kriol is the main language of the community but at least five traditional languages are spoken and taught at the local school: Mara (23 speakers), Wagilak (no recent speaker number available), Rembarrnga (10 speakers), Ngandi and Wubuy. Ngukurr houses an annexe of DAC and employs one full-time NILR and, through CDEP, at least seven Indigenous locals interested in language work; some of these have had some linguistics training. I interviewed seven ILRs, one NILR and two non-Indigenous teachers at the local school. I also observed five different vernacular language classes that were prepared by the Indigenous staff of the language centre and taught by them at the local school.
From Darwin I flew to Maningrida, a remote Indigenous community situated 500 kilometres east of Darwin on the coast of the Arafura Sea in northern Arnhem Land. There are fourteen traditional languages spoken in the region, including Burarra (800 speakers), Djinang (100 speakers), Gurrgoni (an estimated 20 speakers in 1990 – there are no recent figures for this language), Kunbarlang (an estimated 20 speakers in 1990), Ndjebbana (100 speakers), Rembarrnga (10 speakers), Dalabon (30 speakers) and Yan-nhangu (7 speakers). The community school teaches three of these languages: Ndjebbanna, Rembarrnga and Burarra. I interviewed four ILRs and two non-Indigenous staff in the school’s literacy production centre.

Galiwin’ku is the township on Elcho Island, which is situated 550 kilometres northeast of Darwin in the northeastern corner of Arnhem Land. The two main languages of the community are Djambarrpuyngu (139 speakers) and Gupapuyngu (the NILS 2004 estimate of speakers is “hundreds”). I interviewed two ILRs who work in the literacy production centre at the local school, one Indigenous person who had linguistics training but no longer worked due to poor health, and one NILR who oversees a Djambarrpuyngu Bible translation project and does translation training. I conducted four interviews while on Elcho Island.

Whilst in Darwin I interviewed language and linguistics students from various Northern Territory remote communities who were away from their home community studying at SIL when I was visiting their home community. I also interviewed SIL staff as well as two of the Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training staff, including one of its regional linguists, both of these staff members held vital roles in the development of the Northern Territory’s language and culture in schools curriculum. I also interviewed one NILR who is an ex-SAL lecturer and is an active researcher on Australia’s Indigenous languages. Another two interviews were conducted during my field trip to Batchelor Institute’s main campus, 100 kilometres south of Darwin. These involved one ILR/educator and one NILR.

During this trip to the Top End of the Northern Territory I conducted 27 interviews with 42 participants, including fourteen recorded interviews with ILRs; five of these interviews were group interviews (see Table 3.3).
5.3.2. Central Australia

As I lived in Alice Springs I conducted short field trips in Indigenous communities around Alice Springs, interviewing Indigenous and NILRs, Elders and other interested people. Most interviews in Alice Springs were done at my home or at one of the educational institutions; Batchelor Institute or IAD. Others were done in parks and at other peoples’ homes. I interviewed people from Yuendumu, Barrow Creek and Amperlatwaty.

Yuendumu is a remote community 290 kilometres northwest of Alice Springs. Its main traditional language is Warlpiri which has approximately 300 speakers spread across Central Australia. Unfortunately, when I arrived in Yuendumu the community had been temporarily vacated due to severe family feuds. However, I did interview Warlpiri people in Alice Springs, therefore I did not go back to Yuendumu. Barrow Creek is a small remote community approximately 280 kilometres north of Alice Springs on the Stuart Highway. Barrow Creek has two main outstations where local Indigenous people live. The traditional language of the area is Kaytetye, which has approximately 200 speakers. Again, when I arrived in Barrow Creek very few people were there so I interviewed the relevant Kaytetye people in Alice Springs or Tennant Creek. Amperlatwaty is a remote Indigenous community approximately 325 kilometres northeast of Alice Springs in the Sandover region. Amperlatwaty has a population of 300 people. Its main traditional language is Alyawarr, which has approximately 1000 speakers across Central Australia. I lived in Amperlatwaty in the early 1990s and have maintained contact with many of its residents. During my visit there for this research project I conducted one interview and attended the launch of a children’s colouring-in book, which was developed by local Batchelor Institute students with Batchelor Institute staff and other independent NILRs.

Tennant Creek is situated 510 kilometres north of Alice Springs along the Stuart Highway. I met and interviewed many ILRs employed by various organisations throughout Tennant Creek. Some of these ILRs had formal linguistics training with Batchelor Institute and others have been trained on-the-job. Some of these people no longer work as ILRs but work in other areas in the community, and others, whilst not in paid work, are still interested in maintaining their traditional language. Papulu
Apparr-Kari Aboriginal Corporation is the language centre of the Barkly whose core business is to maintain, revitalise and restore languages in the Barkly region. The languages they work on include Warumungu (fifty speakers), Warlpiri (3000 speakers), Alyawarr (1000 speakers), Kaytetye (200 speakers), Warlmanpa (30 speakers), Wakaya (10 speakers), Mudburra (48 speakers), Wambaya (20 speakers), Jingulu (14 speakers), Binbinga (2 speakers), Garrawa (40 speakers), Yanyuwa (70 speakers), Waanyi (4 speakers) and Mara (23 speakers). Most of the ILRs I interviewed work with Papulu Apparr-Karri Aboriginal Corporation. The Papulu Apparr-Karri language centre employs ILRs through CDEP and generally trains these people on the job.

In total, throughout Central Australia (Map 5.4) I conducted twelve interviews with 19 participants, plus one participant who provided a written response to the discussion points, making a total of 20 participants (Table 3.2).

5.4. Discussion

The fieldwork for this research project consisted of driving approximately 10,000 kilometres, mainly on very remote dirt roads across outback Australia, and travelling around 3,000 air miles (~4800 kilometres) across six large regions in the two States and the Territory of Northern Australia to visit 22 communities where I conducted 74 interviews involving 98 participants. There were 70 Indigenous and 28 non-Indigenous participants. Of the 70 Indigenous participants, 44 were working in the field of linguistics at the time of interview, as shown in Table 4.6. These included eight CALL and nine SAL graduates, three university graduates and 31 ILRs trained on-the-job. The other 25 Indigenous participants included trained ILRs not working in the field of linguistics, Elders, language centre employees and other members of the community. Fifteen of these community members had undertaken some prior linguistics training - fourteen with CALL and one with SAL.

I visited two large regions in each State and Territory. Each region varied in the number of language groups, number of speakers within language groups, distances between remote and urban communities, populations, and resources and supports available for language programmes. Western Australia, in particular, has funded language centres, usually based in urban centres, to support language projects in
most remote Indigenous communities. The Northern Territory, particularly in the Top End, ran vernacular literacy programmes through community schools that supported and employed ILRs. In contrast, Northern Queensland language programmes were few with little to no support or funding.

Even though the one constant factor across communities was fluent speakers of all language groups represented in the project, the attitudes of community members towards ILRs and language documentation and maintenance programmes varied within regions and across northern Australia. Similarly, ILRs’ and linguistics organisations’ attitudes to community members and organisations varied across northern Australia.

The following chapters discuss the attitudes and beliefs of these graduates and other participants in their communities. Chapter 6 looks at the course and academic factors that enhance or constrain students’ ability to undertake and complete linguistics courses. Chapter 7 discusses factors at the community level that affect students’ study. It also discusses how beneficial the courses have been to graduates and their community as well as discussing other training factors that participants thought enhanced or constrained ILRs in the field. Chapter 8 discusses the findings related to the community and cultural factors that affect language documentation and maintenance, factors such as community governance, linguistic attitudes and social and cultural factors that affect language work in remote areas. Chapter 8 also addresses factors such as state and federal language policy and attitude, funding and professional support.
CHAPTER 6. TRAINING FACTORS
Chapter 6. TRAINING FACTORS

This chapter discusses factors that impede the progress of ILRs and of Indigenous students in linguistics training programmes. Low literacy levels of students were found to be the main impediment to successfully completing or coping with the course requirements (section 6.1). Other factors depend on the lecturers’ skills, the language they use in the classroom (section 6.2) and the delivery method of the course (section 6.3). The time students take to complete a course (section 6.4) depends in part on the academic support they receive during the course, both on campus and in their home community (section 6.5) and the support they receive from their family and their community to travel to workshops and to study at home. Few graduates of a formal linguistics course work in the field documenting and maintaining their traditional languages. In section 6.7, graduates discuss what they have done with their linguistics skills since finishing their courses, and why. The personal benefits students gained from the linguistics courses are discussed in section 6.8.

6.1. Literacy Skills

This study found that the low level of literacy among linguistics students is a fundamental factor in people not completing or struggling through linguistics courses. Many students’ literacy skills were lower than required to enter courses but they were, nevertheless, accepted into the course (see section 4.1 for a discussion on SAL’s and CALL’s response to students’ low literacy levels).

All CALL, Pilbara and Cairns TAFE students were required to have completed at least year 12 to enrol in their higher education linguistics courses or enter through the institutions’ mature-age schemes. CALL’s mature-aged entrance requirements for a linguistics course, between 1998 and 2003, were that students needed “sufficient knowledge and skills to be able to successfully complete the course” (CALL, 1998: 3). This changed in 2003 with the new Diploma and Advanced Diploma to “[a]ll applicants will be assessed for appropriate literacy skills and may be required to enrol in an appropriate Preparation for Tertiary Studies course” (Caffery, 2003b: 10). However, even through this scheme students with low literacy levels were often
accepted. This was no different for the other institutions, as will be demonstrated in this section.

Two of the participating education institutions assessed students’ literacy skills prior to enrolment and, in theory, those who did not meet the courses’ literacy requirements were required to complete a literacy and numeracy bridging course before undertaking the linguistics course. Batchelor Institute’s bridging course was called the ‘Certificate in Spoken and Written English’ and Pilbara TAFE called theirs the ‘Certificate in Adult Education’.

Certificate in Adult Education, so that’s literacy and numeracy, basically. So, when we get people who need literacy and numeracy standards upgraded, some start from the beginning and some have level one or two or three and they go up and up until you get to the point where you can read fiction and appreciate it. (15IT3)

These bridging courses offered various levels of literacy from pre-literacy through to the literacy level required to cope with a linguistics course. However, in reality students were rarely put into one of these literacy courses but were simply accepted straight into the linguistics course; some students were not assessed at all.

Do you assess them to make sure they have the literacy level to be able to cope with the course?

We used to do that, but no. Because we ended up with so many students who haven’t been to school before but are very good speakers of a language, which we needed to work with. So, we’ve had to provide them with English literacy skills. (17NT3)

The language workers course will also work with people who are totally illiterate ... (19NL3)

We’ve had old people who have come in from the desert who have never held a pen … so we give them very basic English literacy work and sometimes some of the people from communities are already enrolled in literacy and numeracy courses and that helps us with our
work ... but sometimes people don’t have that support at all and they’re the ones that are struggling. (15IT3)

Participants in this study argued that when students with lower than required literacy skills were accepted into a course, the course was adapted to meet their literacy levels. Lowering the literacy requirements of a course meant lowering its standard or “dumbing down” (12IL/T3) the course. This meant that many students who completed a Diploma or Advanced Diploma did not acquire skills equivalent to people who completed a course at the same accredited level in a mainstream institution. An accredited course should meet a standard according to the Australian Qualifications Framework. This framework states that “Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas recognise skills and knowledge meeting national competency standards” (Ministerial Council on Education, 1995). Reducing the standard of courses caused problems for graduates when in the workplace (see section 6.7).

Rarely would students admit to their low levels of literacy. Instead, they made excuses as to why they were not succeeding in the course. Such excuses were usually related to personal or family illness, family or cultural commitments or excuses carefully hidden in other ways so lecturers might not notice the absence of their literacy skills. It was not unusual for even the most experienced of lecturers to be surprised when they realised how low some students’ literacy skills were and how widespread the problem was.

In my naivety, I had forgotten how critical that whole literacy thing is ... Literacy was a major problem for people in the course. People were not coping with the reading... I didn’t realise how poor peoples’ literacy is and people are too ashamed to admit that they couldn’t read or write very well ... People are very good at hiding their low literacy levels... It is so common ... even one woman who had been teaching language in a school for five years didn’t have basic literacy and was too shy to ask me stuff in class ... Lecturers are not really aware of students’ literacy problems, even experienced teachers. (12IL/T2)

... People tend to be a lot worse than you think they are. You can talk to someone and have a reasonable conversation [in English] but when
you try to give someone a list of instructions, for example, they seem to nearly always misunderstand it . . . it’s not only the English as a second language people that are like that, first language English speakers have the same problem. (41NL/T5)

Some students dropped out of the course rather than struggle through or ask for literacy help (as is evident in numerous quotes used in this thesis). Students who struggle to understand linguistic concepts usually do not have the confidence, or feel ‘shame’, to ask for or admit they need help.

Some people are very shy not to express themselves that they don’t know anything.

*So if they are shy and don’t express what they don’t know how is the lecturer to know that they need help in that area?*

You have to ask them privately. It’s no good saying things open in the class. Privacy is the most important. . . . and it’s a shameful thing. It’s embarrassing, very embarrassing. (13IL/E2)

It is argued in the literature that across northern Australia the low literacy level of remote Indigenous people is a result of little to no access to secondary education, and many did not have access to education at the primary level (Kral & Schwab, 2003; and the Northern Territory Education Department, 1999, for example). Some remote Indigenous adults had little access to any form of education. In remote Indigenous communities literacy is usually only encouraged at the community school. Generally, Indigenous people do not have access to books or other reading materials in their home or anywhere else in their community. Schoolchildren are not usually allowed to take school readers home to practice their reading (personal experience with my own child enrolled in a remote community school as well as communications with a remote schoolteacher in both Central Australia and the Top End). It is usually a requirement in all non-Indigenous schools across Australia for children to take home readers to practise their reading. Consequently, the literacy levels of remote Indigenous people are low and those wanting to undertake a linguistics course struggle with the reading and writing requirements of the courses.

In the SAL days we had a lot of people who had never been to school and a lot of them had only done primary school . . . These people are
mainly community people who have never read a book in their lives. In some communities there’s not a single house in the community that has a book in it. (41NL/T5)

Even in cases where students had attended high school it was still evident that their literacy levels were quite low.

… we find students say they have been to school up to [years] eight, nine or ten but they are not at that level functionally because in communities they don’t get that quality education because they are probably not monitored or looked after so they don’t have that knowledge to go with that talent they have. (15IT3)

Participants also argued that it was better to learn literacy in their first language before learning it in their second. However, most classroom instruction, in Australia, is in English, making it even more difficult for remote Indigenous people to increase their literacy skills.

… it is so much easier to be able to read and write in your first language than English. (19NL03)

… and get student to read and write in their own language. You and I know that is the key to get them to become literate in other languages if you can read speak and write in your own language. (04IL/T1)

Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants argued that if a person had literacy in their first language then they would usually be literate in their second language as well.

In fact, my experience has been that if somebody has got good vernacular literacy or even half reasonable vernacular literacy their English literacy would be better than their vernacular literacy. I can only think of one case where that might not have been the case … but that is extremely rare. (51NL/T5)

One Indigenous lecturer who has lived in a remote community, and who has English as a fourth language, knows from personal experience the literacy struggles students
have when starting a linguistics course. She argued that all students should be required to undertake a literacy course prior to starting a linguistics course regardless of what level course they wish to undertake; this way more students would be more likely to finish the course instead of dropping out.

I think the students have not been exposed to stuff. There is no prior knowledge. They need categorising and things like that. And, the weaknesses I found is that the students don’t have the literacy skills. This problem needs to be addressed prior to going in to do the course itself... I think it’s a must for all students to do the foundation studies. Regardless of what level they are doing?

Yes definitely. I would go with that because I know I certainly didn’t have the skills...

Would it have been easier for you to do a [linguistics] course if you had done some literacy course?

It would have been. Yeah.

Do you think it is across the board for all students?

Yes, it’s a must. It’s a must. You may have worked in various fields of employment but you need the skills to be able to write or research.

(04IL/T1)

The low literacy skills of ILRs were not just a problem with people undertaking a linguistics course but also in the field. This study found that ILRs across northern Australia generally struggled with low literacy skills regardless of the work environment they were in. Employers, particularly in language centres, were generally concerned with the low literacy skills of their employees.

There were times where a worker was hampered by lack of a prerequisite skill, generally ones I would lump under "literacy", e.g. the ability to look up something in an alphabetically arranged source, or operate a machine (such as a tape recorder) ... Good confident literacy was unusual even among literacy workers; and less so among teacher trainees unless they were themselves the best graduates of the bilingual school system. Other skills, such as transcription, dictionary work, written composition, editing, depend on good literacy. Some of this, for example, dictionary work, can of course be carried out by a
group including non-literate experts but at least one member of the
team needs good literacy in the relevant languages. (40NL5)

We’ve even got language workers who are totally illiterate, who can
barely write their own names and so on ... We are saying to people
that they are going to have to learn literacy in one language or the
other. (19NL03)

Although low literacy was the norm, there were exceptions. ILRs with high levels of
literacy usually had had more access to education and training and had been working
in the field for a decade or more.

We’ve got, like [Bret] for example, he’s not literate in English and
refuses to have anything to do with English writing ... but he is a
complete techno wiz and writes in six languages ... [David], we’re
very lucky, he’s incredibly literate in fact he is one of the most literate
... people I’ve ever seen, desert people. I’ve never seen anyone as
literate as he and I think it has come about because he has always
been like an apprentice for years and years and years to linguists.
(19NL3)

Students themselves raised concerns about the literacy levels required for linguistics
courses. The following student was in her third year of a course but was struggling to
use linguistic terminology and writing reports.

*How long have you been studying this course?*
Oh, about four, three years, four years. It starts off easy and then it
gets hard.

*What do you find hard?*
Well at the moment I finding my research report hard because you
gotta add more in, like before you used to be, when writing a proposal
it’s just straightforward. By doing a research you gotta do a lot of
research and you gotta like add big words in. And it’s hard because I
never, like English is, you know, second language... and writing a
report is hard. (09IL2)
Additionally, at least three other participants, one of whom later became a linguistics lecturer, argued that one of the reasons many students find linguistics courses difficult is because English is their second or third language. Therefore, these students need more time to complete assignments and courses than first language English speakers do. Some participants argue that people who do not have English as a first language need extra time to do their work because they constantly have to interpret oral and written information from English into their first language. Students then have to understand it in their first language before interpreting it back into English to speak or write it, therefore requiring more time than allowed to complete the required assessment.

I found it really difficult ... You know, the lecturer would come in and talk and I had to take notes, but I wasn’t good at it. I had to ask the lecturers if I could record the lecturers’ because English was my fourth language and I couldn’t listen, translate into [my language] then write it down. It was all too quick so I recorded the lectures then listened to them at night and wrote notes at my own pace ... But in an institution, you’ve got deadlines to meet. An assignment is due in on this date and another due in on this date. And I found that difficult ... No. you need more preparation time by yourself before you can see the results at the end. I am speaking particularly about Indigenous people who are presenting something that is in a language that’s not your own. It is hard. It is hard. (04IL/T1)

... I find difficulty to understand the grammar of the language. Therefore, if I heard an English speaking person speaking to me I must first raise it in my conscious [to translate it in to my language so I could understand what they were saying] before I answer the person ... I have to keep a constant alert for the new words. English new words. (13IL/E3)

One participant argued that Indigenous people should be allowed extra time to write reports as they were not taught report writing skills at school.

I think you need more time... Because for an Indigenous person you’re taking an Indigenous person to write a report and it’s hard
because we’ve never written. If we wrote reports, like all the time we were going to school, we would have been alright …

Do you think that there are many other students that feel the same? That struggle in the same way?

Yeah [Peter] was always getting angry because some. He’s very brainy but to write it on paper is very hard. It is. To speak it, it’s very easy. But to write down on paper it’s just hard and to put it in a report style. (09IL2)

Another participant argued that lecturers should have experience of living and working in remote communities prior to teaching Indigenous people as it is only then that they will understand the issues students face on a day-to-day basis.

A lot of language workers are in courses and the lecturers are under skilled to understand either the language issues or to understand the needs of their students. Um, I don’t see how anybody could be lecturing in those courses if you haven’t actually worked out in the community and for years and seeing the issues over and over. (19NL3)

Another participant argued that lecturers should be more accepting of the language used by the students in their written reports, as the linguistic jargon is difficult for Indigenous students to use and they are not used to using this metalanguage.

I know (lecturers) they’re all different, they’re like advanced, but I reckon they all should just take down what the student just write down, because some of these Indigenous students it’s hard just writing a report. I say on behalf of myself, it’s hard … You know what I mean, cause we all haven’t been to, um, university this is the first university that’s been open [for us] and we’ve, you know, you know what it is, how you write it, some of them don’t know English or proper English so just write it down how they got it and then the lecturer should just take it and mark it. (09IL2)

Lecturers, on the other hand, argue that it is their duty to help students develop the skills to write reports and learn linguistic terminology. Such skills are vital to help
students to understand linguistic works on their language. To help students develop these skills, lecturers need to ask or encourage students to rewrite assignments or provide more information according to the lecturers’ suggestions.

We have a goal of getting students to be able to use the terminology that they will need for reading linguistic work on their language. We may ask students to rewrite assignments to help them learn. (89NT05)

NILRs, usually lecturers, made recommendations whereby formal training courses for people from several different language groups could successfully improve their literacy skills. One such participant recommended teaching all of the students, regardless of their language background, literacy skills in English rather than in the vernacular because there were not enough vernacular reading materials available to students or lecturers to teach the vernacular. This participant was not arguing against vernacular literacy courses, but for a way that people can learn literacy when in multi-lingual groups.

I’d say concentrate in the course on something that you can deliver to a large range of students and that is really getting there, like a really good English literacy course and make reading a major part of that. .. because it is going to be very difficult to get people up to the level that you want them in vernacular literacy because there is simply not enough stuff to read in the vernacular. Also, if you started in the vernacular you would have to have a separate course for each language group, which is going to be too hard to do. And basically say, ‘look this is a basic requirement to do anything of this kind which is literacy’. Forget what kind of literacy it is it just happens that English is there as the vehicle. (51NL/T5)

As part of improving people’s literacy, participants argued that ILRs need research and study skills.

I think study skills, they should learn to be able to decide what the actual problem is, what the instructions are and how to follow them and to how reason, really. One thing I noticed … was that people had got up to higher levels in certificate courses without ever learning
about classification, how you put things in to sets according to what they have in common. (41IL/T5)

Get the literacy really good. I think in the process you want to keep half an eye on people’s ability to do research which means that the reading shouldn’t just be novels… but also reading factual stuff. And getting them to do kind of a bit of critical reading. When [Tania] was doing her reading for the [research project] she was coming across stuff that contradicted other things, and her inclination was to be really puzzled because why should this be so because if it is written it must be right. And so one of my tasks was to make sure she pointed out contradictions to me and talk through them. I can’t just leave people to read on their own, you’ve got to read then come back to it so you develop that skill. (51NL/T5)

Participants from this study argued that the funding issues associated with delivering linguistics courses pressured lecturers into accepting students who did not have the appropriate literacy skills for the course. Lecturers usually did not want to accept students with low literacy skills directly into the linguistics course as it created extra work for them. At the same time, lecturers were under pressure to develop higher-level courses because the higher the level of the course the more funding the institution could receive from the funding bodies (from personal knowledge and experience). But, of course, higher-level courses required students to have higher literacy skills.

I think the issue that we face is that the courses became high-level courses and the student literacy levels weren’t quite that high and so students find it extra challenging and because of that couldn’t come. (15IT3)

Course funding was also allocated according to a staff/student funding ratio (personal knowledge and experience). This is where the number of enrolled students determines the funding for the number of staff employed to develop and deliver the courses. The funding is adjusted regularly according to the student numbers; when student numbers drop so does the funding and therefore staff numbers are also
reduced. This policy, coupled with the fact that centres and departments do not want to lose staff, meant that students were accepted into courses when in fact they should have been required to attend a literacy course first. As a result, lecturers adapted, or in the words of 12IL/T3 ‘dumbed-down’, the course work to suit the students’ literacy levels.

You know the place is funded according to how many students you get and so you try to get them [from] here, there and everywhere. (41IL/T5)

... because of the pressures of having enough student numbers we took in a lot of students. (89NL/T6)

In summary, the low literacy skills of students and ILRs in the field are among the most fundamental factors limiting the documentation and maintenance of Indigenous languages by ILRs. Low literacy skills on the part of students are a major issue faced by educational institutions that train remote Indigenous people. Participating educational institutions offered literacy and numeracy bridging courses for students who did not have the required literacy and numeracy skills to undertake a higher education course. However, students were usually accepted into a linguistics course regardless of their literacy level, even when students’ literacy and numeracy skills were assessed prior to starting the course and found to be below the required level. This was usually done to keep student numbers up to the required level to retain funding for current staff and programmes. Taking on students who had low literacy levels increased the lecturers’ workload as they had to teach the students the necessary literacy skills as well as the course work itself. Participants argued that taking on such students also lowered the standard of the course. In addition, the majority of students had English as a second or third language, which, participants argued, meant that they need more time to process what the lecturer was teaching.

6.2. Lecturers’ Teaching Skills and Language

This research found that the language used in the classroom can also impede students’ learning. This includes language used by the lecturers orally and in the printed information provided to students during the courses. Participants made several recommendations on how formal training courses could overcome this issue.
The main recommendations related to the lecturers’ teaching skills and the skills they need to teach the courses in a manner that was more Indigenous-friendly. Vernacular language skills were considered important for a lecturer to have by many Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants as it is easier to understand someone when speaking in your first language, especially when speaking about technical aspects of a subject.

Good language skills on behalf of the teachers was really helpful. Teachers who are fluent or near fluent are crucial to the course so they can pick when something is not right, or come up with good examples of things and so on. (51NL/T5)

Other recommendations included patience, especially when explaining new concepts, and the need to use plain English as much as possible. Understanding body language was also an important skill for a lecturer to have so that they could easily determine when someone was struggling with new concepts or with the set task.

... I think to be more sensitive to, you know, how do I put this. You know, you just know, I would just know by how they are looking. You have to pick up on the non-verbal communication. Like when you are talking in the classroom you have to look at each and every one of them, you know when they are feeling uncomfortable you have to pick up this non-verbal body language. You just know by the way they look at you, the way they are sitting, so you know you have to make it simple. Repetition. Repetition is a must in teaching. Again I am just speaking from experience. (04IL/T1)

Some ILRs argued that there are significant differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous lecturers and there needs to be more Indigenous lecturers. They claimed that Indigenous lecturers really understand where the students are coming from in terms of the struggles they go through to understand and write in a language that is not their first. The following quote comes from one Indigenous educator who has been through formal training and understands the issues that students face. This person argued that learning how to use English correctly was the main problem faced by Indigenous students.

... language use mainly. They are concerned about the language. To combat that, from my own experience, I have shared with the students that to be able
to learn that or grasp the terminologies in linguistics you have to learn and you have to grasp the meaning of that word and to use it when you are talking to your peers or your lecturer. Use those terms. There is no such word that is identical in our language so you have to learn that. (04IL/T1)

Participants argued that some of these teaching issues could be overcome if there were more lecturers that are Indigenous or if lecturers were more accepting of students’ performance, particularly students who speak English as a second language. Section 6.5 discusses some of these issues further.

**6.3. Course Delivery Methods**

The delivery method of the courses taught by each of the participating education institutions differed. Three of the institutions, SAL, SIL and CALL, delivered their courses by mixed mode (see below) whereas Cairns and Pilbara TAFE only delivered courses on campus. This section discusses these delivery methods and the appropriateness of the different methods from the perspective of the staff and students of the institutions.

The delivery of CALL courses were by mixed-mode, “through a combination of campus-based workshops and community-based study” (Caffery, 2003b). However, in my experience I found that the vast majority of workshops occur on one of Batchelor Institute’s campuses. On-campus workshops required students to travel and stay on one of the campuses for the duration of the workshop. Many students had to travel thousands of kilometres to attend a workshop. Students travelling from the Torres Strait would have to travel for two days to attend a workshop then another two days to return home. Most CALL courses, at the time of this research project, ran two-week workshops and full-time students usually attended eight workshops per year. This meant full-time students were away from home studying on campus for up to sixteen weeks per year. Students are provided with accommodation and meals for the duration. A full-time course required students to study for the full academic year: up to forty weeks per year. Some students argued that the travel and time away from their community took them away from family responsibilities for too long a period, which often caused distress for the students and their families as the students worried about their children and other family, community and cultural responsibilities.
Participants who studied through Batchelor Institute differed in their experiences of the value of this method of delivery.

Better to study in home community. It is very hard for mothers to go away, but still go away to do some bits. (52IL5)

I actually don’t know anyone who has finished the course. I’ve lived around here for 22 years. Um, people seem to drop out before it finishes. One of the things I think is the whole rigours of turning up for forty weeks of the year and studying doesn’t fit into people’s lifestyles, and in the end they will just drop out when it becomes too hard ... They’ve always asked in communities that the course goes out to them and that’s one of the sad things that [the college] haven’t responded to that. (19NL3)

Employers and lecturers argued that students struggled with various social issues when they came to town to study. They were often unwillingly caught up in family issues, alcohol and money problems, which either distracted them from their studies or prevented them from attending the workshops.

... the people from the communities who come in to the course have huge social issues. They come in with grog and family and expectations with money and all that kind of stuff and it gets too hard for them to do that. (19NL3)

One lecturer recommended developing courses so that they can be taught out bush. This way the students are not distracted by social issues such as those faced in the towns.

I think there are quite a lot [of things] that can be done to make courses much more suitable. I’d been inclined to say given the realities of bush life the courses should be modular and in blocks that can be delivered out bush where possible. (51NL/T5)

However, there are many other factors that determine whether or not workshops can be held out in remote communities, including the lack of funding to send lecturers out to remote communities and to accommodate them. One participant also argued that some lecturers were not prepared to go out to the communities to hold
workshops because they were too comfortable working in their own workplace. This appeared to be a problem mainly in one participating education institution but to a small extent is a problem in all.

You also get lecturers who are very comfortable and they have all their resources at the college and then to pick everything up and go out to a community for a week, I think it becomes quite uncomfortable. So the courses just go on for too long and people just don’t succeed. (19NL3)

While some students and lecturers argued for more workshops in communities, others preferred to attend workshops on campus. These students argued that when they are on campus they can focus on their work rather than be distracted by family and community pressures in their home community. These students also argued that at college they had access to all the resources they needed to complete their assignments. However, the majority of students preferred a mixture of both on-campus and community-based workshops.

It’s better to be at the college to do this instead of being at home because at home it’s just like you can’t do it. You can’t get to do it because family and a lot of things to do here. But at the college you’ve got a lot of time, you’ve got computers … I got plenty of time at college because there is nobody around to bug you like your family … And at the college you’ve got everything. Like you got the computer. You got library to go to, you got all the information. At home here you haven’t got a computer like me and I got to go to the library to do that and you gotta pay to go to the library to type up stuff. Yeah, so I find being away from home is better cause you get more work done. (09IL2)

I think it is really good to have home based lectures. It is probably better for students because they are not always away from everything. But it is also good to go to another place. So you can do your studies in peace and access to other people. Yeah its good to have home based lectures. Yeah, bit of both. (45IL5)
One employer preferred community-based programmes rather than the students going away to study, for several reasons: on-campus classes were mixed language groups rather than just one language group, and the students would have more support in the home community between workshops if the workshops were held in the community (see section 6.5 for further discussion on academic support).

We kind of think they [lecturers] don’t work enough with them after they leave the college. Like when they go and do their block for a couple of weeks then when they come back they’re left to their own resources …

We do have a problem with the fact that the people have got to go away to Batchelor up in Darwin, where it would be good if they were taught in the community in a way. Like so that. I understand that there is several languages in one class and all the rest of it but sometimes it would be good to be on home country. (44I05)

The majority of, if not all, workshops held on campus by Batchelor Institute, Cairns and Pilbara TAFE included students from several different languages in the one workshop. Students and ex-students generally preferred mixed language classes but also wanted classes with people just from their own language group. This mixed method, students argued, would allow them to develop their own language skills when in their own language groups, but also develop an understanding of other language situations so they could compare their situation with the others.

So, I learned a lot there. Not only from the lecturers but from the students too … particularly from my own language group. You know they speak language so that got me learning more of my own language. But it was good learning about the other student’s language, about how sometimes that they are sort of the same … I think it was good that there was a lot of [the same language] speakers there with me. Particularly when there were other students who were more fluent. (45IL5)

Oh [mixed language groups] is good in a way but it’s good to have other students who speak my language. You can see a wide range of languages. Sometimes it is good to have different views from other
language groups. But it is good to have the same language group for support. (03IL1)

Better to work with just one language group in a linguistics class. Or can do it in a big group but then separate into individual language groups... (52IL5)

There are certain advantages, especially later in the course, of getting people from different languages together. (51NL/T5)

I think it’s great because it gives the students, again it’s bringing ... cultures together ... And it’s a good thing it’s not a bad thing, because people like to stay in their comfort zone but life doesn’t offer that. Life stretches you, and I think to have that in a course is better than making people feel comfortable. Make them feel comfortable for a while but stretch them a bit because you are actually stretching them inside to work harder. (54IL5)

SAL and SIL used course delivery methods that were different from the other participating institutions. Each institution held their workshops with groups of people from the one language group (SAL often had more than one language group in a workshop) and each group usually had just one lecturer who catered for all of the students’ needs.

... they work with homogenous language groups. No student is accepted on their own. They come in groups because they’ve got to be able to discuss and work through together, and in fact, you know we might have taken three but overall they all came in in bigger groups than that because from the communities there was this excitement. (85NT6)

Not only did students from the one language group attend SIL workshops, but they also had the same lecturer for the whole course. The one lecturer was responsible for all aspects of the students’ educational and pastoral care, on and off campus. This lecturer was responsible for the personal care of each student in their group,
including helping with the students’ banking, shopping and medical care as well as all of the students’ academic and travel requirements. The purpose of this was for students and lecturers to develop a strong relationship, which, they believe, is vital to the students’ success in the course.

It was the same lecturer for all workshops except for one when a lecturer left and another person took over. Yes, it was the one person going through who kept the records, knew where they were, who not only had it in writing but had it up here [pointing to her head]. You know things like what we had to do with someone along the way, make sure we do this again or some element of something that they have shown me they are competent but couldn’t be sure but you know maybe we’ll go back here. The courses, the workshops could be anywhere, sitting under a tin shed with a donkey eating your papers on the ground. Under a tree, dogs barking. (85NT6)

In summary, SIL and SAL taught their courses with one lecturer usually teaching one language group separately. In contrast, CALL’s workshops usually had several language groups in the one class and a different lecturer taught different units of the course. In theory, a CALL student could have up to eight different lecturers in any one year, but they usually had about four. Pilbara and Cairns TAFE courses usually had the same lecturers but several language groups in the one class. These courses targeted all students across northern Australia and did not cater for students’ individual work environments or needs.

Different education institutions had different methods of delivery with, participants argued, different benefits for students. On-campus and off-campus delivery had both advantages and disadvantages, as summarised in Figure 6.1.
Advantages and disadvantages for on-campus and community based workshops.

This study found that students generally preferred a mixture of the delivery methods. In addition, from personal knowledge, community based workshops had the added advantage of including other interested community members, in particular Elders. These workshops also emphasised the importance of the work that students were doing to the rest of their community, often resulting in support for language documentation and maintenance assignments.

6.4. Time Taken to Complete Course

During the years I worked with CALL many students who started a linguistics course did not finish it (actual numbers not known as they are not recorded), and most of those who did finish at least the Diploma took a long time to do so. For example, one student had started studying full time with CALL years before I started in 1995. When I resigned from Batchelor Institute, nearly ten years later, he was still doing the equivalent course, although the course had been rewritten and reaccredited three times since he had started. Such a length of time was unusual, as students who had been taking a long time generally dropped out altogether, but this does highlight the fact that students can and generally do take many years to complete a course. Pilbara TAFE also faced the same problem; they had one full time student who took nine
years to complete a one-year linguistics course (15IT3). Again, this was exceptional, but Pilbara TAFE students generally took two to three times longer than the nominated duration to complete a course.

Sometimes two or three years because we can’t do everything at once so we take them through little by little.

And people are comfortable with that, they know it is a one-year course but it’s going to take them two to three years to do it?

Yeah, because it gives them an adjustment period to the new habits they’re developing to their studies. They need a lot of discipline to come here and do the work so it gives them an adjustment period and then they get to like it and they start to accelerate their work. (15IT3)

Some of them probably got through in a couple of years and some of them longer because of the circumstances in their lives. (85NT6)

Retention rates were low in all courses and the reasons why students did not complete courses were similar for all courses offered by the participating education institutions. In CALL, for example, of the approximate 150 students enrolled in the first year of the two-year Diploma of Arts (Languages & Linguistics), less than half went on to complete the Diploma and only four to six continued on to the Advanced Diploma of Arts course (see section 4.1.2 for discussion on CALL student numbers). CALL had one exceptional year where there were approximately ten students enrolled in the Advanced Diploma due to the high numbers of urban-based, first language English speakers, who had completed a Diploma at Cairns TAFE.

There are many reasons why people take a long time to complete a one or two-year course, whether enrolled part time or full time. Such reasons include students being unable to travel to workshops due to family or cultural commitments. Others were working in their community and could not take time off work to attend workshops, or had so much to do when they went to a large town that they became too busy with family or community business to attend classes.

Most of our students are already teachers in the community school so they continue to work there ... they are sometimes busy working in the school and that’s why it is difficult for us to bring them over to
finish the last part of it … For example, one student who was coming next week is now going to Perth to do the LOTE course. (15IT3)

For some it was like a coming on a holiday … Others got caught up with business at land council etcetera and that. (12IL/T2)

… but it is difficult for me to go all the time. Sometimes we have death in the family and it might put us off and wait a fortnight before we start again. (13IL/E3)

Other reasons discussed by lecturers and students as to why students take a long time or drop out of the course included sorry business (death of a relative), family or personal illness, childcare problems and other social issues.

Like one of the students turning up late all the time was told by a lecturer ‘oh buy an alarm clock’. The fact was she was in a house with fifteen other people. Every day she left the house someone else would go and grab all her clothes and things like that. Buy an alarm clock is a great idea but it just wasn’t it. The bigger issue was she was in an environment where she didn’t have enough sleep, food, security of her possessions to actually be able to study and so on. So turning up for the course became too hard for her so of course she dropped out. (19NL3)

This study found that such social issues affect students and ILRs across northern Australia. I have only provided a few interview extracts here as evidence emerges through this thesis in the various interview extracts that have been used to emphasise other points. It was also clear that students often gave such reasons for not attending or dropping out of the course to hide their literacy difficulties or other problems they might have been facing in the course. The issues students face on a daily basis are immense and real. This is why many NILRs argued that courses, and work places (see Chapter 7), need to be more Indigenous-friendly.
**6.5. Academic Support**

Lecturer and tutor support during the course, whether on campus or in their home community, was vital to students completing the course. Relationships between the student and lecturer were important as they affected students’ confidence and their successful completion of a course. Tutorial assistance for students was also vital to the successful completion of a course, so much so that in 1995 the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ATAS) was introduced by the Australian Federal government to assist Indigenous Australians enrolled in tertiary institutions to achieve educational outcomes equal to those of other Australians (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003). This scheme funded Indigenous students who enrol in an accredited course for up to eight hours of tutorial support per week while undertaking their training on campus and in their home community. Students were entitled to tutorial support for all units of their course including own language work and literacy skills in both their first language and English. This scheme was intended to work well in theory, but in practice, before and during this research project, it had serious problems. Problems included finding tutors that fitted the tutor criteria according to the ATAS policy and generally dealing with what seemed at times a difficult policy or bureaucracy, including filling in extensive, difficult paperwork.

Finding appropriate tutors was nearly always difficult, particularly in remote communities, as shown in the quotes below and as I knew from my own experience as coordinator of CALL. To be eligible to be a tutor one needed to be qualified at a level two years above that of the student, be qualified in the same discipline they were tutoring in, and not be a relative of the student. Meeting any one of these three requirements was usually impossible in remote communities given that literacy levels in remote areas were low, that few people had successfully completed a linguistics course in the same community, and that just about every person in a community is related.

We have utilised ATAS support. We had ATAS tutors working with some of our students ... Yeah, we have previously but not recently. We were fortunate then because they [tutors] had linguistic skills but not now. There are less people in the communities that can help us ... In some years we’ve had contract linguists in [the local language
centre] who can help some of our students in the community but that hasn’t happened for about five years now. (17IT3)

I know the students need more help with tutors. … [my mob] need tutors, they must, because remember they are not speaking English at home every day, 24 hours a day … and it’s difficult.

Do you think tutors are available for [your mob]?

No, that’s why we need our students to graduate and be employed as tutors or lecturers, we need more. (04IL/T1)

We’ve. No, they [tutors] haven’t been used in the past here. (441O5)

There is no tutoring. None at all. There is no tutor there to give us. (13IL/T2)

When tutors were found, usually in larger urban towns, they faced a difficult bureaucracy and a lot of paperwork. Tutors were only employed on a casual basis but needed to provide so much documentation that many decided it was not worth the effort. Tutors had to provide original documentation of their qualifications or copies signed by a Justice of the Peace stating that they had sighted the original document. Often tutors, particularly remote Indigenous people, could not find their original documentation and if they could there was no Justice of the Peace for hundreds of kilometres to sight the original and sign the copy. In addition, a large detailed complex contract had to be signed. This was difficult for many remote Indigenous people whose literacy skills were low as they found reading and understanding the contract difficult. All tutors had to fill in a time sheet and all students in that tutorial had to sign and date it. If the form was not signed by the students the tutor would not be paid. Often students left the tutorial early without signing the attendance form so the tutor had to run around to find the student, adding unnecessary frustration to the process of being paid. Tutorials were always arranged ahead of time. However, it was not unusual for the tutor to show up for the tutorial but not the students, particularly small tutorials arranged for two or three students. In such cases the tutor was not paid. This was a lot of paperwork for a few hours per week which was casual and only available during the academic year.
The academic support of lecturers was also a fundamental factor in whether or not a student completed a course. Establishing a good relationship with students was vital so that students, who are generally quite shy, particularly with literacy and other academic matters, feel comfortable enough to discuss any academic problems they may be going through. This research project found that only SAL and SIL students generally established that sort of relationship with their lecturers. CALL students generally felt that they could not discuss academic problems with some of the lecturers because they did not know them well enough, even though they may have got along well.

One participant, 13IL/E2, discussed an issue he and others faced whilst undertaking a Diploma level course. He could not understand certain concepts in a unit. He was a dedicated student and had studied with both SAL and CALL. He had asked the lecturer to re-explain the concepts he was having trouble with, but still could not follow what the lecturer meant so struggled along without asking for extra help or a tutor. He realised he would fail the subject if he didn’t understand the core principles of the subject but was not comfortable in asking a lecturer to re-explain the concepts. He ended up going to a lecturer he had had many years before, and with whom he had established a good relationship, and asked him to explain the problem. He then understood the content required to complete the unit but it was too late for him to write the assignment and pass the unit, so he failed the unit. This student blamed himself, thinking he was not very good at the subject until he went to see another lecturer who explained the concepts in a manner he could understand. The following interview extract is provided at length so the reader can feel the emotion in the student and hear from him directly the situation he was in.

I was studying with [Lyn] you know. I never really understand what she was trying to relate to us. But when I got in with Dr [Smith] and he explain it to me so I could go on but I was already two weeks to go, so it was too late for me.

...Tell me a bit more about the teaching of the courses, are they good? They teachings are all right but you have to break it down a bit more, a bit further down. The thing is, you are speaking to Indigenous person and both Indigenous person and the lecturer they got different concept of thinking, different way they see things, you know, are
completely different all together. Say for instance, if you mention the word ‘hypothesis’ ‘What’s that?’ I ask myself. I can look in the dictionary but it still doesn’t give me a clear picture of what it is all about … Like I could have finished [my course] a long time ago but because of that person, that really slowed me down.

This one lecturer slowed you down because you couldn’t understand what she wanted you to do and then you went to another lecturer and that person

(interviewee cut in) Explained it more clearly.

And then you felt fine. So, what was the difference between these people?

I was with Dr [Smith] when I was with SAL and I asked him and he knew straight away what I was aiming at, so he break it down and go through every little, you know, tried to finish the painting for me so I could see it. If you see the painting half done there is no meaning for it, you have to complete it.

So was it because you knew Dr [Smith] well or was it because he explained it in a different manner?

He knew what I was aimed to understand. I told him, that is my failure, and he told me, and I get on with my work straightaway and finish it. But not completely ….

Did you try to go back to the other lecturer and say I don’t understand what you are saying here and get her to explain it more?

Well, I think this other person think that we could already see what she was trying to relay across to us. Not only myself the rest of us.

You didn’t feel comfortable going back to that lecturer and asking her to explain it a bit more?

No, the lecturer is doing alright but it is with me. I’m not happy about it because first things first, I could sense I was going to fail it …

(13IL/E2)

This person then went on to say that some of the problems could have been solved if he had access to tutors as discussed above. He also went on to say that he knew that the majority of the students were struggling to communicate with the lecturer and
that the lecturer did not really listen to what was happening in the classroom, and this was the reason why many students dropped out.

Yes, the majority. Yes. That is why many fail, why many people don’t want to come back because of that. That’s the reason, yeah ... First of all let me tell you these two things. There is the lion and the trainer. First of all you have to train the lion before the lion realises you are the master in the ring. So is the lecturer. To make them aware, the thing they real need is listening skills.

*Listening skills on behalf of the lecturer?*

Yes. (13IL/E2)

He went on to argue, using an apt analogy, that it is the responsibility of the lecturer to capture the students’ interest and to keep them interested.

So, he must attract them first. You cannot go to the seaside and cast your line over without the bait in it, you won’t get any fish. You have to have bait on the hook. That is the skill that the lecturer need to capture the student. To make them see there is lesson in it, it is most important for them to receive. Anybody can be a teacher, anyone. But you must have that skill ... They have to express that feeling to the students that it is important to be there and to listen in the class. If they lose interest in the lecturer they won’t come in the class in the morning. You might see them around some time after lunch because there is nothing there for them in the class. (13IL/E2)

This participant, and others like him, believes that it is vital to maintain the students’ interest in the course and to provide the necessary academic and personal support, especially for struggling students. On the other hand, some lecturers argue that it is not their responsibility to keep the students motivated because the students are all adults and they are there because they want to be, therefore they should put in that extra effort to learn things themselves, such as linguistic terminology, the computer and so on. I put this argument to this student but he argued quite strongly that it is the lecturers’ duty to help the students with such things. He argued that the students have not been able to learn many of these linguistic concepts as they come from communities that have had few education opportunities so everything should be
taught during the course. This is one of the reasons why linguistics training specifically designed for Indigenous adults was initially established: to assist Indigenous people from communities who have had little access to education and want the linguistic skills to help document and maintain their traditional languages.

It’s the duty of lecturer to explain and ask. You know, computer is a new thing for us. Like I said I taught myself how to use the computer. So, with the computer are they skills that you should learn while you are doing your linguistic Diploma or should you learn that beforehand so when you come in to your linguistics course you just focus on linguistics?

Well, you have both, whatever. Say if you go to the community and start teaching language then you have to publish your articles in English then in language, type it up everything. But, if there is no sort of idea how to get on the computer then it is very hard. (13IL/E2)

Not only was lecturer and tutorial support vital to the students successfully completing a linguistics course, but so was the pastoral care and support that students received when they were staying on campus. When people go to one of the campuses to study from a remote community they are often living in a foreign environment away from their family and their daily supports. They need support to navigate that foreign environment where they can easily feel isolated or lonely. To work successfully with Indigenous people one should build a respectful and trustworthy relationship. SIL managed to achieve this by ensuring each student had the same lecturer who was responsible for all their academic and pastoral needs on and off campus. In addition, each student had the support from other people from their own language group and usually each workshop consisted of people from the one language group and usually one community.

The underlying relationship between anyone from SIL and those students was paramount. They related in this sense: the people who taught them were responsible for their welfare while they were in there, and you’d be taking them to hospital at night and, of course, there was always a lot of things they had to do when they came to town, and a sense of family connection was really established. Most people, well, so they can relate to you they would allocate you a
family relationship anyway, so that happens, as you know, all over the place, but it was that was a very essential ingredient to what was going on. And there was a sense of two way learning. Nobody was lecturing and telling somebody that this was the way to go or this is what you need to know. People were learning from each other. Lecturer from student, student from lecturer … At SIL they were fed by other members of SIL … And ultimately a good relationship is the basis for all learning. But it is very hard to establish where you’re from so called mono-culture and you’ve got big groups coming from disparate areas because there are all sub-cultures in that mono-culture – individual problems etcetera etcetera. (85NT6)

By comparison, with CALL and Pilbara TAFE, this much-needed support was mostly left for lecturers to give during the workshops. This can and often does put a great load on lecturers who are already working under pressure from the educational institution’s work requirements. Lecturers were required to develop the curriculum, complete the numerous reporting requirements, attend various meetings, do research, travel to remote communities all over Australia and be responsible for the academic and personal welfare of all their students. This was on top of teaching several different linguistics units to classes consisting of people from several different language groups with varying degrees of literacy and oral English skills. This was problematic for staff and reflected in the relationships that staff developed with students.

Also, because the number of students at the start were quite high, in your classroom you could have thirty students at a time and dealing with nineteen different languages and 25 different literacy levels, which is very difficult for the lecturer… And that’s the thing, Jo, the management here would never understand our work here … Because they look at us as another training package which is prepared and delivered. You give the package to them, work hours and you finish, but this is completely different. You got so many different language groups 32 subjects to deal with. So, it is quite difficult. (15IT3)
In summary, tutorial and lecturer support during the course, both on campus and in the students’ home community, is a major concern to both lecturers and students as it is very important for the successful completion of a higher education course. This was less of a concern for SIL and SAL students due to the method of delivery and the relationships built up between SIL and SAL lecturers and their students. Students enrolled in any of the other participating institutions often felt that they needed much more support than they received to understand assignments and difficult concepts. Tutorial support was lacking, mainly due to a difficult policy and the unavailability of tutors, particularly in remote areas.

Lecturers struggled to find the time, and sometimes the patience, to provide the extra support students required. It was also difficult at times for lecturers to know that students needed extra support as the students often did not ask for it. Some students felt that if more tutorial and lecturer support had been available they could have kept going with the course, but without such support, they often felt confused and intimidated so they did not complete assignments often leading them to drop out of the course.

6.6. Non-academic Support

In addition to the academic support and pastoral care students required whilst undertaking formal study, Indigenous adults also needed the support of their families, community and workplace to complete formal training. Family support, from my experience, was one of the major issues students faced, as most of the students were parents, or carers, they needed childcare. Some educational institutions offered childcare but only for children up to the age of six years. Any children over the age of six accompanying their carer to a workshop were required to attend school. This was problematic, as it was often difficult to place children in schools for a week or two and often children did not want to go into childcare or school, which left the carers looking after the child rather than attending class. In addition, there was a fee for childcare and many people did not have the funds to pay for it. Carers also had to pay the costs of travel for the children from their home community to the education institution. This was expensive as most students had to fly from remote communities, often on privately chartered planes. In cases where students could not access childcare support from their families, they could not attend workshops, thereby
extending the time they needed to complete the course or they just drop out of the course.

Students not only needed family support to look after children but also so they could take time out to study and complete assignments at home. One participant discussed the fact that she enrolled in the same course several times but was never able to complete it because of her family and financial responsibilities. In the end she dropped out of the course.

*Have you finished the course?*

No … Because, one, you have to support yourself, support your family… I always went to stage one and then flunked out.

*…flunked out or you chose to move out for other reasons?*

Move out for other reasons

*Why?*

Home … It was always to do with home. To tell you the truth, I didn’t get the support from home and so I had to go back and support the family because the family wasn’t supporting me … And a lot of tragic stuff. When one thing affects part of your family, it affects you.

(54IL5)

Students who were employed whilst undertaking their linguistics study sometimes could not get the amount of leave needed to attend workshops and complete home assignments. Support from their employers was vital to the successful completion of the course. Therefore, some educational institutions’ lecturers, employers of the students and the students spent time together at the beginning of the year, planning the student’s workload and leave time (known from personal knowledge and experience with CALL). Two participants who worked with one particular language centre believe that they were only able to continue formal training because they had full support from their employer. This also contributed to these ILRs being satisfied with their jobs, resulting in them working with the language centre for a long period of time.

Working here is more enjoyable because I am also studying at uni and [my manager] has been really supportive in that area too … Yeah, we worked that out. I do so much work with the language stuff and then
[my manager] gives me some time out to study so I can do my study stuff here as well .... (18IL3)

The need for more support from families, communities, Elders and outside agencies for students and ILRs is discussed in more detail in section 8.2. This is because participants discussed these issues in relation to the communities’ attitudes to studying and working on their traditional language, even though these issues do affect students’ coursework. So I have just outlined a few of the factors that affect peoples’ study and that can, and do, lead them to drop out of a course or not attend workshops, which increases the time taken to complete the course (as discussed in section 6.4).

6.7. What Graduates Do After Study

Participating graduates of this study were asked if they use or have used their linguistic skills to document or maintain their traditional language since finishing their formal linguistics training. Thirty-nine of the 61 Indigenous participants had completed some formal linguistics training and 22 of these were employed as ILRs at the time of interview (see Table 4.6). Of these 22, twelve worked as literacy production workers in local schools producing vernacular literacy materials and eight of these ILRs taught vernacular literacy to primary school children. Four of these ILRs taught linguistics to multilingual classes at one of the participating education institutions (two of these have since left their jobs and no longer work in the languages and linguistics field). One ILR, employed through CDEP, was working for an urban language centre but based in her remote home community developing vernacular language materials, which she also taught in her local school. Five ILRs were working in an urban language centre and it was only these last five who were working directly on language documentation and maintenance projects outside of a school setting.

Whilst there are some employment opportunities in language centres and in local schools, there are few opportunities for employment for graduates of a linguistics course, particularly in remote areas. Participants argue that the lack of employment opportunities significantly affects the amount of documentation and maintenance of Australia’s traditional languages, and it is also a contributing factor as to why
graduates do not complete formal training. Participants believe that if there were career opportunities or jobs available for those wanting to work in the field then more trained ILRs would work on the language activities that could maintain or document their traditional language.

I think time, opportunities, and jobs that are there at that point in time. Like if people could have …. something at the end of that [study], a job or something, then I think they would have pursued further … A great support needs to be given by the council and the community for students who are studying and when they have completed their studies, make sure there is a career pathway for the students. Creating positions for these students to work, employed, but work so the work continues. But it has not been done. It needs to be put in place … if the council says our goal is to have two people involved in just recording oral histories, recording songs and all that and have a plan or have someone sort of employed just to do that, then something would come out of it. People would see the importance of it (language work). If it’s not being done at grassroots level then it’s wasting away.

(04IL/T1)

Some graduates find employment in areas other than language work. In remote areas this is usually with the local council or the community school working on CDEP projects. All participants I spoke to about this were very disappointed about not working on traditional language projects as they felt that documenting and maintaining language was an urgent and important task. However, they just could not do it without the necessary employment or support, as explored in more depth in Chapter 8.

… unfortunately a lot of them [graduates] don’t get involved in language activities when they finish their course and go back to their communities. Well, two things happen. Some end up getting jobs that are not related to language work, either in public service or in teaching and so on. And a lot of them, well, those who don’t get jobs just go home and work on CDEP and don’t do language work. I guess the reason because there is no encouragement in the community to do language work. The council certainly are not encouraging it, although
they talk about it, they talk about things, they don’t actually identify the skills of those people and put things in place to work on language projects. (63IL/T6)

Since coming from doing those courses, doing that linguistic course, well I haven’t really been putting those skills to use here [in his remote home community]... When I come back from doing that course I just come back and started welding, I just come back to my old job.

*Was there a reason why you didn’t use your linguistic skills?*
There really wasn’t anything that’s happening here … (03IL1)

Employers argued that ILRs who do work in the field of linguistics do not stay in the job for long due to family and cultural reasons. Two employers argued that the jobs need to cater more to Indigenous peoples’ lifestyles as people need to take time off to meet family and cultural commitments.

The other one is the peoples’ personal lives and I think if people are really going to apply their skills there needs to be employment patterns that are more attuned to the reality of their lives. I’m not saying it is good that they don’t turn up for their work but in many cases it is inevitable and if you say I’m not going to employ somebody who doesn’t come to work regularly every day on this basis then basically you are saying you are not going to employ Aboriginal people, out bush anyway, and even in town. That is just the reality. There are rare exceptions but they are pretty rare and even then somebody like [Mary] who is quite exceptional in her application, in the end, if you actually watched her over the decade, she had years out because things happened in her family or whatever. So, I think that is another strong factor. (51NL/T5)

One urban-based employer argued that tensions in the workplace are another reason why ILRs do not work, or continue to work in the field. Participants also argued that many people do not work as ILRs because they feel unsupported when doing so. Rather than asking for support or wanting to solve the problems ILRs generally leave
the workplace under the pretence that they are sick. This was not only common in the workplace but was a common reason for not continuing to study, as discussed in section 6.4.

I worked with many Aboriginal people, and people leave, and the typical reason people give for leaving is that they are sick. But, I learnt over the years to not take that at face value and I think it was amazing how often that I could track down that it was something like, well, basically tensions in the work place, like arguments or feelings that things weren’t right. They weren’t always in the workplace but quite often they were things in the workplace and people would give this excuse of “I’m feeling ill I’m going to stop”, but really what they were saying was “I can’t work here anymore, something has happened and I don’t feel comfortable any more”. And, I think that’s partly to do with kind of support. I think work, at least in these circumstances needs to be seen very strongly as being a social environment. Like it’s not just 9-5 or whatever it is there is a lot more to it. I think people feeling unsupported is often the reason, and feeling unsupported can just be that they need… a lot of support and feeling they’re not getting it and feeling sidelined. Because, that is often to do with lack of support and they’re not performing and they know that they are not performing and they’re not happy with what they are doing.

(51NL/T5)

Another factor for ILRs that leave their employment is that their skills are not used appropriately. Employers can easily under or overestimate an ILR’s skills. An employer may assume an ILR has certain skills and therefore may assign them tasks they have not been trained to do, which leaves the ILR feeling overwhelmed and too embarrassed to ask for assistance so they leave the workplace. Similarly, an employer may assume ILRs do not have certain skills so may not assign them tasks they are capable of doing, thereby under-estimating their skill; as a result the employee becomes uninterested in the work and leaves the job.

… I think that is very often the case that is the reason. Overestimating peoples’ skills. But then, you’ve got to be very careful that you don’t underestimate them either. And sometimes people have skills you
don’t realise they have and or not utilising them or if you’re doing things for them that you actually don’t need them to do for them … you need to be very attuned to what is going on … So I think that is quite an important factor. The kind of dynamics of the workplace and the interpersonal relationships there. For better or for worse that is incredibly important especially for bush Aboriginal people. (51NL/T5)

Such an issue is difficult for both the employer and the ILR as both genuinely believe that, because they have a certain certificate or a Diploma, they have specific skills. This is not an unrealistic belief, as all Diploma or Advanced Diploma courses across Australia are supposed to meet certain minimum criteria (see section 6.1). People who have completed a Diploma in linguistics, regardless of where they completed the course, should have the same minimum skills. However, when the standard of courses is lowered, or ‘dumbed down’, to match the literacy levels of the students (as discussed in section 6.1) both employers and graduates are being set up to fail. Linguistics organisations who employ ILRs and know the content of the training courses, or have previously employed graduates from those courses, are aware of the realities of people’s skills; these employees either adapt the work requirements for the ILR or do not employ people from those courses.

At the moment we’ve not employed anybody that has come out of that course. So, there is obviously something missing. Not one of the people have finished the course then been employed here. (19NL3)

It does appear that many graduates do not develop careers in linguistics. However, that is not to say that they do not play a vital role in other workplaces within their community. Linguistics is a difficult scientific discipline that requires knowledge and skills in many areas, including community liaison, organisation and research, and these skills are generally transferable (AIATSIS and FATSIL, 2005: 90) from one workplace to another and all can be built on for personal or work purposes. Some graduates were employed in different areas of their community utilising the skills developed whilst undertaking linguistics training. For example, participant 36IL3, at time of interview, was employed by her local community council to develop and
manage community development projects, as well as to manage a community-housing programme. Some interviewees cited other examples.

Some of [our people] went back to do different things at different times. One student went back to have a successful business. Another went on and worked at a university. (89NL/T6)

Some are classroom teachers, including some degree of two-way literacy training. Some do casual work drawing on their skills, for example casual translation work, documenting art works, or assisting research linguists… Some have died, before they were old. There is not much paid work calling for writing in an Australian language. (40NL5)

Participants in this study discussed various social circumstances that prevented them from working as an ILR or doing any language work (as is evidence by quotations provided throughout this thesis and the following). Such circumstances included family commitments, unemployment, busy private lives, a high rate of mobility, low literacy levels, alcoholism, violence, poverty, poor health and death. They are all factors that severely affect or prevent an ILR from working on language projects or continuing with study.

… disrupted lives: people moving, trouble in relationships, fights, a heap of reasons … (51NL/T5)

Many participants were asked if they or anyone they knew had finished a linguistics course and gone back to their home community and worked on language activities that documented or maintained their traditional language. Whilst there is evidence of some people doing it, the most common response was a straight out ‘no’. This is a good measure (see discussion on external evaluation in sections 2.3 and 3.6) as to the effectiveness of linguistics training across northern Australia for over thirty years.

... have you done any language maintenance on your language?
No. (13IL/E3)

Has anyone gone back to document or maintain [your language]?
No one. (04IL1)
Do you think many people go on to actually working as linguist in their community?

Yeah, some people do. Like [Kate] … Yeah some people do get into language and some people [say] ‘Nah. I did it and what’s the use’, you know

What do you mean ‘what’s the use’?

Oh, you know, some people are very shy, they do the course and just leave the thing there, and you get people who really want to do language and they’re out there. I wouldn’t mind being out there with all these other people but here … it’s like a family thing, and it’s hard. You try to get in there and they probably think ‘who do you think you are’, you know.

So part of it is being accepted by the community?

Yeah … (09IL2)

Nobody, apart from [Daryl], nobody has done any work. Some work has been done, some attempts have been made to work on [my language] but no one had devoted or committed their time to work on it … Communities have to have goals and priorities put in place, what it is that they want for their community. So, I’m sure it is possible that this can be done. (04IE1)

Deaths and the poor health of ILRs are major factors preventing ILRs from working on language projects. Since completing the fieldwork for this research I know that two of the most highly trained and experienced ILRs (who were also participants in this project) no longer work in the field of languages or linguistics; five participants, all ILRs, have died and at least three more have become too ill to work. In addition, one Indigenous person who had undertaken a Diploma and had worked with her local language centre now chooses not to work as an ILR or do any further study due to her heavy drinking, which, she states, makes her unreliable and unfocused. This is a real shame as she had very good language skills; this was reinforced by the local language centre staff who said she was an excellent language worker. This was not an isolated case but this person had the courage to discuss it. The rate of death and
illness of ILRs, whether formally trained or trained on-the-job, is very high. The death rates for Indigenous Australians aged 35 to 54 years, the average age of Indigenous ILRs and linguistics students, are five times more than those recorded for non-Indigenous Australians (Trewin & Madden, 2002: 177). This is an issue in itself because it significantly decreases the already low number of people across northern Australia who have the linguistic skills to do language work and it significantly limits the amount of language documentation and maintenance that is done across northern Australia.

6.8. Personal Outcomes

Participants in this study discussed some of the skills they felt were the best they learned during the course. Some of the skills they had learned, such as research and computer skills, are transferable to jobs other than those related to language work.

It gave me skills to do other things too ... Just like the researching skills and on the computer, just doing things like that. And even though I haven’t been on the computer here [at the language centre] but still it’s good to know something like that. Yeah, just skills like that. Using the library, yeah, computer, whatever. That part of the course is good. ... so if you want to research something else you know how to go about doing it. So that’s good. (05IL1)

The most striking personal outcome was the deep personal benefits participants gained from the courses. For some participants the courses provided them with knowledge of their language and heritage for the first time, which gave them a great sense of identity, pride and recognition of who they were.

The best thing was to learn how to write in your own language. Learns you more about how to break the language, and how to pronounce it and write it. And so when you say it, it just comes out of your mouth but when you say it and write it at the same time you have to think and really listen and think of what you say. (16IL2)

I found it very helpful, it made me feel like I was important in a way, because someone was recognising there was something else to me than just my white part of me... Yeah. So, that was the first time I ever
felt that. That’s what I felt, that part of me was being brought out of me that was suppressed, I suppose ... I learnt more about my mob, like Aboriginal people being more important with their work. And they had work, and they had structure, and they had law, but it got diminished, you know. I learnt this and it made me more aware of who I was... It took twenty years for me to find out who I was. (54IL5)

I done this language thing for my own personal use ... I didn’t know much of my own language that’s why I done that course. It is more of a personal thing rather than a job. It was just for my own personal benefit. (45IL5)

Well it just helped me research my own background sort of thing. Helped me research my own background and find out for myself about my own language. So, I really done it for myself, really ... I ended up learning more stuff by going there, like helping me come and find out more about the language and the culture here. Like, the course made me come back here and sit down here and ask Elders some questions and try to do something, I don’t know. Yeah that was probably the best thing about it... Yeah that would be the best part about that course. Like some of the things I wouldn’t have known if I hadn’t done the course. (03IL1)

Regardless of whether graduates work as ILRs or use the skills that they gained while undertaking a linguistics course, they all learned life long valuable skills. It was heartening to see the pride and emotion in some participants when they discussed how valuable the courses had been to them personally. Participants reinforced Crystal’s (2000:31) argument that languages are valuable because they do foster pride in a culture, and provide individuals and communities with self-confidence (as discussed in section 2.1.5).
6.9. Discussion

Literacy is a fundamental issue for educators, language centres and Indigenous adult students, particularly for students from remote Indigenous communities. Lecturers and students themselves have quite openly discussed the low literacy levels of students when undertaking linguistics study or working as ILRs. As there have “been no thorough surveys of adult literacy” (Kral & Schwab, 2003: 1; Kral & Ellis, in press) across northern Australia, educators do not have precise knowledge of Indigenous adults’ levels of literacy, or the reasons why literacy appears to be low. In addition, there are few surveys or reports that address the issue of literacy among Indigenous primary school children that can help guide educators. One report though, ‘Learning Lessons’ (Northern Territory Education Department, 1999: 17), commonly referred to as the ‘Collins Report’, found that:

eleven to sixteen-year-old students in remote Indigenous schools were averaging around year 2–3 [literacy] levels. The stark reality is that many Indigenous students are leaving the school system with the English literacy and numeracy ability of a six to seven-year-old mainstream child.

Western education is relatively new in some remote Indigenous communities. In the Sandover River region of Central Australia, for example, children did not have access to schools until the mid to late 1980s (Kral & Schwab, 2003: 7; Kral & Ellis, in press). In my experience teaching at Batchelor Institute, students were generally in their 30s, 40s or older, so many had just primary schooling or little to no access to education during their childhood, particularly those from Central Australia. Literacy levels would thus be below the Australian national education benchmarks for many remote Indigenous adults.

Some of the participating education institutions have developed literacy and numeracy bridging courses. These courses are specifically designed for Indigenous adults to undertake prior to enrolling in their desired course so that they have the necessary literacy skills to cope with the course requirements (section 6.1). However, to receive appropriate funding to employ staff and deliver these courses, linguistics departments are required to recruit a specific number of students. Failing to meet this
target could result in the loss of teaching staff or even the closure of the course. This puts the lecturers in a dilemma as they do not want to lose their job but they also want what is best for the student. Too often, the lecturers will recruit students who have lower than required literacy skills into the course as they believe they can help them successfully through the course, even though it increases their workload and makes their jobs harder.

Another issue raised during this research, and often discussed at Batchelor Institute, when I worked there, was setting students up to fail. As a result of the low literacy levels, NILRs and participants of this research project were concerned that the students had been set up to fail as the courses had to be delivered at a standard lower than required, or ‘dumbed down’ (12IL/T3). These courses are supposed to be at levels equivalent to those in mainstream institutions; that is, a graduate from an advanced Diploma at Batchelor should have the same basic linguistic skills and knowledge, including terminology, written and computer literacy, as graduates from a mainstream institution (Ministerial Council on Education, 1995). Unfortunately, they do not. ‘Dumbing down’ a course leaves a graduate believing they have the same linguistic skills as someone who graduated from a mainstream course and that they can therefore do the same work in any work place. Similarly, employers believe these graduates have equivalent skills as someone from a mainstream institution, but after employment they find the employee does not have those skills. This sets the graduates and employers up to fail, because the students do not have the required literacy or linguistic skills to do the job, and the employer because they cannot achieve their linguistic goals without providing extra support to the graduate. The educational institutions are also setting themselves up to fail because eventually employers may decide not to employ any graduates of their institution, as discussed in the next chapter.

Compounding the problem of the low literacy levels of students, lecturers often use technical terms or language that is foreign to their students in the classroom and “[a] consequence may be that many technical words become for students mere jargon, and as such represent an obstacle to the developing understanding” (Mercer, 1999). Such foreign language includes English metaphors and idioms, which often seem to be an easy way for a lecturer to get their points across; however, students simply do
not understand these sayings as English is generally their second, third or fourth
language. When teaching linguistics it is difficult for a lecturer to avoid using
linguistic terms, and linguistics students do need to become familiar with such terms
(Caffery, 2002); this is thus one area where a tutor could be of great benefit to
students.

Students often have little tutorial or lecturer support to help them with understanding
such concepts. Lecturers are generally over-worked and do not have the time, and
sometimes the patience, to act as tutors to go over assessments on a one-on-one
basis. Many remote Indigenous adults require a great deal of literacy support to
complete even the simplest task in a linguistics course but the linguistics courses
specifically designed for these people do not have literacy components. Providing
extra support in the classroom reduces the amount of time lecturers have to teach the
required linguistic skills to others in the class who do have the appropriate literacy
skills. Students not only need support when they are on campus at workshops but
they also need support in their home communities. However, with policy restrictions
and difficult or arduous paperwork, tutors are difficult to find, particularly in remote
Indigenous communities (as discussed in section 6.5).

Many students take twice as much time to complete a linguistics course than required
by the curriculum (section 6.4). This is mainly due to the low literacy skills of
students and the lack of academic support available to them.

It is possible that if students were directed to literacy bridging courses prior to
starting a linguistics course then the standard of the linguistics course would not have
to be lowered. There would also be less pressure on lecturers in workshops to teach
literacy skills and less need for tutors in this area. It seems this cannot be done unless
the funding ratios are adjusted to allow for low numbers of students in a course
without reducing the number of lecturers. If the student/staff ratio model of funding
was changed to allow this to happen then more students could be expected to
graduate with skills equal to people who graduate from an equivalent course in a
mainstream university. It might also mean that students would not take as long to
complete the courses, thereby allowing more people, with higher linguistic skills to
enter the workforce. This in turn would eventually reduce the costs of delivering the
courses. In addition, it is likely that more workplaces would employ graduates of these courses and more graduates would stay in the workplace. This would benefit language conservation outcomes in the long run, as well as improving Indigenous employment opportunities.

Some students and ILRs argued that they could not work as an ILR using their linguistics skills if they did not have the support of their family and their community (section 6.6). ILRs argued that they need the support of Elders who are fluent speakers of their language and councils for funding the programmes. Without such support, programmes rarely get off the ground and it is even rarer for programmes to be successful; this is discussed in more detail in Chapter 8.

There are many hurdles students have to jump over to complete their studies and to work in the field. These hurdles include family and community support, various social issues and the lack of employment opportunities, particularly in remote areas. As a result, many graduates do not work as ILRs when they complete their formal training although the skills they learned during their training proved beneficial in other workplaces (section 6.7). Also, most graduates gained great personal and life long benefits from their linguistics course, including learning about their heritage and gaining a sense of identity (section 6.8), which, the literature argues (see section 2.1.5) is what whole communities can gain by keeping Indigenous languages strong. Despite these benefits, this chapter shows that little of the formal training is meeting its primary goal of contributing to language documentation and maintenance.
CHAPTER 7. WORK ENVIRONMENT FACTORS
Indigenous language researchers work in a variety of different environments across northern Australia. Work environments differ within States/Territories and within regions (section 7.1). Therefore, ILRs require different skills according to their particular region and their particular work environment. The skills that ILRs require for each particular workplace vary depending on their community’s needs, desires, the available human and physical resources and the available support. These issues and the gaps between the skills taught in formal training programmes and what is required in the field are discussed in section 7.2. The effects of these issues are discussed in section 7.3.

The evidence for this Chapter is based on data from interviews coupled with personal observations whilst undertaking fieldwork in the communities.

7.1. Work Environments and Types of Training Undertaken

Across northern Australia each ILR works in a different environment. The types of linguistics training they undertake also differ according to their work environment. ILRs were trained either on the job (see section 4.2) or through an accredited training course (section 4.1). Some of those who were employed as ILRs received a mixture of both types of training. As the work environments differed so did the skills required of ILRs.

In Queensland, most language work is done by interested individuals and usually through their own initiative. There are no language centres or other language environments where ILRs can be employed or receive on-the-job training or support. ILRs in the Queensland regions generally undertake formal linguistics training. These ILRs usually work independently or in small groups, are generally self-supporting, self-funding and require their own resources. They are required to take full responsibility for a project, including applying for funding to pay for informants and to buy the necessary equipment. They require the skills to know what equipment they need and how to use it: for example, digital recorders, computers, printers and transcription software. They need to manage funds, people and the project’s day-to-day operations. They need to do the necessary negotiations with their community on
the language work required and desired by the community. They need to do the data collection and analysis themselves as well as write up the project for community use. ILRs in Queensland generally need as many individual linguistic and administrative skills as possible since they work away from language centres where the necessary skills, support and equipment are generally available. However, these ILRs are not taught many of these required skills (discussed further in section 7.2.1) resulting in few language programmes in this region.

In the Western Australian regions, most language work is done through a language centre, ILRs are part of a team and different people in that team have different but complementary skills. ILRs have a specific role to play in a language project requiring specific skills. For example, an ILR working with a Pilbara language centre needs the skills to do fieldwork, to collect data, and to some extent analyse their data and insert it into a specific computer programme, such as Shoebox. Many of the ILRs interviewed in this region had undertaken both formal and on-the-job training and had been strongly encouraged to do both.

In the Kimberley region, the types of training differed in each community or regional town but the only employment available for an ILR was within a language centre. In one particular Kimberley language centre, the ILRs require the skills to assist a remote community in doing a language project. That is, they needed to be able to guide the community through the process, rather than do the data collection and analysis themselves. An ILR in this language centre required basic linguistic skills but also required good project management skills. Participating ILRs in this language centre only did on-the-job training. This was not because the language centre was against formal training but because the few people in this region who had undertaken formal training were unavailable for employment.

Another language centre in this region required ILRs to work on linguistics projects independently, but under the direct supervision of the language centre’s NILR. Each ILR in this language centre worked on different projects requiring each ILR to have different skills. One ILR generally collected language data from Elders while another collected similar data but mainly prepared vernacular language lessons and taught oral language skills to local schoolchildren.
Language centres across Western Australia employ the majority of their ILRs through CDEP funding (as discussed in section 5.2) rather than through their own funding due to financial constraints (see section 8.3). ILRs in these regions are generally assigned language-specific linguistic tasks and are generally very well supported in all aspects of their linguistics work by NILRs and other staff within the workplace.

In the Northern Territory the work and training environments of ILRs differed from region to region and community to community. Many of the participating ILRs in the Top End of the Northern Territory were employed by their local community primary school. ILRs who worked in a community school usually developed vernacular teaching materials and often taught vernacular literacy to primary school children. The classroom teaching and assessments of vernacular literacy programmes would normally be done by trained teachers. However, this is not the case in many Northern Territory Indigenous schools. Usually it is the ILR, not the schoolteacher, who knows the language, so it is usually they who are expected to develop the vernacular literacy course and teach the programme to the schoolchildren. ILRs who teach in the classroom also assess students’ language skills according to the Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training benchmarks. School-based ILRs were usually trained on-the-job as literacy workers but many had undertaken some short formal training with SAL some 25 years earlier.

The role of ILRs in participating language centres in the Northern Territory also differed. Some ILRs provided oral or written information for children’s storybooks or oral histories. Some went out to remote communities to record histories. Others developed vernacular literacy courses for their local school and taught the courses to the school’s children. In contrast with other areas of the Northern Territory, these ILRs were not expected to assess the children. ILRs in these language centres were usually trained on-the-job but a few did have prior formal training.

Other participating ILRs in the Northern Territory worked with NILRs on independent projects. These ILRs provided specific information on a language they knew well for a specific project. They were not involved in any of the administrative or analytical aspects of the project. ILRs working on these types of projects were
generally trained on-the-job and were paid through the project. Other ILRs worked in Bible study teams to translate the Bible into their traditional language. Many of these ILRs undertook training with SIL and few were paid to work on the project. In two particular communities, ILRs who were working on Bible translation projects had been doing so for over ten years without pay, usually working in the evenings or weekends, and thoroughly enjoyed doing so.

All but one of the language centres involved in this study employed NILRs. Usually, the NILRs do the on-the-job training and organising of the formal training for ILRs where necessary. I found only one language centre that did not employ NILRs and it does not encourage ILRs to attend formal training. The coordinator of this centre argues that ILRs learn more linguistic skills from the Elders in the communities and that any skills that the Elders cannot teach them are taught in-house by visiting linguists and area specialists. Some specialists are brought in from time to time to teach specific skills but currently, they argue, educational institutions do not meet their specific needs.

... the old people that own the language, they’re kind of more your better teachers. We encourage that. Even if [ILRs] are just sitting around or doing fieldtrips, the more they talk the language, the more they communicate, the better skills they’ve got ... [we do] bring in specialised people, like we’ve got our recorders and our video person who taught most of my mob ... To be honest I think they (ILRs) learn a lot more when the linguists come to visit and see how they do it ... Everything’s done in house, like a lot of the training. We bring in specialised trainers a lot. But that’s, um, it may change when we start to get the universities and that to adapt classes towards what we need. Like, it may be a certificate course but they’ll [ILRs] do bits and pieces of the certificate. They don’t need all of the certificate, they only need bits and pieces of it. (44I05)

ILRs that have the opportunity to undertake both on the job training and formal training argue that these two methods complement each other but on-the-job training builds on the skills taught during formal training and provides them with the
necessary skills to work within their particular environment. As two informants who work in a language centre stated:

I picked up more skills here at [the language centre] even though I did stuff at [college]. During the course, it was just basically showing me how to put it on computer and writing it and reading. It was just mainly reading, writing and sounds and when I came here [to the language centre] I learned more, like how to put it, using modern technology, how to put it on tape using Dictaphones and all that. So, I learnt more here, it’s more hands on… (18IL3)

... I learned more different things when I’m working here and whereas when I’m at college I just stick to that one little thing… It’s basically the same, it just tells you how to write verbs and nouns and action words in language... Whereas here, at [the language centre], I do a bit of everything here … (16IL3)

All participating ILRs who were employed with a language centre, with the exception of some of those who work in the language centre in the Central Australian region (which does not encourage formal training), argue that they want more formal training. In addition, they want that training in the workplace with an education institution brought in to their work place to give intensive lessons on a regular basis. They also want these lessons to be relevant to their specific needs. ILRs interviewed in this research project stated that both formal and on-the-job training was the best way of learning, as long as the training “can be flexible” (45IL5). Such flexible training, or targeted training, can accommodate the specific requirements within a specific workplace (see section 7.2.1 for a discussion of the gaps in formal training).

ILRs who work in the field with NILRs on a specific project are generally trained on-the-job for that project, such as developing vernacular dictionaries, grammars or Bible translation. ILRs working on such projects generally learned the necessary skills to complete that project. They were usually trained by the project’s NILR. Such training has proved quite successful when targeted to a specific project because the ILRs gain a deeper linguistic understanding of their language.
Those who worked closely on Bible translation (and related work) became, I think, the best trained of any in language work, specifically, but not only, translation work, particularly in being able to discuss meaning. I don't think this resulted from formal or classroom training. (40NL5)

Four of the NILR participants argued that ILRs who graduated from the SAL or SIL course, or have trained with NILRs in the field, have a deeper linguistic understanding of their languages.

        Early SAL courses seemed to get students further into linguistics ...
        (40NL5)

Whereas, those who finished one of the other formal courses, and many of those trained through a language centre, can often read texts in their language but could not understand them properly. Participants argued that these ILRs do not have an understanding of the sentence structure and the deeper meaning of the text. The following quotes show that, frequently, ILRs could read the words in their language and translate them, but when they had to read and translate a whole text they could not understand the underlying meaning of the texts.

        ...she was initially afraid to read the Bible herself. What she said was that, as time progressed and she understood the text, she was eventually willing to read it. As the discussion developed it become plain that the exact meaning of her own words was not that she hadn’t understood them initially but simply that she’d not understood their implications. This was verified when I called on the example of the disciples stating within the gospels that they had not understood what Jesus meant, although they had known plainly what he said. That she agreed was exactly what had happened to her. (82NL6)

If you ask why do people not use their training and also why do they drop out, I think lack of literacy is really really important. It’s not that they don’t have basic literacy ... [Kate] ... had trouble, not with the words or the task, but with the structure of the sentence. Superficially, you wouldn’t think she would have that much trouble but she did ...
highlights how much a lack of a really deep literacy affected people to perform in the sorts of tasks you were asking about... (51NL/T5)

Participants believed that such issues were a result of low literacy skills, which was a problem regardless of the type of training an individual ILR undertook (see section 6.1 for a more detailed discussion on ILRs literacy skills).

In summary, this study found that ILRs work in different environments across northern Australia; each work environment is different and each workplace requires ILRs to perform different duties. Some work in language centres, some in community schools and some on independent one-off linguistic projects. This study also found that ILRs undertake different types of linguistics training depending on their work environment. In some areas, Queensland for example, ILRs generally only undertake formal training. ILRs in Queensland do not have the support of language centres or any other linguistics organisation where they can receive employment or on-the-job training. In contrast, in Western Australia ILRs usually only work in language centres and most are encouraged to undertake formal training. ILRs in some language centres have the opportunity to receive both formal and on-the-job training. In other language centres, ILRs can only undertake formal or on-the-job training. In the Northern Territory, many ILRs work in local schools or language centres and develop vernacular literacy materials. Many of these ILRs are also required to teach the courses to primary school children. The different work environments have different needs and generally do different types of linguistic activities requiring ILRs to have different skills. The skills required varied according to the ILRs workplace, duties required and support available.

At the time the participants were interviewed it was evident that their linguistics training at various institutions had not given them all the skills they needed to work in their particular region or workplace (section 7.2). Some ILRs, particularly those who have the support of a language centre, can learn some of the required skills on-the-job but others cannot, and therefore they cannot meet the needs of the job. This in turn leaves them feeling inadequate and in some cases causes them to stop working as an ILR, as will become evident through the next section.
7.2. Skills Required For The Workplace

As workplaces differ among the various environments across northern Australia so do the skills required of ILRs. Each region requires ILRs to have skills specific to their region and workplace. The skills required depend on the region’s resources, human, physical and community support and attitudes. Each graduate of a formal linguistics course receives the basic linguistic and analytical skills required for linguistic documentation and language maintenance programmes at various levels. However, few graduates learn the essential skills required for their specific region through any of the formal courses available. Batchelor Institute and Pilbara TAFE offer just one higher education linguistics course each and these courses do not, and cannot, meet the diverse needs of ILRs across northern Australia.

When people complete formal linguistics courses they expect to have the skills to go back to their community to do the necessary and urgent language work needed. However, due to the different work environments, ILRs who only study with an education institution do not necessarily have the specific skills required to do linguistics work in their community. As discussed in section 7.1, some ILRs work on Bible translation projects, others work with NILRs developing dictionaries and others develop vernacular teaching materials for their local school. Some ILRs also teach vernacular literacy and oral language skills to schoolchildren. Others teach linguistics to Indigenous adults in higher educational institutions and others provide oral histories for documentation purposes. Each of these roles require different skills. Participants are not taught all of these skills in formal training. Many of these skills can only be taught through on-the-job training. When participants were asked if they thought there were any skills that they, or ILRs, should have been taught whilst undertaking formal linguistics training, there was a large range of responses on everything from academic to personal skills, as is explored in this section.

Participants across northern Australia argued that the skills needed by ILRs differed depending on the role of the ILR, the skills of others available to support that ILR, and the region they were in. One participant argued that ILRs in her region needed additional skills to meet the developing needs of their communities. She argued that language work in their region is no longer just about collecting language data before
it died out, even though that is vital. She argued that it is now also about producing materials wanted or needed by the community.

Also, the expectation of the community of what we’re creating with their language is different. Fifteen years ago it was just recording the languages. Now it’s record our languages, put them in to a dictionary, want a morphology, make a couple of books and help us develop a LOTE programme for the school … (19NL3)

Participants argued that the specific skills required by ILRs varied from region to region and within regions, but there were also some universal needs. Table 7.1 shows the main skills, in addition to the linguistic skills, that more than one participant in the region stated that ILRs required. Skills identified in only a subset of regions are discussed in section 7.2.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required Skills</th>
<th>Torres Strait</th>
<th>Main QLD</th>
<th>Pilbara</th>
<th>Kimbe rley</th>
<th>C.A</th>
<th>Top End</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Funding application</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.1: Additional skills required by region, as recommended by participants.

Participants argued that ILRs need better literacy, computer and teaching skills in all regions (section 7.2.2). It is interesting to note that participants throughout Queensland argued that ILRs needed more skills in all of the areas identified in Table 7.1; this is also the region that has the least linguistic support from NILRs and linguistics organisations.

7.2.1. Skills Required in Specific Regions

Participants in the Torres Strait argued that ILRs in their region needed the skills to work independently so they could develop and manage language projects from the beginning to the end. Such management includes applying for funding and managing any successful funding. It also requires ILRs to have negotiation skills so they can
negotiate with their community about the sorts of language projects needed, and why they need that particular project rather than another. They also need to be able to advise and negotiate these needs with Elders, council and other community members. Therefore, ILRs in the Torres Strait require negotiation, management and financial skills on top of the linguistic, literacy and computer skills needed to document or maintain their traditional language.

... we have to make sure they know how to work independently ... how to look for funding, get funding, and then how to set up projects independently, you know, to set up their own projects. And be able to find out what areas they need to have projects on, like language maintenance projects. You know, identify what is going on in their community like language loss and so on. So they’re able to set programmes up. So, these are the sorts of things they need to know.

*And they are the sorts of things ... they need to learn during their training?*

Yeah, during their training. (63IL/T5)

Skills to apply for funding were not only a concern for ILRs in the Torres Strait but in other areas that are not supported by language centres or other linguistics supports. Participants in these areas argued that ILRs should be taught the skills to know how to write funding applications and the administrative skills to manage any successful applications during their formal training.

*Were there any other skills you thought you could have learned [at college] to help you with your job here?*

I think more administration. How to get grants. How to write yourself ... Yeah, that would have been helpful. Writing for funds and who to write to. That would have been helpful. (45IL5)

Skills like negotiating with people and how to get funding and so on. How to apply for the funding, where the fundings are, you know, where you can get funding from. Ah, these are things they need to know. (63IL/T6)
Participants, particularly in Queensland and Western Australia, argued that ILRs lacked the motivation and confidence that are vital for ILRs to succeed and that these skills should be taught during their linguistics course. ILRs in these regions work in isolated areas and usually work on language projects by themselves, even if they work for a language centre they may need to travel to remote areas without the support of a NILR and need these skills. They rarely have the linguistic support that language centres, or NILR, offer to ILRs. Participants argued that motivation and confidence should be taught during their formal linguistics training as they cannot learn how to be motivated or confident in their home community as there is nowhere for them to learn it.

... you need to know how to work on your own. You need confidence. You need to be motivated, you need to know how to be motivated, how to be confident. When you are on your own you haven’t got lecturers directing you to say this is what we will do next ... Why can’t it be a subject where the student. I thought all of this is happening when they do their research [project] ... You know when speaking in public, with council, you need to be able to stand up and be able to talk to them at a different level, not just someone from off the streets. Maybe the course could address that. Make a unit up giving people, maybe public speaking skills. (04IL/T1)

... they lack this drive to work independently. They finish here and they thought they still be guided by the [college], by the lecturers when they go home. They are not confident on leaving the institute. Even though they learn the skills they’re not confident enough to use them in the community. That’s what I found ... Yeah, I think it is the responsibility of the trainers as well. Whether you incorporate those things in the course or [the] Institute actually guide them in the communities. (63IL/T6)

... and also they need to be motivated because, you know ... particularly the people from the remote communities or from traditional communities coming here. Those skills they are learning the first time and their parents don’t have those skills for them to learn
from at home when growing up … The other skills they probably, you know, making sure they know how their language works and also be literate in their language. (63IL/T6)

However, one Elder calls the lack of motivation and drive of ILRs, Elders and other community members ‘the colonial mentality’. He argues that the colonial mentality has been with Indigenous people for generations and it still exists in some communities. He is concerned that people in communities sit back and wait for others to do the work for them rather that taking the initiative to do it themselves. He argues that the ‘spirit of independence’, people taking the initiative to do language work and to work independently, is no longer there because it has been taken over by the welfare mentality. Individuals want someone else to do the work, or be paid to do the work, instead of taking the responsibility themselves to do the work for the sake of documenting their language. He argues that this mentality needs to be reversed so people can be encouraged to work on their own, rather than rely on others to do the work for them. He believes this is one of the main reasons people do not work on language projects.

… there is still that colonial mentality [that] exist in the communities, in some communities, at least in [my community], where everybody looks for government for help. You know, there’s that spirit which existed in my grandfathers time and in my fathers time, spirit of independence and so on is no longer there, because that’s been all taken over by welfare mentality and so on, yeah. So that needs to be reversed, so people can be encouraged to work on their own rather than rely on others to help them along. I think that’s what’s lacking. That’s why people don’t want to get into language work. Yeah. (63IL/T6)

He argues that linguistics training alone will not change these attitudes, as they are to do with the attitudes of the communities, attitudes towards their language, and attitudes in terms of encouraging language work (community attitudes are explored further in section 8.2). Community councils often talk about setting up language programmes and applying for funding, but in many communities, this does not eventuate.
Oh it’s more than linguistic training. I think it’s also to do with the communities. The attitudes of the communities, attitude towards the language, attitude towards … encouraging it. For instance, the councils they talk about it but they don’t do anything about it. (63IL/T6)

Participants raised the need for continued support of lecturers for graduates when they finished their formal training several times. This was a sign that graduates did not have the confidence to use their linguistic skills when they completed their formal training (see 9.2 for solutions).

Yeah, but it’s good to have your lecturer around so you can ask them ‘Oh, am I doing it the right way’ or ‘what’s this word you can put in here’ because they know the words, the big words … Especially when you’re writing reports and stuff. Yeah, I like my lecturers around. (09IL2)

Participants in the Torres Strait region emphasised the need to have good negotiation skills. ILRs need to negotiate projects with funding bodies, community councils, Elders and other interested or relevant parties. Negotiation, confidence, motivation and literacy skills go hand in hand. ILRs in regions where there is no linguistic support, regardless of region, need all of these skills to be successful in their projects.

You also have people outside the community to negotiate with. So you have to be literate. You have to write … when you are talking about something you need to know how to write. If you are writing a letter to a funding body you have to know how address them and you have to know how to write the submission. You have to know how to speak with them, using different terminology … All of this you have to know. You have to deal with people outside the community. You have to be confident in that as well because you’re like the middle person between your community and the outside world. So, you have to have all these skills, you know, how you record, whether you are computer literate so you need to know all these things. You need to be confident and motivated. (04IL/T1)
In one Western Australian language centre, ILRs must be Elders of the community and fluent in their traditional language. These ILRs usually work on a specific language project that the centre has been funded to do, such as identifying traditional names for landmarks in the area. In addition, one of these ILRs also taught vernacular oral skills to children from local schools (see section 7.3 for further discussion on teaching skills required). The role of an ILR in another Western Australian language centre differed again and so did the skills needed to do the required work. ILRs in this language centre required the skills to support and guide community members with their language work to ensure that projects develop in the way the community wants to see them developed.

So they (ILRs) help to develop projects and support projects, language projects, so that they can develop, um, and their work is based in the community … They don’t initiate the project. The project is initiated by the project [sic]. Then they respond as a staff, and that’s their work that is to provide the support that’s needed to assist the language group in the community who might be the project team in the community … They support the people from that language community whose language it is and who’s identified the project, support those people to ensure that the project develops in the way they want to see it developed. And they as language speakers in their own right may be involved in projects within their own language community. So then they take up a different kind of role there. (27104)

The role of ILRs and NILRs in another Western Australian language centre is different in that ILRs work directly on linguistics projects, both in remote communities and within the centre, and each ILR works on a different language – usually their own traditional language. ILRs in this language centre do fieldwork collecting linguistic data. To do this they require advanced technological skills to use computers for communication purposes, usually e-mail, and use digital recorders and download the recordings on to a computer. They also need the skills to analyse the data using various linguistic analytical software packages and transcription programmes. Employers at this centre argue that both ILRs and NILRs now need more technological skills in their training and that the educational institutions that
deliver linguistics courses need to include such skills in the training. This language
centre relied heavily on the use of computers for all aspects of language work,
including compiling dictionaries, developing teaching materials and producing
various books on oral histories. They also use computer technology to communicate
with one another when out in the field. They argued that, with the changes in
technology and in their clientele’s expectations, language researchers need different
skills from other ILRs and what is taught in the educational institutions.

... what they were trained with fifteen years ago to what they are
expected to do now has changed ... Aside from the fact that
technology has changed and people need to be massively much more
computer literate than what they were fifteen years ago, the clientele
we work with has become much more sophisticated, so the way we
approach language work has changed. ... People in the communities
say about fifteen years ago, didn’t have television or telephone, only a
two-way radio, so there was a whole culture to do with keeping in
touch with a two way radio. Now people, even out in communities,
have got computers in their home, e-mails, and there is a whole
different culture and different way of using language. There is this
massive change that has happened in [our region]. I think the
language workers fifteen years ago were trained to sit down under a
tree, pencil and paper, working with people recording stories; now it’s
using digital recorders, transcribing it on to computers, interlinearise
the Shoebox and going back and checking. So, the whole way the
workers need to work has changed. (19NL3)

The need for good technological skills also applied to ILRs in all regions of northern
Australia, as discussed in section 7.2.2.

In summary, participants in regions where there are no linguistic supports required
additional skills in all of the areas discussed above - funding application, project
management and technological skills, as well as motivation, confidence and
negotiation skills to carry out the required language projects. It would be unusual for
anyone in any discipline to have all of the skills required to run an entire large
project successfully. No ILR in any other region is required to have all of the project
initiation and management skills to run a language project. ILRs, other than those in Queensland and some parts of the Northern Territory, usually have the support of a language centre or other organisation at least for project and funding management. ILRs in these unsupported areas urgently need support to run language documentation and maintenance projects.

7.2.2. Skills Required Across All Regions

Computer literacy and the constant need to build on computer skills was an issue raised by participants across northern Australia regardless of the ILR’s work place. However, these skills are not taught in any depth in any of the educational institutions.

I think I need to know more about computers. How to get work done on computers. Like using a database to do a dictionary. We need students to be more familiar with technology. That’s one of the things I would have liked more of. To store that information. And recording skills. I’m not very good at going out recording. How to go out and interview people and that sort of stuff.

So you didn’t do that [in your course]?

Yeah, we did a couple of workshops but not enough. Not in depth.

Yeah. … I was hoping, yeah, that we could learn how to apply these things in to the workplace, like programmes and that. What programmes were relevant for us to use and that and how we could use them. But that was okay because coming to [the language centre] I learned how to do that.

The traditional role of NILRs in the field and in language centres has dramatically changed over the years. NILRs, like ILRs, play different roles in different language centres and in the field. Generally, NILRs no longer record data in notebooks or journals then leave the field and go back to their office to analyse and write up the data. Nowadays they usually take much of the technological equipment they need with them into the field and complete much of the work that they used to do in the office out in the field. Similarly, NILRs working in language centres have to be more
accountable for how they do linguistics work and have more of a responsibility to
train ILRs with technical linguistic skills and the technology needed to analyse and
produce linguistic materials. They are also, often, managers of the language centre
and do much more administrative work and project management. They are also much
more accountable to the community and the Indigenous people they work with.

... even us linguists are struggling now to keep up with the change
with what we are meant to do. In [this language centre] I think that’s
reflected in that, say like my position as Senior Linguist, it’s project
management. Management of linguistic projects. Whereas fifteen
years ago the senior linguist was working with the languages. Things
have changed, because we’ve got more funding, we’ve got more
money and because of technology we can work at a much faster rate

... And in the old days, like even twenty years ago, I’m thinking a
linguist, no-one knew what they did, they knew they did something
sort of mystic with languages whereas now all the language workers
are saying we want to know what you are doing and why you’re doing
and how you’re doing it, we don’t necessarily want to do it ourselves
but we want to have the full knowledge. So I see for us the need to
really talk about language analysis, have the terminology with the
language workers so we are all talking the same language. (19NL3)

... the linguist ... well they’re language development officers that
work with the community language development officers [ILRs] ...
But the language development officer can be a non-Aboriginal person
... She has skills in linguistics and so her job is to work with the
community based people (ILRs). (27IO4)

Computer literacy skills are vital for ILRs who work in school environments. The
many ILRs across northern Australia, particularly in the Top End’s community
schools, need the skills to use digital recorders, various linguistic software packages,
the internet and so on to develop vernacular literacy materials to use in the
classroom.
This project found that many ILRs required classroom teaching skills. ILRs were not only employed in schools to develop the vernacular literacy materials but they were often required to teach schoolchildren vernacular literacy. Therefore, in addition to needing to be computer literate, ILRs required the skills to teach vernacular literacy in a classroom situation to various year levels. For this, ILRs, who are not trained as teachers, not only need higher literacy skills in their traditional language but also the skills to develop vernacular literacy programmes for children, use new and ever changing computer technology, know how to plan lessons and teach to a classroom of schoolchildren. Teaching in a class of children also requires the ILR to know how to deal with child behavioural problems in the classroom and any special requirements of individual children, including how to deal with children with hearing loss and other conditions that may impede students’ concentration or learning. ILRs also need the skills to assess the children’s progress, assess the children’s vernacular literacy skills themselves, as well as report on each child’s progress according the relevant education department’s educational benchmarks. However, these skills are not taught in any higher education linguistics courses, even if those courses are designed specifically for Indigenous Australians.

ILRs, both in schools and in language centres who teach vernacular literacy, argue that teaching skills should be taught to them during their linguistics training. They also argue that they should not have to do additional training, such as teacher training, to teach vernacular literacy and oral language skills.

... and definitely the teaching. I really think that without doing another certificate, that should also be involved in the language class. Because you know we can all teach our kids but to teach our sister next door is a lot harder ... We do a lot of language stuff ourselves we do a lot of resource material here that we make up for teaching the kids and everything. Yeah, but I would like to see Batchelor and all them to put a bit more emphasis where (ILRs are) going to go after. What are they aiming these people to do what. Apart from recording their language the next step is to teach it and that’s probably what it is.

And we do a lot of teaching. (44I05)
... people need to have proper skills to document the language and also to teach the language. (63IL/T5)

One participant argued that having Indigenous role models in each course would be most useful in helping them to learn some of the teaching and linguistic skills they require because Indigenous people learn best from their own people. This person argued that it was most important for the role model to be Indigenous but the language background of the role model did not matter as long as they were Indigenous.

I would put an interpreter or another bystander, because even though, you’re a kid you need role-models, when you’re an adult you need role-models … When it’s to do with the workplace I think you need a role-model in there like a teacher’s aid.

... *A role-model in what way ... a language speaker or somebody who* A language speaker because coming from someone with Aboriginal background your most valuable thing that you’re taught is family. So, you grow up with family and you know family but as soon as you been put into a class there’s no family there. So to see someone you can relate to, whether it be aunty from long-a-tree but it’s still family and you still feel close…

*So it wouldn’t matter what language group they came from but just someone who has been there done that?*

Yeah…Yeah that would be good because it’s like … all new … So having aunty [Mary] come in and she was like a good role-model too because she had already done it. (54ILR5)

Participants also argued that if they had more Indigenous lecturers then many of the issues students face, both culturally and linguistically (see Chapter 8), could be overcome.

... the politician’s, he lives a luxurious life. He doesn’t know what the community people experience, so he has to get down from his high horse to the grassroots level in order to understand the people, and so does the lecturer. Different thing is Indigenous lecturer, well, he knows what he’s trying to relay across to the students because he had
the same perspective. Whereas the other lecturer, non-Indigenous lecturer has to step down and down to the grassroots level to work with the people … We need more Indigenous lecturers in the institute to understand the students.

*Understand the students in language?*

In language, yeah. You need lecturers in all the languages.

*So, you need lectures who can speak KKY, KLY, Meriam Mir, Warlpiri, Arrernte*

Yes. Even if they just work as tutors, that is quite acceptable.

(13IL/E2)

It was not only ILRs who argued that they needed teaching skills to be able to teach; so did lecturers who taught linguistics in higher educational institutions. The issue of having a teaching qualification to teach linguistics in CALL was often discussed when I worked there. The main requirement for a lecturing position with CALL was a degree in linguistics, with exceptions for Indigenous people. However, at the time, very few staff had any formal teacher training. With the exception of one, this was also the case in all other participating institutions. Lecturers were not taught how to teach or to assess students during their linguistics training. Generally, these skills were learned on-the-job through trial and error.

Teaching at SAL with all linguists, very few with us with any teaching experience. It was a laboratory in teaching techniques. How do you help speakers of Indigenous languages whose education is often stunted fourth or fifth grade and then nothing until adulthood and so on. They have a basic literacy. How do you help them learn linguistic techniques that might be useful to them and yet which were taught to me, and others, at a university level. So there was a lot of searching and hunting in the faculty for ways of dealing with this. It was a problem we all had to deal with… (89NL/T6)

Maybe teaching was one of the things I didn’t have formal training in… Well at least at the institute, where I did my degree course … In the Degree they should incorporate something like that, because a lot of linguists end up teaching in the institutions but they don’t have
Some of the skills needed to teach linguistics to adult students might not be taught in any teacher-training course either. As stated in Chapter 6, linguistics lecturers had to teach in a classroom with adult students from several different language groups and with varying levels of literacy and oral language skills in both their traditional language and English (see, for example, Black & Breen, 2001). This is extremely difficult for even the best and most experienced of lecturers. Linguistics lecturers at all participating institutions said that they constantly struggle to find the right technique for teaching linguistics to such a diversity of students in the one class.

... I tried to involve curriculum negotiation, which I found works within certain parameters; it works if you are very clear what the framework you’re negotiating is but it doesn’t work so well if everything is wide open. There were times I felt I could best help my students by leaving them with the task and getting out the classroom.

... I realised the term teacher was often a misleading term in that it’s not how we teach that counts, it’s what people learn and how they learn. So, it is a matter of how do you facilitate learning? What do you do with that? It is a very complicated thing. It was this opportunity to try to find ways of helping people learn things that I knew as a linguist but in a very practical way. It was a real big challenge.

(89NL/T6)

Participants in all regions except Western Australia argued that ILRs would have benefited greatly from doing work experience as part of the course so as to gain some of the necessary skills to work as an ILR. One participant argued that working with a NILR on a project could have given him the opportunity to see how linguistic work was done in the field or by NILRs doing some actual linguistic work.

I think students should be able to work with linguists, someone in a university or another institute so you can work along side them to see how that person, linguist, goes about doing that work. I would have
liked to do that for a week or two … CDU had that [linguist] and someone - the Yolngu mob. I could have hung out with them for a whole week. It would have been good for students to have lectures with them. Have guest lectures to talk about what they do. (45IL5)

The need for work experience was particularly important for people in areas without the support of a language centre in the area. However, the only State where this was not discussed by ILRs was in Western Australia. This could be because almost all ILRs in this state were employed by language centres and those who undertook formal training also received on-the-job-training, therefore had work experience opportunities.

In summary, computer, teaching and work experience were skills required across all regions. Improved literacy was also required across all regions, which was explored in detail in section 6.1.

This section also highlighted the importance of lecturers of linguistics courses needing teacher training. To teach linguistics one needs higher qualifications in linguistics but no qualifications in teaching. Participating educational institutions usually require lecturers to hold at least a Degree in linguistics to teach a linguistics course but a teaching qualification was not required, even though it may be desirable. Furthermore, a general teaching course may not teach some of the skills required to teach in a classroom of Indigenous adults with various levels of literacy and English oral skills. Therefore, a targeted course for people wanting to teach in this field may be needed to improve their teaching skills in the classroom, in assessment and in workshop planning. This in turn may improve the quality of the linguistics courses outcomes.

7.3. Discussion

Indigenous Australians come from quite different areas across the vast continent of Australia. They live a diversity of lifestyles and have access to a range of resources and supports to meet their linguistic goals of documenting or maintaining their language, and subsequently work in a diversity of environments (section 7.1). As a result, the linguistic skills ILRs need differ across the continent (section 7.2.1)
ILRs undertake different sorts of training, formal and on-the-job, or a mixture of both. It is clear from the interviews that ILRs who undertook training specifically targeted to a specific project, such as Bible translation and dictionary making, generally had a deeper linguistic understanding of their traditional language compared to those who attended one of the current generalist linguistics courses (section 7.1). Graduates of SAL and SIL tended to have this deeper knowledge of their languages because their training had been more targeted on their language and focused on a particular task. By comparison, other linguistics training courses had many units to teach within the one course, in a limited time frame and to many students with many language groups and literacy levels in the one class. Some participants provided recommendations to improve the current linguistics courses offered by the participating educational institutions. ILRs argue that these improvements would significantly help them in their workplace and in achieving their linguistic goals. Such recommendations include undertaking work experience during the course, having guest lectures from people who work in the field, having Indigenous role models in the classroom and learning teaching skills. Formal linguistics courses teach the basic linguistic skills to document or maintain traditional language to a wide range of people from various regions. The specific skills ILRs required for their region are not always taught in formal linguistics courses.

This study found that ILRs do not do the same work in all locations across northern Australia; therefore, they need different skills that depend on the social needs of their environment (section 7.2.1). However, each educational institution only offers one higher education course that does not target ILRs’ specific environmental needs. Gaps in ILR training vary according to the ILRs’ needs but there are some overlaps. ILRs throughout northern Australia required increased literacy skills. ILRs in most regions required study skills and computer skills. Study skills not only benefited people during their study but also in the field. Study skills help ILRs in classification, alphabetical and numerical ordering for dictionary making. Computer technology has also changed how ILRs, regardless of region, work on language projects, many of the skills for which were not taught in formal linguistics courses offered by participating educational institutions.
This study also found that many ILRs in most regions not only develop vernacular literacy materials, but also teach vernacular literacy and oral language skills in primary schools. A general teaching course is usually a three-year degree because of the many skills required for teaching in the classroom, planning and preparing materials for classes for the different ages and academic years, as well as assessing the students according to individual State or Territory benchmarks. However, ILRs who have generally only completed a one-year Diploma or two-year Advanced Diploma are sometimes expected to have these skills. ILRs in this study argued that they want these skills and that they should be taught teaching skills during their linguistics training. No linguistics course in Australia offers teaching skills regardless of the level of the course. One reason for this is that teaching is a specialist area in itself and just adding a couple of extra units to a linguistics course cannot provide the necessary skills required for the job and will reduce the level of linguistic skills taught in the course. One solution may be to develop a course that teaches Indigenous students both sets of skills. Such a course could teach students enough linguistic skills to develop literacy materials and enough teaching skills to teach schoolchildren using those materials. This could be a specific teacher-linguist course. Such a course could leave out less critical linguistic and teaching skills but could be targeted to specific regional needs and taught more like the SAL and SIL courses. This study found that there is a definite need for such a course but whether or not such a course could be developed is not within the scope of this research project to decide.

Teacher training is also needed by many of the NILRs who teach linguistics in the education sector, such as the participating educational institutions in this study. Most linguistics lecturers in this study, and from my experience, do not have the training to face the complexities of mixed aged groups, mixed language groups, mixed cultures and people with various levels of literacy. From my personal experience, teaching literacy skills to people with low literacy levels is a specialist skill, but lecturers in the participating institutions do this on a daily basis. This is an institutional policy issue and one that needs to be addressed so that the outcomes for linguistics graduates are improved.
No linguistics course specifically designed for Indigenous Australians offers the higher-level technological skills ILRs argue they require in the workplace. The main reason, from my observation, is that the educational institutions do not have the funding to provide the necessary up-to-date equipment for students to use for training purposes, and to train lecturers to use that equipment. In addition, because there is so much to teach linguistics students, including basic literacy in many cases, that there is just not enough time in the course to teach these additional skills in a generalist course.

This study found that even if the training was perfect there were many other factors that enhanced or constrained an ILR working in the field. These factors include cultural, societal, funding and government policy. These are the factors discussed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 8. COMMUNITY FACTORS
Chapter 8. COMMUNITY FACTORS

One of the findings of this research project is that the capacity of ILRs or NILRs to document or maintain traditional Indigenous languages is enhanced or constrained by various local realities. These factors are generally outside the control of the ILR and are usually deeply ingrained in the community. This chapter starts by looking at the cultural and linguistic factors that affect the language documentation and maintenance activities of ILRs. Section 8.1 examines what these factors are and what observable effects they have across northern Australia. This is followed by a discussion about the attitudes of Indigenous Elders, ILRs and other community members towards language documentation and maintenance activities and those who want to do the work. Strongly held views were expressed concerning ILRs working with NILRs, what titles are appropriate, the availability of support from Elders and organisations, and the benefits of research to the language community (section 8.2). The struggle to access appropriate funding and the financial incentives to work as an ILR are discussed in section 8.3.

8.1. Linguistic and Cultural Factors

Traditionally, Indigenous Elders have been the ones who have been responsible for handing language and culture on to future generations. This tradition has dramatically changed over the past 220 years in many Australian Indigenous communities, with languages dying at an increasingly fast pace. Younger people now want to assist with the responsibility of documenting and maintaining their traditional languages so that they can be handed on to future generations. This research project found that Elders across all participating regions of northern Australia are reluctant to support these younger people in doing this. Elders are fearful of breaching thousands of years of traditional culture and practice. Traditionally, only those who have gained a higher status in the community have learned all the linguistic and cultural knowledge to hand on to future generations; generally, the younger generations do not have this knowledge and therefore cannot pass it on to others.

Participants across northern Australia discussed their belief that for thousands of years the learning of language and culture has been progressive; the older you are the
more linguistic and cultural knowledge you attain. Certain knowledge is provided through various ceremonies and at various stages of life, but it is not provided to those who are not yet ready for it. The more traditional knowledge people gain, the higher the status they have within their community. Elders have the highest cultural and societal status as they have been through the traditional ceremonies and gained the knowledge. Therefore, traditionally, it is their responsibility to hand knowledge on to future generations. This must be done at the right time and only to those who are ready, culturally and linguistically, to receive that knowledge.

... There are rules about who and what information can be discussed or developed or dealt with by certain people, and everyone knows and understands that it is the senior people and the older people in our language community who have the language knowledge. They’re older, they’ve been occupying their space for longer than young people ... the senior people have this tremendous amount of knowledge about their language and life, Aboriginal society, their language community, their whole life. These people have a wealth of understanding and knowledge of their presence here, their existence.

(27104)

Since colonisation 220 years ago, many of the traditional ceremonies and methods for handing on such knowledge have ceased to be practised across northern Australia. This study found that people in all of the participating communities are concerned that their traditional knowledge will die out if Elders do not teach the younger generations their language and culture, or document their language and culture for future generations. Some Elders are concerned that if their traditional language and culture is handed on to people who are not at the right stage of their life, linguistically and culturally, they will breach thousands of years of cultural law and practice. Others contend that Elders need to pass on their traditional language and culture to the younger generations even if they do not hold the correct status as their languages are rapidly dying. Through much negotiation over many years, some communities have developed and implemented ways to hand on their traditional knowledge to the younger generations without breaching their cultural traditions. Even so, certain information cannot be handed on until the person is culturally ready for it. The following quote explains very clearly the traditional method of handing on
language and it is provided here in length. The participant explained this with much pride in her voice and body language.

... we also acknowledge that young people need to learn that history and learn that knowledge from the senior people. But, those senior people also know what can, what information can be made available to younger people and what they withhold until it is time to inform people of different things. So, it is a gradual thing. No young person can just have all the knowledge because people know that they’re not ready for it in their own minds and their own development and so the older we get different knowledges is disclosed to us.

But also know, and the senior people that I spend a lot of time with, also know that they need to capture the interest of the young people and therefore they know they need to be allowing the young people to participate to be exposed to events or activities and knowledge. They need to be exposed to that. But that’s done gently and in the right way ... And there’s stages of life that different ages will be taught, from four to when they enter into primary school there’s different things, [that’s] the way we do things. We try to make children aware of different things at different stages of their life. So whilst there is a concern that young people aren’t being given information, we need to be clear the fact that at different stages of life different information is disclosed. Different knowledge is made available to young people and the senior people know what information they can provide to young people, and that they’re safe ... at the same time they’re disclosing this information, they know what information to give that won’t create conflict or trouble or concern for the senior people in the community. And I think they handled that really well.

There’s rules that have been here for thousands and thousands of years and people do that. Then, and they’re very observant, people see which of the young people are genuine and wanting to know and wanting to, people that are hungry for information but they know how to deal with people like that. They know how to respond to the needs
of those people, because one of the key things ... they have to release
some of this information to the next generations because that’s about
the survival of the people and skilling the people to be able to perform
different roles and continue the linguistic survival of that community.
(271O4)

This study found that where communities are supported by a language centre, Elders
shared this opinion and practice, albeit in different ways. The above quote is from an
Elder who is a senior person in a Western Australian language centre. The following
quote, which comes from a senior person in a Central Australian region, also
emphasises the importance of handing on traditional knowledge and languages to the
younger generations but at the same time not breaching any customs. The manner in
which Elders in this region pass linguistic and cultural information on to the younger
generations differs from the practice stated in the above quote, but, nevertheless, the
language and culture is still being recorded and handed on. The Elders allow their
language centre to record information either directly from the Elders or by recording
a ceremony. They then lock it away until the next generation of people are ready to
learn it. They do not hand the information directly to the younger generations.

A couple of years ago you could not touch certain stuff and you
couldn’t do certain stuff. Last year we recorded the men’s ceremony
and we recorded men going back burying people, in traditional
country burying people. Now, those things were requested to us by the
traditional Elders because they’re concerned that it is going and is
leaving. It’s restricted. It’s locked in a safe. We’ve got a safe … that
those cultural things go into and only men are allowed to look at it.
Now we’re doing the same for the women. So those things are still
being recorded, being handed down but what they’re making sure is
that what’s being handed down is as pure as it was … and like, Mrs
[Brown], we’re doing work with her and she’s going ‘when I go you
mob make sure everybody sees this. You make sure’... So we’re
getting a lot more stuff saying it should be seen. Where in the past
we’ve been told we’re never to show this or ‘no turn that off you’re
not recording this’. It’s making a big difference in our society … And
it has only been happening in the last three or four years. (441O5)
People in the Pilbara region collect linguistic and cultural data for future generations quite differently. Whilst the Elders allow younger people to collect language data, they are still reluctant to hand on certain knowledge, especially if that younger person does not have the right cultural status or has not been recognised and accepted as a language researcher. Therefore, the Elders have selected two Elders to document their traditional language and practices; in this way they do not breach their traditional practices and the information is then available to the younger generations when they are ready.

Both of these selected Elders, ILRs, are male and have had on-the-job training and many years working in the field. One of them has had formal training. Both are fluent and literate in several Indigenous languages and one is also literate in English – the other one refuses to learn English literacy even though he speaks English fluently. It is because these two people hold the right cultural status and are fluent in their traditional languages that they are able to do the complex language work required to document their languages in detail without breaching any of their cultural and linguistic practices. In addition, both of these men assist their language centre with promoting the importance of language documentation and maintenance activities as they are highly respected and have the cultural right to negotiate such issues with community Elders.

The difference between our two most competent language workers that work here … and the other language workers, which are often younger, the difference between those two is that [these men] have have incredible liaison skills with the community. They both are significantly up in the law order and so they can actually pull in a lot of muscle, very rapidly. … I think the success of this organisation is down to the fact that [these men] are very high up in the law … It all seems like in a way that [Bret] and [David] have been sacrificed by the community. Like, they are obviously intelligent men and the community have allowed them to step outside and to really focus on language.

*Are they from the same language group or different?*

No, different. And they actually don’t work together much at all. But if we go into a community and one of those two guys are with us,
instant credit, there is total credit. It doesn’t matter what community through the [region]. Everyone recognises them as language workers. (19NL3)

These men do this work knowing that it takes them away from various activities that Elders are privileged to do. They themselves may not be able to gain more traditional knowledge as they are not as involved in as many traditional activities as they would be if they were not focusing on language work. However, they accept this as they believe that documenting their traditional language and culture for future generations is vital for the survival of their languages and for future generations to learn about their heritage.

… and it’s a very significant thing … [David] has had to let go of a lot of his role in the law to focus on language work. And the community, the larger community have let him do that. So when law is on they permit [him] not to be involved so that he can focus on his [language] work. (19NL3)

In contrast, in Queensland and parts of the Northern Territory, where there are no language centres or other linguistic or cultural supports, Elders do not support language activities by individuals who do not have the relevant status or fluency, in fear of breaching traditional law and practices. They also find it difficult to allow or support ILRs to run language programmes if they are not fluent in their traditional language, even if they hold an Elder status within their community. Even though this factor was not discussed in as much detail by people in these regions, it was obvious through various conversations that this was a major concern for the Elders and the rest of the community.

Oh, yes, it’s natural. It’s natural across the board to be concerned [about documenting and maintaining our traditional language] but to, actually, them [Elders] to cooperate you got to know a lot of things. I think that’s the cultural aspect of putting things together. (06IO1)

Five participants in these regions stated that their Elders would rather see their language die than see someone who does not have the right status within the community or is not fluent in their traditional language try to document or maintain
it. The following quote comes from two trained ILRs who had completed three years of formal linguistics training. Throughout these three years, they felt they had full community support in documenting and maintaining their traditional language, so much so that they thought that when they finished they could go back to their community and set up a language and cultural programme at their local primary school. However, they came across some unexpected problems. When they finished their formal training they started a language maintenance programme at the community school, but they could not understand why the Elders would not support them or assist with the teaching of the language. They knew that they were not fluent in the language but believed that the Elders who were fluent would be the language speakers and advisors in the programme. They knew they could not run the programme without fluent speakers. Then one day when the ILRs were running a language lesson in the school an Elder came into the classroom and ‘publicly shamed them’ (061O1) and ‘kicked’ (051L1) them out of the classroom because they were not fluent in the language and they did not have the right cultural status within the community to teach language. These two ILRs thought they were doing what the community and the Elders wanted – to keep their language strong. They were both very upset by what had happened, so much so that during our interview their emotions quickly shifted between anger, frustration and not caring. This was something they did not expect and had thought was important to the Elders before they started the programme.

We try to go up to the school to teach it but we couldn’t teach up at the school because we weren’t fluent speakers and we tried to explain what we were doing but still they told us not to go up there so we stopped.

Oh, the Elders asked you not to go up there?

No. They told us not [shouting] to go up there. We shouldn’t be teaching up there because we weren’t fluent speakers. We told them that we may not be fluent speakers but we are willing to teach the kids, and (brushing it off), whatever. The council wasn’t much help, they ignored us in the end. (051L1)

Cultural and linguistic status, participants argued, is part of a hierarchical system. Indigenous people need to work their way up the hierarchy and as they do they gain
status. No one can claim they have that status; it is something that must be recognised by others and once it is recognised then that person will have more support from the community.

First of all like I said there is like a hierarchical system in the ... There is a time limit for you. You must show yourself to the community, to prove yourself, just. You have to show your skills for them to label you that you are the [inaudible], which means you are the man who can do it.

So how does a person who has just finished a course do that?
The person finish the course and when he go back he doesn’t know how to write a submission to the government to get an income. First of all he doesn’t know anything about it and even though you got these skills and knowledge from the institute he has to find his way around because there is always a pressure ‘Oh no, you’re not in the place yet to teach in the community’. There are certain ones above you, you got to become much older before you teach it. But if you have the power to speaking it then you would be able to break barriers.

...See you don’t advertise yourself. That is not our system, to advertise yourself with the radio that you have that qualification. It is all through by speaking, the way you talk to people and you attract them to you. And people spread the news around the community.

So you think that’s one of the reasons why people don’t do language work in the communities?
That’s right. Yeah. (13IL/E3)

Even though their languages are severely endangered and there is very little documentation of them, people are prepared to let their languages die if ILRs do not prove themselves capable of documenting or maintaining their language, and do not hold the right status to do it.

Yeah, as long as the community. Once the community get to know you and you got that skill and you got that knowledge with you …

Who are these people in the communities?
The Elders and the council and the children … The community is sleeping: your path is that you have to spray them with water and make them awaken.

*But what about a ILR who doesn’t have that confidence to wake them up, will the community just sit back and let the language change and die out?*

The community will sleep.

*Even if the language dies?*

Yes. (13IL/E2)

I asked this participant what could be incorporated in the training to assist students in dealing with these issues so they could document their languages. He argued that students should be taught how to publish stories and sell them to members of their community to prove that they have the linguistic skills to work on their traditional language.

Yes, one thing I found. You have to explain in the classroom how to write their stories write their books and things like that so they can write it and sell it to the community. (13IL/E2)

These linguistic and cultural factors were found right across northern Australia. I also found that the younger people, including those who had undertaken years of formal training as an ILR, generally do not realise that these factors exist in their community, and if they do, they do not realise how much these strong cultural beliefs will affect them when they start language and cultural projects. ILRs who work through a language centre or other formal language projects with NILRs are fully supported and have no cause to know this is an issue. Others think that the community, in particular the Elders, do not want to support them in these activities, but do not understand why.

Maybe if there was more support from the council then. They, council haven’t been doing anything. They know we are capable of doing that but they haven’t been supportive of us. They couldn’t care less. It’s like we went to school and wasted three years of our life for nothing. Even though we want to do it, and we are willing to teach it, we need the council to support it. And the community… No one, it’s like
nobody is interested in doing anything... Yeah, like since that course we come back here and do nothing really. There is no real support from council or from community... Yeah. It’s like we’re doing it on our own sort of thing. There’s not really fluent speakers or anything going up there and teaching in class. Like we need somebody there all the time. Like an Elder. Elder there all the time. Yeah, just more support. Like even council getting paper or just something like that, you know equipment or something. A grant for us, or something like that. (05IL1)

The above incident of being told not to teach language and culture programmes was so devastating for the ILRs concerned that they no longer study or work on language projects. As a result, there is no language programme going on in that community at all. In some communities, such beliefs by the Elders not only apply to ILRs but also to anyone in the community who wants to learn to speak their traditional language. I spoke to another, older, community resident who is concerned about the loss of his traditional language and wanted to learn to speak it, but found that when he tried to do so in public he was humiliated. So he stopped trying to learn the language and does not encourage others to learn to speak it.

I tried to speak [language] but people, Elders, laugh at you when you make mistake so I don’t try anymore. They make you feel shame. (071O1)

Five participants, including these two ILRs, a council representative, an Indigenous educator and another community member, argued that community awareness courses and proper planning with everyone in their community could resolve some of the problems that prevent them from doing language work. They argue that documenting and maintaining their traditional language needs support from the community as a whole for the success of the program, therefore the community needs to be aware of what the issues are.

People need more planning or something. Like planning in the classes.

Who would need to do that?
It would have to be council, school, by everybody. So, everybody got to have time to have input into the language. So it needs to be a whole community effort. (05IL1)

We need more community awareness or something. (03IL1)

There should be an awareness thing happening. Educating the community in the situation of their language in the community. What are the dangers and how it can happen, and try to strengthen those areas where there are weaknesses. Like, even at home, people need to be aware and focus on their language use in their house, in schools, in churches, on the streets, in all the different language domains. So, they need to be aware all the time how the language is used. If people are not aware of that, we are slowly seeing a decline in language. (04IL/T1)

One person from the same region, who had previously undertaken formal linguistics training but now works with the local council, confirmed what had happened in the classroom with these two ILRs. However he argued that the ILRs may not have planned the programme or discussed it properly with the Elders or other community people, which could be the reason for the course not running and for them not receiving the support they needed.

I think they didn’t follow the plan that was in the [course] book, where the first thing you do is suppose to hold a meeting. You hold a meeting with all the people in the village here … then tell the Elders and the chairman, councillors, what you are planning to do. You advise them because there’s [a] few fluent speakers on the island who try to interfere, who try to correct what you do, because I seen it myself, it happened to graduates from [the college]. … when they started teaching at school, one of the Elders, she tried to correct them, interfered, in front of the kids, which to my knowledge, I was in the classroom, was a shameful thing for [the graduates]. (08IL1)
However, I was with these two ILRs when they developed and negotiated their language programme plans with the Elders, council and other community members. I, like them, believed that as they developed the programme they consulted appropriately with the other community members. This was while they were still studying and I believe that Elders, councils and other community members are supportive of people studying, regardless of what the course is, but they seem to find it hard to allow ILRs, when they finish the course, to work in an area that may breach their cultural practices.

The issue of community awareness about the role of an ILR and a language centre was also raised by a senior member of a language centre in Western Australia. This participant argued that the community must recognise that language centres cannot change how community members are using their language. A language centre’s role is to document traditional local languages and assist the community to maintain their language, not to teach language to the younger generations. This is similar to the comments made by participants in Queensland.

Probably. Language awareness. Yeah. One of the communities, for example … we’ve got a number of CDEP workers there and when we talk to them about what it is they want to do with CDEP they all said, ‘Oh! our kids are really mixing up [this language] and [that language] and they’re mixing it all up and it’s not good so we want to work on CDEP so we can sort that out.’ So we sit and have a big yarn with them and in the end I said ‘We can’t do that at [the language centre], we can’t change how your kids are speaking, that happens at home and for the kids to know what language they are speaking it needs to be discussed at home.’ So we are starting, very early days, but to develop a bit of awareness in the community and to develop a bit of a programme to make awareness that language is learnt at home and discussions about language need to happen at home, you know where the language is happening. So that comes down to the language workers being made um to be skilled to deal with that stuff. (19NL3)

This research project also found that the success of a language programme depended on the Elders and other community members understanding what people are studying.
when undertaking a linguistics course. Elders who participated in this research project generally encouraged people to undertake such study, but did not understand what was involved in the course or why people study it. Most participating Elders thought that people studying linguistics were actually doing courses that taught them how to speak their traditional language. In reality, the students do not necessarily want to learn to speak their language fluently but want the linguistic skills to document and maintain it. They believe that if they have these linguistic skills the fluent speakers will assist them with the programme by providing the necessary fluent language skills.

... Do many [ILRs} come back and [work on} language projects?
Um. At the moment, I don’t know because um. I hear many of them go to this language teaching body... See, I don’t get the information. If I do work in the office … I would have known but I’m staying at home, I’m just an Elder. Sometimes people come up and tell me about this language course. I attended too sometimes… Yeah, and young people ask me a question sometimes for understanding of the language and I’ve explained it. (11IE2)

Some participants argue that the community status and linguistic fluency factor is a problem that particularly affects women. They argue this is because women do not go through initiation as men do, so it is difficult for them to be accorded the same status, and, therefore, they are not provided with the same language and cultural information that men have access to at a similar age. Considering most students are female (see section 4.2 for more details) this significantly affects the linguistic documentation and maintenance of traditional languages.

Again, this differed from region to region. In the regions where there are no linguistics support organisations, ILRs generally do not use their linguistic skills to do language work at all. By comparison, in regions where there are language centres the communities are more supportive of anyone doing language work as long as they are not breaching their cultural beliefs and practices. To support women in being recognised for their linguistic skills and to gain the relevant status, various activities have been put in place by some language centres. Each language centre approaches this issue in different ways. For example, one particular language centre in Western
Australia has one female and one male ILR. Both are Elders, both have appropriate community status and both are fluent in their traditional language. In this language centre the female ILR only works with women and the male only works with males. The female usually only works on language projects in the language centre rather than in the field, whereas the male does both and does the necessary liaison with the all-male council. By comparison, another, much larger language centre in the same State, which deals with many language groups, encourages males to work with the females so that they recognise that the women have the skills to do the job. This also builds the status of women within the community. The language centre’s NILRs do this by directing the male ILRs to the female ILRs who have the necessary linguistic skills and knowledge of the relevant language to check their work rather than having the NILR check it.

We’re very lucky because it’s [the language centre] built up enough credit in the community, like I can go into a community and there’s credit because we’ve got the [language centre] name. So we always take the women language workers with us and very carefully make sure that they are doing the work, that they really know what they are talking about [and] that they’re doing the work that everyone has seen is important … this is a good example, the CDEP workers we’ve got [in one community] there’s eight men. And they’ve just started too. Once they’ve done some work, come into town and sitting down at the computer and writing down their stories and so on. I can sit and check their work with no worries, or interlinearise it and get it checked on shoebox. But instead I say ‘[Natalie] is the editor here in [that language]’. So we get [Natalie] to check their work through. And straight away those guys are seeing that she knows what she is doing and that she is really literate and so on. This is just our perspective of how we give these people credit. And [Ruth] is [language name] and again being a young women. But she now runs a cultural awareness training and she is the person up the front the whole time. So it is giving her a lot of credit and got her a very public persona. And we think that is having quite an effect … And each of those language workers have to give a report to the committee every month and it is a written report, has to state certain things. So those people on the
committee it starts giving the workers status as well, because they start to see what the workers are doing and it just goes on and on.

(19NL3)

In this way the female ILRs build up status, or recognition, within the communities based on their ability rather than their cultural status or linguistic fluency. In addition, cultural practices and beliefs are not breached. However, it can take time for these women to build up sufficient status so that they are not just judged on their linguistic skills, but also on their behaviour and the respect they show for their culture. These women would not have this status in the community if they went out into the community themselves, without being a part of the language centre and working hard to learn the necessary skills.

Not yet. No. It takes time and people have got to be able to trust them and, whether we like it or not, we say to people ‘what you do outside of work hours also reflects on [the language centre]. You know if you’re going to run amuck and drink the whole time and then expect when you’re in your work people are going to respect you it’s just not going to be there.’ So there’s all that stuff. And we give significant amount of time of work for cultural purpose. We encourage people to go, without it being rorted. You know there is a fine line there. If there’s something on we say, ‘Oh! Do you need to go’ rather than people say ‘Oh! I gotta go’ and then try to make an excuse. It’s saying to people that your cultural activities are critical to your work here at [the language centre] and recognising that. Yeah. (19NL3)

In summary, the issues of community status and linguistic fluency were key factors in all regions I visited. They are the reasons why, in certain communities, ILRs do not continue to do language work, even if they have completed many years of training. However, it appears to be more of a problem in Queensland and parts of the Northern Territory than in other regions. The reason for this is that, in regions or areas where there are language centres, ways have been found to document language without breaching these traditional linguistic and cultural practices. The language centres are able to work round this problem through negotiation by the centre’s Indigenous council with the community Elders. The language centres have worked
hard with Elders over many years to gain their respect, support and trust. As a result, the Elders are now willing to work with the younger ILRs on certain language projects even though there are still restrictions on what the younger language workers can be told. It is also interesting to note that the younger generations are generally not aware that community status affects language documentation until they are older or hold the correct place in the community.

8.2. Community Attitudes

ILRs, Elders and other community participants discussed other factors that they believe significantly affect language documentation and maintenance activities. These factors relate to the attitudes, practices and beliefs of community residents, which differ from community to community. Some stem from attitudes and pressures that are external to the endangered language community; these Grenoble and Whaley (2006) call macro-variables, and the UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages (2003) refers to them as external forces. I agree with these descriptions, but, as the following beliefs were expressed by people within the community and have an effect on ILRs working on language programmes within their communities, I have referred to them as community factors. These factors include appropriate titles and equality for ILRs in the community and workplace (section 8.2.1), negotiation about which variety of the traditional language to document or maintain (section 8.2.2), the benefits to the community in doing language work (section 8.2.3) and participants’ concern for the lack of initiative and drive within the community to do language work (section 8.2.4).

8.2.1. Appropriate Titles and Working Together

Just as it is important to Elders that ILRs hold the correct cultural status within their community if they are to do language work, it is important to ILRs that their linguistic skills be recognised. The title they are provided with provides such recognition. This title provides status to ILRs within their workplace and their community. It also provides them with confidence and pride.

Traditionally, Indigenous people working on language and linguistics projects were, or are still, known as ‘language workers’. Some NILRs, traditionally known as ‘linguists’, refer to ‘language workers’ as ‘community linguists’, ‘Indigenous
linguists’, ‘language assistants’ or ‘language informants’, among other terms. In the course of this research project it was found that ILRs in different regions want to be referred to by different titles. Terms such as ‘language worker’ offend some ILRs, particularly those in Queensland and parts of Western Australia. Queensland ILRs prefer to be referred to as ‘linguists’, regardless of the level of training that a person had received, whether a two-week linguistics course, a Diploma, Advanced Diploma or Degree. ILRs in this region have argued this since training with SAL started in the 1970s. Those who attended the short SAL courses, but have not worked in the field since, still want to be called linguists.

You have to label them linguist because they’ve got linguistic qualifications.

Okay, and if somebody had a Diploma and someone else had a Degree do you still call them all linguists?

Yes, because I believe in equality.

... even if they have higher qualifications?

Yes... equality. (13IL/E2)

In contrast, in parts of Western Australia the terms ‘linguist’ and ‘language worker’ were not used at all as they can cause offence to ILRs (Caffery, 2006). ILRs, Elders and other community members argue that it takes two to do language work. Even though it is usually NILRs who undertake higher qualifications to gain the higher-level linguistic analytical skills, ILRs also plays vital roles in any language project. ILRs are the ones who usually have the necessary contacts and language knowledge required to do the work, but they believe the term ‘language worker’ implies that they are inferior to linguists and that they play a minor role in the project.

We’re trying to get away from just saying language worker because that’s confused with linguists and Aboriginal people, and in our case, history has it that the Aboriginal person is the language worker and the non-Aboriginal person is the linguist. In some way it sort of presents to people that they’re this trained, western trained technical expert but then a language worker is kind of, if you look at it that way, is a lesser thing. But we know that the linguist without the language worker, in our case, can run into some problems. So, these people, who we call language workers, who we now call Language
Community Development Officers, have a lot of expertise and a lot of knowledge that they bring to the project, as well as what the trained western linguist can bring. … and so then empowering more people within the language community to aspire to doing more work on their language. (27IO4)

In contrast, ILRs in other parts of Western Australia and in the NT, refer to themselves as language workers. They argue that a linguist is someone who has had at least university training and has attained a higher-level of linguistic understanding, whereas most ILRs have had on-the-job training or at most Advanced Diploma level of formal training.

I just refer to myself as a language worker ...

What is the difference? …

I suppose you have those qualifications. I think what you learn at [college], to me, is just basic linguistics. There is heaps of stuff you have to learn to be a linguist and I haven’t learned that much in my three years at [college]. There are heaps of other things I need to learn, like glossing …

... so you think the difference between a language worker and a linguist is qualifications?

Oh, there is more to it than that. I suppose if you are a language worker, I think they both have understandings. They [linguists] work in the community for a long time so they have an understanding of the language and the basic language structure and the speakers. They have more knowledge than students I suppose. I haven’t got the experience. (45IL5)

I just call myself language worker ...

What is the difference?

Well, because like you, you’re really above me. You got Batchelor of Arts, you got Masters.

So, its qualifications that make the difference ...

Well, that’s how I look at it. (52IL5)
[I’m a] language worker ...

*What is the difference?*

There’s not much difference. Um, we’ve been arguing that we want to see our language workers to rise up to become linguists so that they don’t have to have a linguist working side by side with them, cause they can do all the language work and the linguistics stuff as well. Which is what most of us have been doing now …

*What would you need to do to be a linguist?*

We have to get our degree.

*So it is just a degree?*

Yeah, that final piece of paper to say we are a linguist even though we work side by side with a linguist, we do a lot of work they do here as well. Yeah and it’s really good. And I class myself as language worker because I can speak the language and I can interpret and understand it, and linguist, you got to do a lot of grammar and texts and everything and tense stuff of it all. (18IL3)

[I’m a] language worker ...

*What is the difference?*

A linguist is more higher than a language worker.

*What makes them higher?*

Um, I don’t know. A linguist is, um, a linguist is like a teacher. Yeah, and they. I don’t know what worker, but linguist is more than a language worker. That’s all I know. (16IL2)

Non-Indigenous participants across northern Australia generally agree that unless a person has at least university training then they are ‘language workers’. This provides, according to NILRs, a clear distinction between the two and it provides the individual with the recognition according to their qualification.

To me a linguist is someone who is prepared to undertake linguistic work on any language what so ever. So, I find my students are often referred to as linguists and I won’t agree … So our graduates from [college] are not linguists but if the community wants to call them linguists well so be it…(89NL/T6)
It is probably easier to call them language workers because some of them are language workers and some of them are trained linguists, so it keeps their distinction clear... One of the problems of using the term linguist is that they are doing work that is clearly language work. So they are often transcribing stories, translating them, collecting them, even doing research to collect material, but it is not strictly speaking linguistic work, it is a kind of linguistic work, and it is not usually what a linguist would think of themselves as doing. (51NL/T5)

A linguist really does the detailed analysis of the language materials. A language worker ideally would provide the material, would do a lot of the checks, do the liaison work that needs to happen so they can sit down and record with people. Um, would sit along side the linguist and do lots of checking. But the rigours of morphology and grammar and so on would be done by the linguist. (19NL3)

Staff members in language centres generally use one term to refer to their ILRs but an informant in one language centre argued that this is unfair to the highly skilled ILR as they are not getting the recognition that they deserve. This language centre employed two ILRs who have worked in the field for many years and have gained the necessary linguistic skills to do detailed linguistic analysis, one of these has done some formal linguistics training, but is still referred to and paid (see section 8.3 for discussion on funding) as a ‘language workers’. Staff at the language centre find this difficult as they cannot formally distinguish them from other ILRs and recognise them for the skills they have, particularly from a western society’s perspective. However, local Indigenous communities do provide them with the recognition they deserve.

In an ideal world you would have a language worker like [David] who actually understands that process [the rigours of morphology and grammar] and can work it through. Like we can actually say to [David], we think this is happening with this case can you go and find some examples and talk to people about this that or the other and he actually can sit and do, he loves to do that, he loves morphology. So
there are a real range. We’ve got some language workers who all they
do is just liaison through to language workers like [Leanne] who is
working on morphology, and she wouldn’t even know what
morphology is but she likes to conjugate verbs and do lists of how
they conjugate and work out the verb classes … and so on but doesn’t
use those terminology…

So it’s the knowledge of linguistic analysis that determines whether
they’re a language worker or a linguist?

Yeah I think so. That’s in my mind.

You talked a lot about [David] and [Bret]… who have those skills to
analyse language, would you class them as linguist or a language
worker?

In a European sense they’re a language worker, which is sad. This is
what I am saying, from another perspective, from a community
perspective they’re seen as linguists. (19NL3)

During the discussions on titles, ILRs in all regions raised the importance of ILRs
and NILRs working together as professional equals on language projects. ILRs
argued that the NILR and the ILR have different sets of skills and knowledge but all
of these are vital for the success of the project; therefore they should work together
as equals.

Working together is the best because, I have my world and you have
your world, and we can work things out together. It should be a
collaborative approach we can both bring things to it. (04IL/T1)

I think both they should work together. As they are coming in with
two sets of values. You know. You know. What an Indigenous person
has to offer. He might offer something that a non-Indigenous person
can. Non-Indigenous person might offer something that the
Indigenous person can’t offer. They have to work, and their values
have to work and meet half way, so that, with them both working
together, you know, come up with something that would be good.
Structured. Yeah. (25IL4)
However, one participant from a region where there are no language centres argued that NILRs should be brought in to communities to help to coordinate programmes rather than having the ILRs do it. He believes that in his community outsiders will reduce the effects of internal disputes and disagreements on language projects. He also believes an outsider will be able to get the project up and running, but at the same time it should be the ILRs who collect data.

A person like [one ILR] is qualified to do that himself but yeah, it is better to bring someone from outside to work, not with the Elders but to plan it. To plan and keep these people. People already discussed that … I think we need to have a fulltime programme and have experts like yourself to coordinate to look after the programme and run it and have [ILRs] and people like that. … So it just needs a good co-ordination and a proper programme written down for preschool, primary school, high school TAFE and whatever else, and I would like to see it on site. That way it would draw attention and interest of people …

Do you think the people who finish the course at Batchelor have the skills to run these programmes themselves?

For me, I would still prefer someone to be available on site. (08IL/O1)

In summary, recognition for the language skills an ILR has is very important. The title they prefer to be called differs from region to region and within regions. Some regions argue that the title clarifies the role ILRs play in language work and in many cases provides equality in the work they do with others. Some ILRs can be quite offended by the title used to refer to them whilst others, despite arguing that they have similar skills to a NILR, say that it is qualifications not skills that distinguish between a ‘language worker and a ‘linguist’.

8.2.2. Which Language to Document or Maintain

Australia’s traditional languages are changing at such a rapid pace that grandchildren often cannot communicate with their grandparents in their traditional language, and parents of these grandchildren tend to speak what the children are speaking so that they can communicate with their own children. Parents then act as interpreters between grandchildren and grandparents (personal observation and discussions over
a ten year period with Indigenous students). This issue adds to the complexity of language documentation and maintenance in remote communities. ILRs and their community need to decide which language they will document and maintain, i.e. the language of the Elders, the language of the ILR or the language of the teenagers or younger children. Different community members have different and quite strong opinions about this. However, most argue that it should be the language of the Elders.

Well, a lot of them [ILRs] go back and want to work with the Elders, of course. Because a lot of them think that the Elders speak proper language, where as the younger people are not talking the language properly ... They work on the Elders. I’m more interested, I myself am interested in making sure that we, sort of maintain the language the Elders speak. I know that languages change all the time, but um, but I would like to see that we preserve the language that is spoken by Elders, by adults. (63IL/T6)

I would choose an Elder and I would get the Elder to go and talk with the kids, and that, and they have their discussion and they come to an agreement and I would work with whatever they have agreed with.

*So the decision is a community decision* ...

Yeah. (54IL5)

I think at least in areas where languages are still relatively strong people will ideally work on the language of an old relative. (51NL/T5)

Participants also discussed their opinions about whether or not it makes a difference to what language and how much of it is documented if an Indigenous person does it rather than a non-Indigenous person. Everyone tended to agree that it does make a difference because Indigenous and non-Indigenous people would document different aspects of the language and for different reasons. Non-Indigenous people do it as part of their career, whereas Indigenous people do it because they want to keep their language alive because their language and culture are part of them, and provide them with a sense of belonging and identity.
A non-Indigenous person has different sort of interest. I think anyway. They are basically looking at the language in a more sort of scientific perspective and, you know, basically just want to know how the language works and so on. Whereas, Indigenous people have passion for it. I guess they know it’s their language and can really get stuck into it. Providing they have right training and so on. (63IL/T5)

Certainly ... Are these things predictable. Surely it must make a difference ... I think an [Indigenous person] will take a different sample to someone else, they will have different insights in analysing, they may do a much better job on... working on the significance of things and so on ... I think an outsider’s point of view of the language can be useful. I think an insider view from a person who is linguistically trained can provide special insights. (89NL/T6)

Indigenous people prefer to document the language of the Elders but ILRs argued that it is difficult to document the Elders’ language as they are often reluctant to provide the data needed. This was particularly the case in regions that did not have the support of a language centre. Two participants in Queensland argued that Elders will not just give away their knowledge so ILRs need to ask the right questions to get the information that they need. They claimed that Elders will not elaborate on answers and this makes collecting language data so difficult that some ILRs believe that the Elders do not care about handing down their traditional language to future generations. As a result, the ILRs give up trying to document or maintain their traditional language, believing they are not supported and that nobody cares about language so there is no point in doing the language work.

It’s just hard to get, I don’t know, get around and collect the names of [fluent speakers]. Yeah everybody is just doing their own thing. They’re just having a good time. They’d just rather do something else than sit down and spill their guts to a tape recorder. They want to keep that information to themselves, you know what I mean?

Why do you think they want to do that?

I don’t know. Maybe you got to ask the right questions to get that answer. If you don’t ask them that question they just keep it to
themselves. They won’t tell you, you just have to ask them that right question. (03IL1)

[My people] are the most difficult people. You know if you ask for their cooperation they will say to you, ‘Yes, I will on the conditions’. They got conditions… some conditions are unnecessary and some [Elders] don’t want to be part of it. It’s not because they don’t want to teach the language it’s just that they want to be treated special … So if you talk to them [and] you don’t know them and if you can’t play smart … [then] you got to lay low and do whatever to win them. You got to win them first.

So people ... who do a language course can’t necessarily just come in and work with Elders, they have to build their confidence and build up relationships

Yes, this has to be done first. ... They don’t want to come, they reckon [ILRs are] trying to disrupt the language, their language … we need people like yourself to come and work with us and know how to convince the Elders and get the language back. (08IL/O1)

In summary, there is an issue about what form of the language to document but most participants argue this should be the language of the Elders. Many of the above quotes might sound like the participants believe that Elders just want control of their language and the right to determine who can and who cannot work on their language. However, this problem could also be due to the cultural and linguistic factors discussed in section 8.1. Linguistically unsupported communities may not have addressed these issues of language documentation and maintenance, therefore do not realise that they can work through the issues and find ways to document and maintain their language without breaching their customs and beliefs.

8.2.3. Benefits for the Language Community

Another concern raised by Indigenous participants was the issue of copyright and the lack of benefits brought by research to their community. Participants were concerned that NILRs would record their languages and get the recognition for it even though the language belongs to the Indigenous people and they played a significant role in
the language project. They were also concerned that they would lose control and ownership of their language even though they recognise that both ILRs and NILRs need to work on the project as equals for the success of the programme.

... [Working together is important] But then again the copyright laws, who’s got ownership of the work. That’s the bottom line because non-Indigenous person can say well I did all the work, I can take my stuff away. So for the Indigenous person we are back to square one, more-or-less ... you got to play the game safely, eh? You got to be one step ahead, because someone might say it ... So they should come together, Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Indigenous person got the language skills and the non-Indigenous has those methodologies on how to maintain it and they need to meet half way and say all right we’re working together, this is the deal that we both have a copy of each of what we done. So they covering each other. They have to have a contract but they should both do it. (25IL4)

These concerns generated a sense of mistrust of NILRs in some communities so Indigenous people have put practices in place to minimise such problems. Some communities ask for contracts to be signed between the two parties, and others, particularly language centres, have developed policies stating the conditions upon which the NILR works on language programmes. These policies need to be abided by at all times. Prior to starting any language project NILRs have to sign an agreement saying that they agree to the terms and conditions, and if they choose not to sign it they cannot work on the language project. Other, usually smaller language centres just stop working with any NILR they lose trust in.

One participant, who had worked on several big language documentation projects and was undertaking formal study, no longer works as an ILR and did not finish her linguistics study due to her family not being recognised for the work they had done on a dictionary project. She stated that during the early stages of the dictionary project, which took three to four years to complete, many people were involved, but during the final phase different people, or a select few, were involved in the project. When the dictionary was completed and launched, some of the community members were very upset because they had not been acknowledged at all for their involvement...
or knowledge provided. They felt they had been heavily involved in the project in the beginning and were not acknowledged at all in the end. This caused such community tensions that some community members have refused to allow this NILR to work on any more of their language projects. They felt that this NILR wanted all the glory for writing the dictionary herself. As a result, the participant said that ‘if that’s how linguists work I didn’t want to be one’ and that she would no longer work on language projects. She also dropped out of her course. However, knowing the NILR, I am sure that no offence was intended – it was simply an oversight. This oversight upset various community members and may have severe consequences for NILRs working on future language projects in that community. This was not an isolated incident as similar incidents have occurred in other regions, as one participant in Western Australia discussed.

... and people, researchers have been thrown out of communities because of it. People are saying, like this anthropologist and his wife who have worked in a community off and on for forty years, have just been told not to come back again. And everyone loves them and thinks they’re gorgeous, but they’ve said you’ve made yourself wealthy and famous and we’re still sitting here with no money and um people are starting to get a bit annoyed by that. The fact that, you know, a European expert is well to do and the aboriginal people they’ve worked with are not recognised. (19NL3)

Communities want and expect benefits from language projects within their community, regardless of who did the work. Participants sometimes felt that when a NILR completes a language project in their community and sends a copy of the final version of the work to the community, such as a grammar, a dictionary or a detailed phonological analysis of the language, it is full of linguistic jargon and too complicated for most community members to read. This leads them to think that the materials are useless and of no benefit to them in maintaining or documenting their language.

In summary, when communities do not receive anything, or anything useful, at the end of a project they can feel that they did not get any benefit themselves out of the project and that the researcher was there just for their own benefit. A severe
consequence of this is that if these people decide not to support and assist in language projects it is highly likely that their language will disappear with much of it not being documented, and therefore, will not be available for future generations or the wider community to learn from.

8.2.4. Community Support and Attitudes

ILRs who work on language projects without the support of a linguistics organisation argue that they need the support of their community council if a language project is to succeed. They need council support to apply for funding to purchase the necessary materials and equipment for the language project. They also need the council’s support to negotiate the necessary details of the programme with the Elders and the rest of the community. They need the council to get the necessary language support from fluent speakers to ensure they are documenting or maintaining the language correctly, as well as getting the community to recognise they have the skills to do the job.

Yeah, like I said if there was more support and probably money available to run classes up at the school or just to buy paper and pencils or something … [to] use in classes …. cause we just go in with our own, what we get when go to [college]. Whatever paper we get there, that’s what we use here. So whatever materials we provide them that’s it … Yeah, but we got the certificate there but we can’t, we don’t really know how to really use it. We don’t know how to go about showing the council that we got the certificate or we can do this or can do that. I don’t know. There’s just no support there… I don’t know why. Less support from community or, I don’t know. Whatever (discarding it as if it didn’t matter). (03IL1)

These same ILRs argue that even if they did have the funding and support to run the language projects it would make no difference in maintaining the language as people’s needs are now different. They argue that people do not need their traditional language for everyday living now, as the majority of people in their community speak English or the local creole.

Everything is just the same every year. I don’t know if it really changes … It’s a different time now. This is a different time. Our
language is dying, it’s not needed now. You know, not like [in the] dreamtime time. [In] this age our language [is] not needed to be used now. Everybody is into English, and this language now [creole]. I don’t think you can get people to start talking [language] again …

Do you think people are interested in at least documenting the language for future generations?

Yeah. But they don’t work together to do that. (05IL1)

In summary, at times it appears that that everyone blames everyone else for the lack of language work in their community. It could be, as 63IL/T6 argued, that individuals have lost the spirit of independence and are so used to the colonial mentality that drastic changes are needed in the community before they themselves gain the motivation to do the necessary language work to document their traditional languages. However, it could also be a result of the combination of factors such as the fear of breaching traditional customs and practices, misunderstanding of the desires and roles of ILRs and the misinterpretation of one another’s attitudes and a lack of thorough communication between all concerned. This ‘colonial mentality’ seems to be an issue in remote isolated communities where there is no support to negotiate issues affecting language documentation and maintenance.

8.3. Financial Incentives

Language centres across northern Australia, particularly in Western Australia, discussed their concern that according to funding requirements, all ILRs must be paid at the same rate. Language centres usually employ most of their ILRs through CDEP funding, which creates an inequity among ILRs. Participants argued that the senior and more experienced ones should be paid more than the less experienced ILRs. Language centres argue that people who are on CDEP but work in areas other than language do not have to work as long hours as ILRs and they do not have to travel out bush. As a result, there are no incentives for people to stay with the language centres for long periods or to do fieldwork. An ILR can earn the same amount of money by staying at home or working in other fields without doing any fieldwork or having to go to the language centre every day to work. Language centres argue that this is one of the main causes for the high turnover of ILRs. Language centres are trying to find ways around this issue. Funding is an issue, not only for regions with
language centres, but also in regions where there are no language centres or other linguistics supports. All regions need the funds to pay ILRs and to pay Elders to assist them with the language projects. Without funding, there is no financial incentive for the Elders to assist with language projects or for ILRs to work on language projects.

It would be lovely to be able to recognise it (the skills of certain ILRs), from that sense, coming from a community’s perspective but the reality is that it just doesn’t fit in with the European system and the funding. It sometimes really gets me that I’m (a NILR) being paid a certain salary and yet [David] and [Bret] are being paid CDEP salaries. I kind of feel quite embarrassed about that. It’s the very unfortunate reality of the funding we get. We try to compensate for that in other ways, in non-monetary ways. (19NL3).

... we don’t really know when that government money [is going to] come in to run the course ... I would like to see that course running ... all the time. All the time. Sometimes it has a big break ... I see there are young people very interested. Yeah, [but without] money people can’t run the course ... The teachers (Elders or ILRs) doing the teaching [have] got to be paid for that, because someone may be teaching a language course here and is putting in too much time away from his own work and things like that. He can’t just do it for nothing. That’s why we are depending on government money to come through. (11TO2)

In the Torres Strait, where there are no language centres, ILRs do not have the funds to pay themselves, so if they want to do the work they usually do it in their own time using their own resources without any pay. These ILRs also do not have the funds to pay Elders to assist them with the language projects. As a result, there is no financial incentive for the Elders to assist them. Four participants (01IL1, 03IL1, 05IL1 and 63IL6) argued that Elders should be prepared to work on language projects on their traditional language regardless of whether they get paid, because it is their responsibility to record it for future generations.
Elders want money, they are greedy they don’t even want to help save their language unless they get paid for it. (01IO1)

However, without funding it is very difficult to run any sort of language programme, whether it is a small local community programme or a larger documentation programme. Its continuity relies on individuals doing it out of love and concern for their language. Such individuals do it unsupported which is difficult, especially if they do not have community, Elder and financial support. Rarely are such projects long term, regardless how skilled and motivated the individuals are.

It is very hard for anybody to take, whatever training, to take back and do anything useful if they don’t have local support. If there’s no job for them locally. No way of making money. If they can influence a local council to do things that’s great… Now you can want to develop your language but without a place to stand, without funding or whatever it is not easy. Certainly not easy to develop something that is going to continue. No, I think where you are going to find successes is where there have been, for one reason or another, supportive organisations: a local language centre, concerned school, luck of the draw, local missionaries whatever. But I think it takes some sort of critical mass. There’s nothing in this life that works by individuals. (89NL/T6)

Participants argued that traditional languages will be lost regardless of what the communities do if the local, State and Federal governments do not put policies in place and fund them. One participant strongly argues that the government needs to be serious about developing language policies and to put such policies in place as well as funding them appropriately. He argues that some states are slowly implementing such policies, but the State he lives in has never approved a language policy even though he was on a committee that developed such a policy for that State.

So, the government needs to be serious about policies, to put policies in place and also fund those policies. Strategic plan. Some states are slowly doing that, like New South Wales, Western Australia. The Northern Territory had bilingual education for a while, but states like Queensland and South Australia. South Australia has something.
Queensland never had any language policy. I mean I was involved in language policy development at one time with the Queensland Education Department. It was all done, there was a committee set up of Indigenous people to put together a policy but then it was just shelved. They didn’t implement it, it’s just sitting there. It’s still sitting there. They haven’t done anything about it. So the governments are not serious about it. That’s what I mean, they need to get serious. They need to recognise United Nations declarations on Indigenous rights and so on in terms of linguistic rights for Indigenous people and so on. (63IL/T6)

In summary, government attitudes towards traditional languages have a massive effect on Indigenous language programmes across Australia. Without the government’s support, including its attitudes, policies and funding, individual language projects are unlikely to be successful.

Good bureaucracy and institutions play a vital role in supporting local work. Local work can be assisted or hampered, depending on whether government and non-government structures are providing effective support or not. (Koori Centre, 2007)

8.4. Discussion

This project found many community factors that can significantly constrain or enhance the progress of language documentation and maintenance projects. It also found that all of these factors are far more problematic in remote communities that do not have outside linguistic and financial support, particularly from a language centre. Linguistic fluency and community status were fundamental factors that affected language documentation and maintenance activities across northern Australia (section 8.1). However, this was more noticeably the case in regions without linguistic supports such the Queensland regions and parts of Central Australia. Staff in language centres have spent many years dealing with cultural and linguistic issues and have managed to negotiate ways around them without breaching traditional cultural or linguistic practices or confronting the attitudes of community Elders and other community members. In regions where there are no linguistic supports such negotiations have not been possible. It appears that the reason for this
is that ILRs are not aware that the problem exists. Those in the community who are aware of the problem have not realised that there could be a way of supporting the younger generations in documenting and maintaining their traditional language without breaching thousands of years of cultural and linguistic practices. But even if ILRs were aware that the problem exists, participants argue, they do not have the negotiation skills to negotiate around such a long-standing tradition with the Elders.

Cultural status is a problem that particularly affects women, as they rarely go through initiation ceremonies (section 8.1), so it is harder to recognise when they have the correct cultural status. As the majority of ILRs are women, this factor significantly constrains linguistic activities in all regions. Again, this is more of a problem in areas where there are no linguistic supports, since regions with language centres have developed strategies to support the recognition of women’s skills.

Equality and recognition for ILRs working in language centres or independently in the field was an important factor in the success of any linguistics project. Participants argued that it takes both Indigenous and non-Indigenous language researchers to document a language properly. However, as it is usually the NILR who has the higher educational qualifications, participants argue, they are the ones who receive the recognition for the work. Participants argue that without their knowledge and expertise in the community the NILR could not achieve their goals. Therefore it was important that ILRs were properly recognised for their contribution to the project. Appropriate titles were one way ILRs argued that such recognition was awarded. Appropriate titles also provided the ILRs with recognition, status and pride (section 8.2).

Funding was also a fundamental factor in the success of any language project; however, whose responsibility it is to provide that funding was unclear. ILRs who worked for language centres did not need to be involved in such issues as the language centre administrative staff and NILRs generally worked out funding issues. However, ILRs in isolated, linguistically unsupported regions needed to have the skills to apply for funding and manage the funding according to grant conditions. ILRs in these regions were not trained with these skills and argued that it was the responsibility of their local council to play this role but councils rarely did so.
Whose responsibility it is to apply for and manage funding for linguistics projects in remote communities is not clear and is outside the scope of this project but is a major factor in future of language maintenance and documentation projects and needs to be addressed.

The fact that Indigenous people are still concerned about NILRs abusing their research privileges (8.2.3) is very worrying as many NILRs and linguistics organisations have worked hard over the past 25 years to stop such abuses happening and to gain the trust of the communities. Since the 1980s there has been much discussion about the abuse of research privilege (see for example Caffery, 2006; Cameron et al., 1992; Wilkins, 1992). Such concerns were the basis for the development and implementation of numerous ethical guidelines and protocols for researchers working in Australian Indigenous communities. The Australian Linguistic Society has been proactive in developing and implementing documents to guide and advise NILRs who do fieldwork in Indigenous communities, in order to reduce and stop such concerns. Such documents include the Society’s 1990 Statement of Ethics (1990) and Linguistic Rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities (1984). There are also the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies’ (2000) Guidelines for Ethical Research in Indigenous Studies and the Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages (2004) Guide to Community Protocols for Indigenous Language Projects, among many other documents currently available on ethics, intellectual property and community protocols. Despite these widely available documents, Indigenous participants in this project have the perception that this abuse is still occurring.

All the linguistic and community status factors and the community attitudes outlined above affect how individual ILRs perceive themselves within their community and within a language project, therefore they affect project outcomes. These factors can reinforce or reduce ILRs’ sense of professional efficacy, which significantly affects the success of a language project. Such factors can stop language activities occurring in many communities, particularly those that are unsupported by language centres or other relevant organisations. During the fieldwork for this research project, I found that ILRs who are supported and recognised for their linguistic skills are more confident in their language projects and tend to be more successful in achieving their
linguistic goals. I also found that it was usually ILRs who work through a language centre that had this sense of pride. They usually had the better linguistic and liaison skills, and were prepared to develop further linguistic skills so that they could do more language work. As a result, communities with the support of a language centre have more language projects on the ground and more ILRs working and training compared to areas where there are no such support mechanisms.
CHAPTER 9. FINAL DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Chapter 9. **FINAL DISCUSSION**

As every Australian Indigenous community is different so are the issues that affect the documentation and maintenance of their endangered languages. As a consequence, there are no straightforward answers to the questions:

> To what extent, and in what ways, does linguistic training assist in the documentation or maintenance of endangered languages? If trained Indigenous language researchers work in the field, what factors enhance or constrain them? If they do not work in the field, why not?

The issues discussed in this thesis are broad and very complex. They are spread across many disciplines, from curriculum development, literacy, community and government policy to crossing cultural boundaries and dealing with the attitudes of individual community members. The issues do not stop with the training, community and cultural factors, but also extend to the influence of the wider community of Australia. This chapter summarises all these issues (section 9.1) then discusses possible solutions (section 9.2).

### 9.1. Review of Findings

My data came from interviews recorded largely in the home communities of 98 participants triangulated through interview data from ILRs, Elders and other community members. In addition, there were some data gathered from interviews with NILRs and non-Indigenous lecturers, and from my own personal knowledge and experience (Chapter 3). Data from existing publications and internal reports were reviewed (Chapter 2) and student and graduate data held by participating educational institutions were consolidated and analysed (Chapter 4). The new interview data (Chapter 5), which has not previously been reported, represents the views, beliefs, practices and customs of Indigenous Australians at the grass roots level (Chapters 6, 7 and 8).

The literature documents the desperate state of Indigenous languages in Australia (section 2.1) and it argues that more Indigenous people should be trained to document and maintain their traditional languages because of evidence that their prior knowledge and relationships provide more insights about the languages than
those of non-Indigenous people (sections 2.2 and 2.3). As a result of such evidence linguistics training courses specifically designed for remote Indigenous Australians were developed, and have been delivered by various educational institutions over the past 30 years.

Despite these good intentions, the findings of this project show that few Indigenous Australians who have graduated from these courses work directly on language documentation and maintenance projects. For this project, I interviewed 44 ILRs working in the field. Of these 44, 22 were trained on-the-job and 22 had undertaken formal training (Table 4.5). Of the latter 22, only six were working directly on language documentation and maintenance projects at the time. All the others were developing and often teaching vernacular literacy programmes from existing materials in their local schools.

I have grouped the factors that affect language documentation and maintenance into three categories (Figure 9.1): Graduate and training, Workplace environments and Community factors.

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<tr>
<th>Findings</th>
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<tr>
<td>Graduate &amp; training factors</td>
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<td>Reduced number of graduates over 30 years</td>
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<td>Few graduates working in the field</td>
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<td>Relative value of formal vs. on-the-job training</td>
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<td>Low literacy levels accepted into courses</td>
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<td>Low retention rates and slow completions</td>
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<td>Lecturers without specific education training</td>
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<td>Lecturers without sufficient classroom support</td>
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<td>Lack of tutorial support for students</td>
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<td>Inadequate technological equipment</td>
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<td>Funding policies promoting numbers over quality</td>
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<th>Work environments</th>
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<tr>
<td>Different levels of linguistic support in different regions</td>
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<td>Different skills required according to work environment and goals</td>
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<td>Sensitivity to equal treatment and appropriate titles</td>
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<th>Community factors</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural acceptance of risks of language dying out</td>
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<td>Cultural solutions to language work other than by elders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community support for language projects</td>
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<td>Financial resources for ILRs</td>
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<td>Financial resources and policy support for language centres</td>
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Figure 9.1: Summary of main findings.
I now review the key findings in each of the three categories before synthesising them to an integrated conclusion and providing recommendations (section 9.2).

9.1.1. Graduate and Training Findings

This research project started by looking at whether the linguistics training of Indigenous adults resulted in people working on language projects that contribute to the documentation or maintenance of their traditional languages. It initially examined the types of courses available, both currently and historically, and the aims of each course (section 4.1). The overall aim of each course was to provide Indigenous adults with the linguistics skills to work on their traditional language.

The curricula developed to teach linguistics courses were not usually based on empirical evidence but on what the course lecturers believed ILRs needed in the field (personal experience, observation and discussion with people who developed such curriculum over a twelve year period, including during research for this project). These courses were usually developed by course lecturers who did not have education or curriculum development qualifications (section 6.2). They were also usually developed with little consultation with people in Indigenous communities who are first language speakers of their traditional language and live a fairly traditional lifestyle. In the cases where Indigenous people were involved, they were rarely experienced in curriculum development and often too shy to contribute to the development, or rarely provided information on the more detailed aspects of their cultural requirements (section 8.1). As curriculum development teams operate without access to detailed research on the effectiveness of such training in Indigenous communities, a single course is developed, then taught to students from a diversity of linguistic environments with limited tailoring to their local situation (section 7.1).

There were a total of 411 known graduates from the participating educational institutions. SAL trained 63% of the graduates over a ten-year period compared to 18% over an eleven-year period trained by CALL (section 4.4). Over the years, the numbers of graduates have dramatically reduced. This may be the result of course delivery methods changing to teach multilingual and multicultural groups in the one class, usually delivered on campus (sections 4.1 and 6.3). In addition, the academic
levels of the courses have increased (section 4.1) but the literacy levels of students have not (section 6.1).

Literacy was a fundamental factor affecting Indigenous students whilst undertaking linguistics training, as well as ILRs in the workplace. Students were often accepted into courses that required higher literacy levels than those possessed by the student, which lowered retention rates or lengthened the time taken to complete a course (section 6.1). According to some educational institutions’ policy, in particular Batchelor Institute and Pilbara TAFE, students with literacy skills lower than those required to enrol in a linguistics course should be directed to the institution’s bridging course to prepare them for the higher-level linguistics course. However, students with lower than required literacy skills were often accepted directly into the linguistics course and then needed more support from lecturers than those with the appropriate literacy skills (section 6.5). Students also required tutorial support both in their home community and while on campus. Funding for tutorial support is available for students but with the difficult tutorial policy and arduous paperwork it was often difficult to find appropriate tutors (section 6.5). Lecturers accepted these students with low literacy into the courses, knowing it would increase their workload and that the student would be likely to struggle through the course, because they needed to keep a minimum number of students to sustain funding for staffing levels (section 6.1).

There is no doubt that funding is limited for linguistics programmes. However, Federal and State government policies (see section 4.1.4 for an example of such policy) argue that Indigenous languages need to be documented and maintained so Indigenous people can reinforce their understanding of their cultural heritage to give them a greater sense of identity. If the threat of Australia’s Indigenous languages dying out undocumented within the next couple of decades is to be alleviated then the issue of funding, whilst vital, should become secondary to that of developing appropriate programmes and putting them in place to document the remaining languages.

Indigenous adult linguistics training can be successful when appropriately matched to the individual community’s needs and the appropriate supports are provided (see
for example Amery, 2000; Koori Centre, 2007). This was also evidenced by the number of ILRs working in language centres and on language projects where there was linguistic support, compared to the lack of ILRs working in areas where there were no language centres or other linguistic supports (Table 4.6). Targeted training, I argue, is vital to the successful work of ILRs in the field. This study found that current, or untargeted, linguistics training programmes do not generally lead to ILRs documenting or maintaining their languages themselves. However, targeted training can be very successful when appropriately matched to an individual community’s needs (section 7.1). One course does not suit all language communities due to societal, cultural, political and financial differences among communities. Even though there is a commonality of factors, targeted training is important for the success of language documentation programmes by ILRs.

### 9.1.2. Workplace Findings

Although few graduates of formal courses are employed as ILRs working directly on language documentation and maintenance projects there are many Indigenous people working as ILRs who have been trained on-the-job. From interviews with them it is clear that the linguistic skills ILRs need to do language work across northern Australia differed depending on their work environment (see section 7.1). Those who work within a language centre work as part of a team, which requires them to have specific skills to do the required linguistic tasks. These ILRs are generally very well supported by NILRs and other employees of the language centre. They also have access to all of the resources needed to complete the task, and support if they need to ask any questions or need additional help.

ILRs who work in regions where there are no linguistic supports generally have to have all the skills within themselves that would otherwise be provided by various employees in language centres. To do any language work in regions without linguistic support ILRs need to provide their own resources and generally work on their own, initiating and managing projects, funds and complex project issues themselves. They need the linguistic skills to collect and analyse data as well as to produce the required materials (section 7.2). These ILRs usually receive very little support from people in their community or their community Council (section 8.2.4).
They are also not paid to work on language projects, unlike those in language centres and schools who are usually paid through CDEP (section 8.3).

Other ILRs work in schools where they need computer and vernacular literacy skills to produce literacy materials for various year levels at the school. These ILRs are also often required to teach vernacular literacy and oral skills to classes; they also need to assess children according to the State or Territory’s education benchmarks. Most of these skills are not taught in linguistics courses in any of the participating educational institutions (section 7.1 and 7.2).

As a consequence of these factors, this research project found that in regions where there were linguistic supports, i.e. the presence of language centres or dedicated individuals or organisations, more ILRs are working and appear to be achieving their linguistic goals. In contrast, in regions where there were no language centres there are few ILRs working directly on language projects, even though some do work in their community schools developing literacy materials (throughout Chapter 7). The projects initial hypothesis that there may be a difference in documentation and maintenance activities between urban and remote communities was not substantiated because the differences was actually between linguistically supported and linguistically unsupported areas.

The findings in chapters 4, 6, 7 and 8 show that linguistics training in Indigenous adult education could be reviewed and adjusted to meet the specific requirements and needs of each community and most importantly those of the ILR working in that community. No one individual can do the work necessary to maintain or document an endangered language by themself; they need the skills that are appropriate to their community and language situation as well as the support of their community and a linguistics organisation. The ILRs working in the Torres Strait have a particularly hard time given that they face almost all of the issues addressed in this thesis but have very little human, physical or linguistic support. A key solution would be to have a language centre in all regions to support ILRs in both formal and on-the-job training and during their day-to-day operations (this is discussed further in section 9.2).
9.1.3. Community Findings

Whilst there is evidence of 411 Indigenous Australians who have completed at least some formal linguistics training, it appears that the vast majority of these did not go on to do language work in their community, despite most of them having done the training originally with this intent. When asked if anyone who has finished a linguistics course has gone on to document or maintain their traditional language, the overwhelming response received from Indigenous participants was a straight out ‘no’ (section 6.7). This response came from regions with and without linguistic supports; it is a good measure of the effectiveness of linguistics training across northern Australia for over thirty years and matches my results. However, the reasons are not simply to do with training or work environments.

Community Elders are generally supportive of people undertaking linguistics study, or indeed any study. However, when it comes to working closely with their traditional customs, Elders are concerned that if they allow their language to be documented and handed on to future generations by Indigenous people who have not gained the right cultural and linguistic status, they will be breaching long term traditional practices (section 8.1). Participants reported that some Elders would rather see their language die than allow an Indigenous person who does not have the correct linguistic and cultural status within the community try to document or maintain it (section 8.1 and 8.2). Community awareness programmes about the precarious situation of their traditional languages and about the role of ILRs are vital for the success of language projects by ILRs and seem to help Elders to work out ways to overcome the cultural and linguistic constraining factors (section 8.1). These problems are mainly in regions that do not have the support of a language centre, linguistics organisation or NILRs (section 8.1) to contribute to such community awareness.

It is also apparent that many community members, particularly Elders, do not understand what skills are taught to students during a linguistics course. Many Elders believe that students are taught how to speak and teach their traditional language (section 8.1). They are not aware that students are taught skills to assist in the documentation and maintenance of their traditional languages so it can be handed on
to future generations. Elders are unaware that ILRs are not taught to speak their traditional language fluently and that it takes, in some communities, the whole community to work with or support a language project for it to be successful. This includes the support and contribution of fluent speakers (section 8.2) and the role of council in applying for and managing funds and negotiating the project with other community members (section 8.3). Community awareness programmes would assist Elders and other community members in understanding why people undertake linguistics training, what skills they are developing and how they can contribute to documenting or maintaining their traditional language (section 8.1). Such awareness courses would also assist community members in understanding the issues ILRs face when undertaking language projects and the support needed from the whole community to do the project (Chapter 8). Community awareness programmes have generally been successful in regions with a strong language centre.

9.2. Possible Solutions

From the results of this research, it would be fair to say that even if the linguistics training of Indigenous adults was perfect, it is unlikely that we would see much increase in the documentation and maintenance of Australia’s endangered languages by Indigenous Australians given the existing constraints. One research participant argued that linguistics in Indigenous adult education has had no positive effects on Australia’s Indigenous languages.

Visions of the 1970s have not played out according to the more rosy hopes, for a combination of understandable reasons. It is difficult to discern the particular contribution of the training and its quality. For instance, consider just one relatively objective indicator: there has been a paucity of published (or publishable) writings about language, or lengthy compositions in an Australian language, especially if one puts aside writings co-authored with an outsider (non-native-speaker let us say). (40NL5)

However, failure is not the message that this thesis wants to portray. Based on this project’s findings, I argue that the reasons linguistics training has not been as successful as some initially thought it would be are that the barriers to success have not previously been assessed from an Indigenous perspective, and that they are
complex and intertwining. I also argue that fixing one issue will not fix the overall problem. There could be a considerable increase in the documentation and maintenance of Australia’s Indigenous languages if all of the issues discussed in this thesis were addressed. But it is vital that the issues are addressed simultaneously, not in isolation, to really have an impact. It is also vital that action occurs as soon as possible as these languages are balancing on the edge of extinction and require documentation urgently. The response to this challenge, I argue, needs to come at three levels - curriculum development, policies of educational institutions, and Regional Indigenous Language Centre implementation and policy.

Indigenous Australian adult students come from diverse environments across the vast continent of Australia; some live quite different lifestyles to others as well as having different levels of support and resources to meet their linguistic goals of “helping to keep their language strong” (section 7.1). The linguistic, cultural and societal factors that affect language work in many communities are not usually considered during the curriculum development process. My research project aimed to make a contribution by providing an understanding of these factors which could be taken into account in future linguistics curriculum for Indigenous Australians. By asking Indigenous people at the grass roots level how relevant the courses have been to them and their language community, we have gained new insights into how appropriate linguistics training has been. Indigenous Australians have provided a very different picture to that thought to be the case by most curriculum developers (see Figure 9.1). Now it is up to the curriculum developers to listen to what these people have said and to develop appropriate and relevant courses that are targeted towards the needs of the diversity of ILRs and their communities.

Previous chapters have listed the numerous issues participants argued they faced while undertaking linguistics training, including lowering the standard of the courses to match literacy levels, communication by lecturers, teaching skills, tutors, literacy, and additional skills that need to be taught during the course (Chapter 6). All of these issues are directly related to the training and need to be addressed by educational institutions when establishing their policy and delivery environments within which the curriculum is used.
Participants also talked about various community issues that significantly affect the documentation and maintenance of Indigenous languages. These include issues of having the right linguistic and cultural status and knowledge (section 8.1) and personal issues including ILRs having the confidence to show the community that they have the necessary skills and that they can apply them in the right cultural way (Chapter 7). These non-training factors are fundamental issues that need to be addressed by Elders, Indigenous community Councils and other Indigenous community members for the sake of documenting or maintaining their traditional languages for future generations. In addition, these community factors cannot be ignored in the training of ILRs, and NILRs should be aware of these issues so that they can prepare to deal with them as needed. Other factors participants argued constrain them include the lack of support, funding and policy by State, Territory and Federal governments. One participant argued governments are not serious about linguistic and cultural rights for Indigenous people (section 8.3). If governments do not develop and implement policies on the documentation and maintenance of Indigenous languages, particularly to resource Regional Indigenous Language Centres, then none of the other issues found in this research project can be adequately addressed.

There are various levels of problems raised by participants with the linguistics training of Indigenous Australian adults and ILRs documenting and maintaining their traditional languages in the workplace. These include educational institutions, community and regional support. These various levels of issues are summarised in Table 9.1 but not all issues relate to all participating institutions or regions.

Some of the educational institutional issues could be rectified by increased funding and by enforcing policy for lecturers to direct students with low literacy skills to bridging courses (section 6.1). If these issues were rectified the lecturers could then concentrate on delivering linguistic skills to people ready for linguistics training at the literacy level the course was designed for. Increased funding would also allow lecturers to teach smaller groups, possibly one language group at a time, without fear of losing their jobs. This could also alleviate the courses from being ‘dumbed down’ (section 6.7) and improve the course’s outcomes.
### Educational institutions

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Curriculum</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The lack of empirical evidence to guide lecturers when developing linguistics curricula</td>
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<td>The need to increase lecturers’ skills in curriculum development</td>
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<tr>
<th>Delivery practices and policy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students with low levels of literacy undertaking higher-level linguistics courses</td>
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<tr>
<td>The lack of extra lecturer support for students with lower than required literacy skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>The lack of tutorial support in home communities and on campuses</td>
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<tr>
<td>The need to increase lecturers’ skills in teaching groups of people with low literacy, from a diversity of backgrounds and languages and needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>The lack of funding to run these courses so that lecturers can work without the worry of losing their jobs if the student numbers are low</td>
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### Outside education

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<th>Community:</th>
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<td>Lack of Council and Elders support for ILRs in the workplace</td>
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<td>Lack of Elders providing language data</td>
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<td>Lack of employment opportunities</td>
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<td>Lack of funding support from council</td>
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<th>Regional /Government Support:</th>
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<tr>
<td>The lack of language centres in remote regions to:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• support ILRs, particularly women, with their training and status</td>
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<tr>
<td>• provide work experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>• provide employment opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td>• support ILRs when establishing a language documentation and maintenance project</td>
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<tr>
<td>• support for ILRs in negotiating the needs for a language project, and</td>
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<tr>
<td>• provide support for community awareness programmes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of language policy in Indigenous community schools to employ ILRs as teachers of vernacular literacy programmes when not trained as teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of State, Territory and Federal language policy, infrastructure and funding support language activities in remote regions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 9.1: Key issues found inside and outside the educational environments for ILRs training and working in northern Australia as raised by participants in interview.

Regional Indigenous Language Centres in areas currently without linguistic support would certainly improve outcomes, both for Indigenous linguistics training and for increased documentation and maintenance of Indigenous languages. The NILS Report (AIATSIS and FATSIL, 2005) recommended that Regional Indigenous Language Centres and a National Indigenous Language Centre be established to assist in the documentation and maintenance of Australia’s Indigenous Languages (section 2.1.6). It recommended that Regional Indigenous Language Centres be the main facilitators of training with the support of training providers and a National Indigenous Language Centre (AIATSIS and FATSIL, 2005: 90). Regrettably, there is
no indication in the literature that these NILS Report recommendations have been taken up by Australian governments to date, which underlies participants’ claims that governments are not serious about linguistic and cultural rights for Indigenous people (section 8.3). My findings provide strong support for the NILS report’s recommendation to implement National and Regional Indigenous Language Centres. However, it is important to state that any action by outside bodies needs to be done through negotiation with and support of the language speakers.

The establishment of more Regional Indigenous Language Centres across northern Australia would improve the current status of Australia’s endangered languages and provide more employment opportunities for ILRs. They could support communities, not currently supported, in achieving their linguistic goals and work closely with educational institutions that deliver ILR training to provide work experience and employment opportunities. Such centres could contribute valuable information on the linguistics training needs of specific regions (section 7.1 and 7.2) to assist in the development of appropriate and relevant curriculum. In addition, as recommended in the NILS Report, the Regional Indigenous Language Centres could provide infrastructure and technical support to ILRs and communities (Figure 9.2). As conduits from a National Indigenous Language Centre, they could also direct financial support to community language projects and to Indigenous representative groups in their area that can make decisions about language policy and priorities (AIATSIS and FATSIL, 2005: 133).

![Figure 9.2: Summary of institutional arrangements (grey box backgrounds) needed to support ILRs whilst training and in the field, and in order to support and possibly increase the amount of urgently needed language documentation and maintenance activities. The Training Institutions and Regional Indigenous Language Centres need to integrate the activities encompassed in the grey box.](image)
A National Indigenous Language Centre, as argued in the NILS report (AIATSIS and FATSIL, 2005: 133-134), could advise governments on points of language policy. It could provide high-level support to Regional Indigenous Language Centres and assistance with funding and resources so that they can support ILRs, communities and educational institutions appropriately.

In summary, some of the results of this research project could be combined with some of the NILS recommendations so that Indigenous students of linguistics training courses and communities wanting to document and maintain their traditional languages are supported through the process. A National Indigenous Language Centre could provide high-level support to Regional Indigenous Language centres across northern Australia, as discussed above. More Regional Indigenous Language Centres in regions that do not currently have linguistic support could provide much needed linguistic support to ILRs and their communities. Educational institutions and Regional Indigenous Language Centres could support one another through training; educational institutions could continue to provide formal training but their students could learn the specific skills for their region in their Regional Indigenous Language Centre through work experience or on-the-job training. The integrated education and linguistics institutional response which is, I argue, needed to assist in the documentation and maintenance of more of Australia’s dying languages is shown in Figure 9.2. This provides a structure where educational institutions and language centres work independently but support one another in areas vital to the documentation and maintenance of Indigenous languages.

Such a structure would provide a mixture of formal and on-the-job training, which this study recommends is the best way for ILRs to gain the linguistic skills necessary to work on their own language. If more Regional Indigenous Language Centres were established, and were well funded to do the recommended tasks, students could do work experience or actually be employed in the language centre, as recommended in the NILS Report (section 2.1.6). Educational institutions would also greatly benefit from such a programme as students could complete certain core areas through the language centre, therefore reducing the lecturers’ travel and workloads. This provides additional academic support to each student as well as providing the vital regional skills that the ILR requires to work in their region.
The findings of this research are mainly aimed at good public outcomes, both in terms of improved cultural maintenance for Indigenous people, and improved efficiency and relevance of training to Indigenous Australians, and possibly to other Indigenous groups internationally. The findings are primarily aimed at assisting the linguistics and training fields to develop and implement more relevant and culturally appropriate training practices, curriculum and policies. They also aim to provide appropriate support to promote future maintenance and documentation projects for Australia’s endangered Indigenous languages. One language centre, one educational institution and one Federal Interpreter training feasibility study have already accepted some of the results of this research and are considering, with Indigenous people and relevant organisations and governments, how to adapt current practices to ensure the issues raised are addressed in their field (personal communications; I have provided information and had discussions with these organisations to assist in these processes).

9.3. Conclusion

In summary, this study has showed that formal linguistics training has made limited contribution to the documentation and maintenance of Australia’s Indigenous languages to date. The analysis leads to some well-defined recommendations for regional and national policy aimed at language centres and educational institutions, as well as specific curriculum and course delivery recommendations aimed at the training process. Given a combined response to these issues, there is good reason to believe that improved documentation and maintenance of Australia’s threatened languages can be achieved.
REFERENCES
REFERENCES


——. 1991. The Road Less Travelled: Recording and Teaching Aboriginal Languages in Western Australia. In: Linguistics in the Service of Society: Essays in

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APPENDICES

Sunset over Numbulwar, Top End, Northern Territory

Common White Gum, Kimberley, Western Australia
APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: PROJECT OVERVIEW

Linguistics in Adult Education & its Effects on Endangered Languages

Overview of Research project

This thesis aims to address the research question

To what extent, and in what ways, does linguistic training assist
in the documentation or maintenance of endangered languages?

Australian indigenous languages are relatively undocumented and extremely endangered. Therefore, so we do not lose hundreds or thousand of years of knowledge and culture, it is vital to document as much of what is left before they all die out. Indigenous people do not want to see their language and culture disappear and would like the tools to maintain or document their traditional languages themselves, to ensure correct language and cultural analysis. Possibly one of the best ways to maintain or document a language is by someone who is a first or second language speaker of the target language and linguistically trained. However, the linguistic courses offered to indigenous Australians must be both culturally appropriate and relevant to the communities needs. This research project will address the internal and external factors that enhance or constrain a trained indigenous language worker/linguist documenting or maintaining their traditional and extremely endangered language. Such information is vital to ensure the quality of accredited courses and the relevance of the skills that are taught to students. The results of this research aim to provide a thorough understanding on why some trained indigenous linguists use their linguistic skills to maintain or document their traditional language and others do not. The results may also provide details on what aspects of the training are successful and what needs to, and how they can, be improved. I expect the findings not only to show that training issues affect the documentation of Australia’s endangered languages but also sociological, environmental and cultural issues, that Registered Training Organisations and linguistic organisations are not yet aware of, affect the documentation or maintenance of these endangered languages.
The findings of this research project aim to benefit the linguistic and training industries and Australia’s indigenous language communities by the development, implementation and use of culturally appropriate and relevant training practices, curriculum, policies and support which will encourage future maintenance, documentation and revival projects for Australia’s endangered indigenous languages. This research aims to benefit individual language communities or language centres by providing them with the opportunity to contribute to language worker/linguist training, by identifying their specific linguistic requirements and hopefully incorporating them in the linguistic curriculum.

The purpose of this research project is to increase the documentation of Australia’s indigenous languages and provide the wider community with valuable knowledge that might otherwise take scientists many generations to regain. Future indigenous generations may benefit by having documented knowledge of their traditional language and culture that they can learn from and can hand down to their children. The results of this project aim not only benefit the linguistic training industry but also any other training facility that offers training to remote and rural Indigenous Australians.

If you would like to discuss this project further please do not hesitate to contact me on 0401 815 875 or e-mail me on sscaffery@ozemail.com.au.
I would like to know in what ways, if any, your linguistic training has helped you or any others in your community to document or maintain your traditional language. The main reason I want to do this is to see if the linguistic skills taught in the course have met your needs and helped in recording your language or keeping it strong. I would also like to look at the language projects you or your community have worked on to find out how these have helped in the documentation and maintenance of your traditional language.

I would like you to help me in this research project by answering some questions. I will write the results of these interviews in a research paper and give it to the Charles Darwin University so I can get a university degree and share the information with communities and educators so they can understand your needs better.

If you do decide to help me with this research project I will need to interview you for about ½ an hour or so, and record, on a tape-recorder, our discussion. No-one else will listen to what you say in the interview unless you want them to hear it. I will keep your name secret and when I write out the interviews and include your comments in my research paper I will make sure no-one will know who gave me the information. I will also need you to sign the attached consent form.

You should not feel uncomfortable at any time during this research. However, if are uncomfortable at any time please let me know straight away. Of course, you are free to withdraw from this study at any time and without any explanation.

A copy of the results of the project will be sent to you as soon as they are available. You can also ask to look at the information I have collected from you at any time. If you want to listen to the tapes of our interview please let me know and I will send you a copy.
If you have any questions about this research project please phone me on 0401 815 875, or you can talk to the Executive Officer of the Charles Darwin University Human Ethics Committee on 08 89 46 7064.

Thank you. Jo
APPENDIX III: CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH PROJECT CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF PROJECT: Linguistics In Adult Education And Its Effects On Endangered Languages

RESEARCHER: Josephine Caffery

I ........................................ of ............................................. agree to take part in this research project. I understand that the purpose of the research is to see if the skills taught in linguistic courses meet the needs of my community and how they have helped in recording or keeping my language strong.

Josephine Caffery has explained to me the aims, methods, and benefits of the research.

I agree to take part in this study.

I understand I can withdraw from the research at any time and any information I have provided will not be used unless I state otherwise.

I understand that my personal details and any other information I give will not be passed on to anyone else. It will be kept confidential at all times.

I understand that results will be used for research reasons, and may be published in linguistics journals and academic papers.

I am happy to have all our interviews recorded on a tape recorder.

I understand that the ownership of my Indigenous knowledge and cultural heritage will be mine and Josephine Caffery will say this in the research findings and in the giving out of the research.
APPENDIX IV: INTERVIEW DISCUSSION POINTS FOR INDIGENOUS PARTICIPANTS

Linguistics in Adult Education & its Effects on Endangered Languages
Interview Questions

by Josephine Caffery

These sample questions are intended to stimulate discussion, which will hopefully draw out much more information relating to the research question – To what extent does linguistic training assist in the maintenance/documentation/revival of endangered languages.

Where did you do your linguistic training?

How long did you study for?

When you studied linguistics at [name of institution] what did you get out of it?
   How useful do you think it has been for you?

Why did you want to study linguistics?

What have you been doing since you finished your linguistic course?

Have you worked on any language projects? If yes,
   What language projects have you worked?
   What was your role in these projects?

What were the best skills you learned during your study that really helped you with language work in your community?

Are there any skills you have learned since finishing the course that you think you should have learned while you were studying?

Can you suggest any changes to the course you did that would improve the course, or make it more suitable for indigenous language workers/linguists when working in their community?

Do you think that the language maintenance projects you have worked on have helped to document or maintain your language? If so, how?

Was there any language maintenance/documentation work done on your traditional language before you started to do it?
   If so what work was done and who did it? (to ascertain whether it was someone in their community or an outside researcher)?
   What role did you play in these projects?

Do you think it is better for indigenous people or non-indigenous people document your traditional language? Why?

Do you think people will still be speaking and learning your traditional language in 5 or 10 years? If not, why not?
APPENDIX V: INTERVIEW DISCUSSION POINTS FOR NON-INDIGENOUS PARTICIPANTS

Linguistics in adult education & its effects on endangered languages

Interview guide for linguists/educators working with indigenous language workers/linguists

An overview of the research project and question will be provided at the beginning of the interview.

Research question – To what extent does linguistic training assist in the maintenance or documentation of Australia’s endangered languages

Interview Guide

Linguistic training specifically for indigenous Australians has been offered since the 1970’s. Since then the linguistic training has changed and so has the organisations that trained them. I’d like to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the training of indigenous language workers/linguists, and how effective you think this training has been in terms of documenting and maintaining Australian indigenous languages.

Firstly, do you refer to these people as linguists or language workers? (This question will be asked so I can use the same term throughout the interview as the interviewee uses, so as not to cause any confusion for the interviewee.)

Have you worked with an indigenous language worker/linguist on language programmes?
If yes discuss, (points with * may not be asked to those who do not know about the language workers training)

- sorts of projects work on together
- each persons role in the projects
- language workers training
- *where the training was held
- *who did the training
- *length of training
- *method of training
- *appropriateness of the method of training
- appropriateness of training
were any additional skills needed
strengths of the training/language workers/linguists skills
weaknesses of the training/language workers/linguists skills
other skills that should be incorporated in the language workers training
recommendations to improve the linguistic training.

Are many of the people you know that who trained as a language worker/linguist still using their skills to document their traditional language?
   If yes, discuss
type of language work have they have done
projects they are currently working on
role in these projects

   If no, discuss
what they are doing now
reasons why people who train as language workers/linguists do not use or continue to use their linguistic skills to maintain or document their traditional language

Do you think the students learned skills on-the-job that they should have learned while they were training?

In your experience, what language did the indigenous language worker/linguist work on, was it the language of the Elders, the language of the linguist, the language of the younger generations or another language?

What community support does/did the language worker/linguist have to document or maintain their language?

In your opinion, does having a trained indigenous language worker/linguist working on language maintenance projects make a difference to the amount of and what is maintained of the language? Why?
What educational institutions do you know trains or have trained indigenous Australians to work as a language worker/linguist?

We discussed the different institutions that delivered the linguistic training we have been discussing. Which one do you think offered the better courses? Why?

I would like to interview indigenous language workers/linguists who have had formal training. Who do you know would like to participate in such an interview?