Towards a model for training Indigenous languages educators in Australia

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ILE Teacher Training

• Context
  – Implementation of NSW & other syllabi
  – Lack of qualified fluent teachers
  – Absence of initial teacher education programs
  – Numerous revitalising/declining languages
  – Widely distributed small populations
  – Demands for parity with other languages
  – No local precedents
  – Calls to follow overseas examples

ILE Teacher Training

• In 2005, several other local schools expressed an interest in introducing Gumbaynggirr language classes. The main reason these have not gone ahead is the lack of Gumbaynggirr teachers.

• Muurrbay recognises that simply knowing some language is not enough, people need to develop their teaching skills before they can comfortably take on a room full of excited children!


ILE Teacher Training

• An initial response
  – Master of Indigenous Languages Education (MILE)
  – One year, full time, block release (mixed mode)
  – Fluency development option, but no requirements
  – Linguistics, pedagogy, research/praxis
  – 10 graduates 2006, 13 candidates 2008
  – Grad Dip and Cert offered from 2007
  – Limited professional development accreditation

ILE Teacher Training

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ILE Teacher Training

• Concurrent developments (NSW)
  – Increasing school implementation (50+)
  – Speaking Gamilaraay 1 & 2 at USyd
  – Muurrbay/MRALC Summer School at USyd
  – NSW TAFE Cert’s I-III in Aboriginal Languages
  – NSW OBOS Stage 6 feasibility study
  – Indigenous Languages Institute at USyd

ILE Teacher Training

The NSW Department of Education & Training acknowledges the availability of the Master of Indigenous Languages Education offered at the University of Sydney and accepts this program as providing appropriate training for qualified Aboriginal teachers seeking additional approval to teach an Aboriginal language. Aboriginal teachers completing the Master of Indigenous Languages Education up to the end of 2010 will be eligible for approval to teach Aboriginal languages. In 2009 the Department will reconsider the Master of Indigenous Languages Education and any other available Aboriginal languages programs in terms of the requirements for Aboriginal languages teachers after 2010.
ILE Teacher Training

- Field Trip
  - July-September, 2007
  - Canada (British Columbia, Alberta)
  - USA (Montana, Utah, Arizona, California)
  - Aotearoa/New Zealand

- Foci
  - ILE teacher training courses
  - Delivery methods & fora
  - Accreditation/development of fluency

ILE Teacher Training

- Variables
  - Treaty history
  - Government support
  - Funding
  - Number & vitality of languages
  - Size & proportion of speaker populations
  - Community activity & interest

ILE Teacher Training

- Aotearoa
  - Strong ongoing (single) treaty history with specific application to language
  - Single level of actively supportive government (MLA, MLC), funding
  - Single recovering language (variation & standardisation issues)
  - Numerically & proportionately large speaker population (160,000+)
  - Strong community activity/interest (e.g. Maori television, language nests)

ILE Teacher Training

- Aotearoa
  - Broad eligibility/limited exclusivity
  - Institutional accreditation of fluency by coursework/exam (MLC)
  - Maori syllabi for core subjects (Maths & Science)
  - Public & tribal providers offer designated degrees & school programs
  - Undergraduate & graduate, immersion (Maori medium) & bilingual (Maori language & culture) designations

ILE Teacher Training

- Aotearoa
  - Maori medium preschool to degree possible
  - 3 year degrees, Limited Authority to Teach (LAT)
  - Fluent speakers undertake MLC exam & mainstream or designated degree through tribal college/university
  - Non-fluent speakers (including pakeha) undertake designated degree with Maori content, up to 30%
  - Usually some community-based instruction
  - Many exit to media & government
ILE Teacher Training

• United States of America
  – Diverse treaty histories determining resource access
  – Dual levels of largely unsupportive government
  – Heavy reliance on community funding
  – Multiple languages of widely varying vitality
  – Widely variable speaker populations (1 vs. 100,000)
  – Widely variable community activity/interest
  – Limited eligibility/exclusivity, user pays

• Canada
  – Diverse treaty histories determining resource access
  – Dual levels of largely supportive government
  – Some reliance on community funding
  – Multiple languages of varying vitality
  – Variable speaker populations (1 vs. 10,000)
  – Variable community activity/interest
  – Limited eligibility/exclusivity, user pays
  – Community accreditation of fluency (challenge/coursework)

ILE Teacher Training

• United States of America
  – Community accreditation of fluency (challenge/exam/coursework)
  – Tribal & state native-medium/bilingual schools
  – Few native language syllabi (tribal only)
  – Two-stage college/university degrees, mostly undergraduate
  – Some tribal providers offer language-specific designated degrees, language development
  – Immersion (native medium)/bilingual (native language & culture) designations

• Canada
  – Fluent speakers undertake challenge/exam & university or tribal college & university degree
  – Non-fluent speakers undertake institute/tribal college/university language training & degree
  – Community-based instruction common
  – Few undertake designated degrees
  – Largely limited to strongest nations with tribal college/language authority
  – Language institutes summer schools – mostly language & linguistics
ILE Teacher Training

• The Canadian ‘Laddered’ Model (UVic)
  • University/community partnerships
    – First Nations Language Certificate
  • Fluency accreditation by language-specific authorities/BCCT
    – Certificate in Aboriginal Languages Revitalisation
  • Continuing Studies/VET
    – Developmental Standard Term Certificate
  • Diploma level
    – Eligible to teach language classes
    – 4 years (+4) currency
    – Articulation to education & arts degrees

ILE Teacher Training

• Reflections on the Australian context
  – Heavy reliance on government/university support
  – Limited community resources/providers/advocates
  – Diverse, smaller, more distributed populations
  – Fewer strong languages
  – Broad national eligibility
  – Creative funding/delivery models (block release)
  – Established Indigenous teacher education programs
  – Need to respond creatively to fluency issues

ILE Teacher Training

• A flexible approach to fluency
  – Accept parity as a long term goal
  – Allow for variable developmental standards
    • by language & over time
  – Implement community accreditation
    • Recognise/foster language authorities
    – Implement limited term certification
  – Recognise available training
  – Allow for multilingual & linguistic knowledge

ILE Teacher Training

• A flexible approach to training
  – Adapt/expand existing USyd degree
    • Dip/BEd (Aboriginal Studies)
  – Offer base major of 3 languages & linguistics
    • e.g Gamilaraay, Gumbaynggirr & Wiradjuri
  – Utilise existing MILE curriculum & staff
  – Invite EdSW Languages & Linguistics participation
  – Enable cross-institutional study/credit for languages

ILE Teacher Training

• A flexible approach to training
  – Recognise community accreditation of fluency
  – Align diploma with prospective restricted license
    • Indigenous Languages Teacher role under consideration
  – Articulate with other relevant programs
    • ACU BEd (Primary), Batchelor Institute BA
    (Language & Linguistics)
  – Foster articulation/advanced standing with VET providers

ILE Teacher Training

• Develop strategic partnerships
  – Expand Koori Centre/EdSW/Arts partnerships to include Languages Education & Linguistics
  – Work with NSWIT, DET, NSWTF & community agencies on fluency accreditation & restricted license
  – Develop higher education partnerships on articulation/credit (ACU, Batchelor Institute, etc)
  – Develop model ILE VET qualification with NSW TAFE & community agencies
  – Formalise ongoing sponsorship of languages summer schools/institutes & coordinate course delivery
ILE Teacher Training

• Some residual issues
  – A lot of work
  – Fundamental changes to existing structures
  – Reliant on substantial cooperation, goodwill & internal support
  – Unproven demand
  – Uncertain cost effectiveness
  – National leadership role
  – Price of inaction