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Closing the policy–practice gap: making Indigenous language policy more than empty rhetoric

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Abstract

Though there have been significant advances in some states and territories in reviving Indigenous languages, there are language mechanisms that constantly work throughout society to perpetuate the elevated status of the language of the dominant group – standard Australian English. These language mechanisms include language testing, education curricula and the media. They serve to – intentionally or otherwise – undermine the legitimacy of and discriminate against certain non-dominant groups, such as speakers of Aboriginal English, creoles and traditional languages. Consequently a de facto or invisible form of language policy exists that is not explicitly written but is implicitly created: it privileges monolingualism over multilingualism and impedes full revitalisation and maintenance of Indigenous languages. The elevated status of English encourages a shift away from these languages and encourages speaker communities to accept – automatically, unconsciously and therefore without resistance – the hegemonic ideologies of the dominant socio-political group. This shift goes against certain human rights and has significant implications in the fields of health, education, law and social justice.

This paper looks at the dominance of Standard Australian English (SAE) and its impact on Indigenous languages. Though the acquisition of English is important it does not need to work against the maintenance of languages as it is doing today. In fact building academic understanding using the home language can help develop competency in English. So the aim here is to raise awareness about the language ideologies that form the invisible language policy experienced in Australia today. An understanding of these invisible linguistic forces can provide language professionals and educators a means to deconstruct and decolonise the discriminatory processes that foster linguistic and cultural assimilation.

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The endangered state of Indigenous languages in Australia has been well documented (McConvell & Thieberger 2001; Australian Institute of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Studies 2005) as has the need for a coherent and consistent language policy (Ozolins 1993; Erebus Consulting Partners 2002) to help reverse language decline and restore a sense of linguistic identity to Indigenous communities (Fishman 1991). This decline has been made more severe through aggressive assimilatory policies towards Indigenous people carried out over the past 200 years (Moran 2005). Today, policies and practices continue to undermine Indigenous language revival, but these are less visible as they are indirect in their effect.

In spite of these pressures language revitalisation in Australia is strong in certain areas. Communities, through language centres and programs in schools, local halls and homes, have brought language and language-related knowledge back into people's lives in the face of great challenges. Language revitalisation and maintenance is, therefore, part of a bigger picture – the recognition of the rights and identity of Indigenous peoples. Australia is a signatory of several international human rights declarations that acknowledge these rights.[3] There are also official policies and documents that recognise:

- the value of Australia's Aboriginal language diversity and its importance in education (Department of Education, Science & Training 2000)
- the social dysfunction caused by decline in language (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1997)
- the importance of teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, cultures and languages to all Indigenous and non-Indigenous students (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training & Youth Affairs [MCEETYA] 1995, p. 1)
- the importance of the use by teachers of culturally inclusive methodologies and the provision of education which will strengthen Indigenous students' identity and cultural values (MCEETYA 1995, p. 5)
- the importance of bilingual and bicultural education (Australian Labor Party 2007, p. 215).

One factor working against the success of these policies that are supportive of Indigenous languages, is the invisible, or de facto, language policy which puts the objective of Standard Australian English (SAE) literacy above all other language objectives (such as language maintenance). Indeed the effect of the way in which the objective of SAE literacy is pursued can be to deny the essential place of Indigenous languages in people's lives and in the continuance of their cultures. It is not so much

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3 Australia is a signatory to human rights declarations that specifically address children's right to education in their first language. These declarations include: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 27), the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (Articles 5 and 6), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Articles 26 and 27), Convention on the Rights of the Child (Articles 14.1 and 29.1) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 13).

the goal of SAE literacy for all Australians (which indeed has near universal approval) that is being contested here, but the subordination of other language objectives to this end. This subordination can be labelled *invisible*, since its overriding of other linguistic goals such as revitalisation is not stated, but assumed. Invisible language policy, then, can seriously and adversely affect not only language revitalisation and Indigenous education as a whole but how multilingualism and language rights are seen in the mainstream society.

This paper looks at some of the effects of invisible language policy on language revitalisation and education. We, as educators and applied linguists, will examine three questions: What is language policy? What does invisible language policy look like? How can we counteract the negative effects of it?

Ideologies of language planning

To understand what can drive language planning we need to consider ideologies of language. These ideologies can be defined as the 'socioculturally motivated ideas, perceptions and expectations of language, manifested in all sorts of language use' (Blommaert 1999, p. 1). The ideologies of language planning are therefore the assumptions, attitudes and perceptions of languages and their speakers that are involved in putting language policy into practice. An example of language ideology can be seen in the Australian Language and Literacy Policy (Department of Employment, Education & Training [DEET] 1991, p. 32), which says the following:

> Australian English is integral to Australian identity. It is the vehicle for mainstream Australian culture. Being proficient in Australian English is essential for effective functioning in the community and the workplace. A key message of this policy is that Australian English must be accessible to and accessed by all Australians.

Here we can see a particular perception or ideology of Australian English having an elevated political, social, cultural and economic status by associating it directly with Australian identity, the carrying of Australian culture, the community and the workplace. It is worth noting that the *National Policy on Languages* was not claimed to be rescinded by government with the introduction of this language and literacy policy, yet the binding of English, and only English, to Australian identity effectively undermines the policy's recognition of the 'linguistic diversity of Australia' (Lo Bianco 1987, p. 9).

Policy-makers form decisions based on issues such as the readiness or instinct to use one language variety over another, the status of that language variety, the symbolic quality of a language in relation to nationhood, as well as cultural authenticity, modernity, equality and other values (Blommaert 1999). Consider these values in the following example. In an Australian Liberal Party article entitled 'Fighting terrorism', one of the ways listed to fight the war on terror was by 'establishing *citizenship tests* that will help ensure a *modern* Australia maintains sentiments of *nationhood* and

attachment to a *common language*, *distinct heritage* and *shared values*.' (Liberal Party 2007 [emphasis added])

Here we can see a clear ideology of nationalism. The text gives a symbolic quality to a 'common language' – Australian English – representing one nation and therefore strength in unity against a common enemy. This article even suggests a way of ensuring how the nation will stay safe in the face of terrorism – a citizenship test. This test is written in English which shows us the de facto priority of one language over all others (Shohamy 2006). This government document contradicts one of the principles of the *National Policy on Languages*, as we shall see later.

Ideologies of society

Viewing English in symbolic and political terms is particularly noticeable in education and immigration discourse. Indeed Blommaert (1999) notes that these attitudes are related to broader social, political and historical concepts including power relationships among groups in societies, discrimination, nation-building and social engineering. The results of these issues often involve different groups, dominant and non-dominant, either directly or indirectly; and relate to factors such as:

- the stigmatising of certain languages/varieties, for example Aboriginal English being generally stigmatised by white Australian society (McArthur 1998)
- restrictions on the use of certain languages/varieties: for example banning Indigenous languages in schools; the exclusive use of SAE as the medium of education in schools; current repression of bilingual programs in the Northern Territory.

These factors help maintain SAE monolingualism by promoting ideologies of the dominant group and by marginalising or excluding minorities. Overt language policies can afford to pay lip service to inclusive language, diversity and democratic processes as long as covert mechanisms are functioning to execute policies with contrary aims. Of course, popular policies are often supported by more widespread assumptions about human life and development. In the Australian setting it could be argued (adapted from Malcolm 2009) that at least five such assumptions have been behind some of the kinds of policies advocated in relation to Indigenous education in the past two centuries:

- assumptions of *social Darwinism*, leading to low expectations of Indigenous students and consequent policies with minimal educational objectives for them
- assumptions of *cultural imperialism*, leading to low estimation of Indigenous languages and cultures and policies of education aiming at assimilation
- assumptions of *cultural deprivation*, leading to policies which count the Indigenous linguistic and cultural inheritance as a handicap and seek to rectify it
- assumptions of *cultural relativism*, leading to policies embracing Indigenous languages and cultures within an inclusive multicultural society

- assumptions of *global imperatives*, leading to policies which subordinate lesser objectives, including supporting home languages, to that of equipping citizens for a marketplace of global competitiveness.

While the earlier assumptions on this list may be less current and even discredited today, they still may underlie unreflected practice in some education areas (see below), though the fifth assumption probably has the most overt influence on current policy developments.

What are language planning and policy?

Language policy is the 'decision-making process, formally stated or implicit, used to decide which languages will be taught to (or learned by) whom and for what purposes' (Cooper 1989, p. 31). It depends on the language culture of a society, meaning 'the set of behaviours, assumptions, cultural forms, prejudices, folk belief systems, attitudes, stereotypes, ways of thinking about language, and religio-historical circumstances associated with a particular language' (Schiffman 1996, p. 5). How we speak, make sentences and use any language is influenced by many social, cultural, political and environmental factors: home, school, the media, the courts, and so on. This influence can be intended or unintended, written and explicit or unwritten and implicit. All these factors can be planned for many reasons (Baldauf 1993) and on many levels: at the home, community, state, national and even international level. Language planning therefore is how you put language policy into practice.

When all this planning is written down we can say it is an overt language policy, like the *National Policy on Languages* (Lo Bianco 1987). An invisible language policy can coexist with such a policy by endorsing practices which deny the overtly stated principles. Take for example the principle that:

> No Australian resident ought to be denied … equal, appropriate and fair treatment by the law including representation and other rights commonly associated with equality or deriving from citizenship, because of language disabilities, or lack of adequate, or any, competence in English. (p. 8)

This principle is effectively denied by the introduction of a citizenship test which implicitly requires competence in SAE (see above).

Language planning in Australia

English has become the de facto official language of Australia but does not carry legal status (Lo Bianco 1987). Australia's main aim in language policy has been achieving English monolingualism (Lo Bianco 2000) and this has been achieved in explicit and implicit ways. After a period of positive language activism and consultation starting in the 1970s, in 1984 the Senate Committee on Education and the Arts released the Report on a National Language Policy. The aim of this very inclusive report was to create a coordinated language policy for Australia. While it has been argued

that the dominance of English remained unchallenged (Tollefson 1991), this report nevertheless marked a unique recognition of the aspirations and rights of Australians of all language backgrounds and, as such, is of enduring significance, despite the fact that its information and resulting recommendations have been conveniently ignored. Senate recommendations based on submissions from Indigenous organisations made sure that Indigenous language maintenance and revival was explicitly covered.

As a result of the report, in 1986 the minister of education commissioned the *National Policy on Languages* (NPL), which saw Australia become the first English-speaking country with a policy on languages (Centenary of Federation Committee 1994, p. 29, cited in Lo Bianco 1995). In general the policy looked at short- and long-term Indigenous language maintenance and revival based on three main notions: consultation and shared decision making; the national importance of Aboriginal languages; and prioritising the educational and social role of languages currently in use. In the 1990s, however, Australia moved from community considerations to national economic and internationally strategic intentions, as reflected in the changed emphasis of the Australian Language and Literacy Policy (1991). Among other things this new and narrowly focused policy 'contradicted and sought to undermine the core multicultural and multilingual basis of the NPL' (Lo Bianco 2000, p. 53). The main role was to 'eliminate the inclusiveness of the NPL by targeting "literacy", assessment and foreign languages' (Moore 1996, p. 481). Today, exclusive SAE literacy, assessment and foreign languages are still being heavily targeted.

Despite Australia having an earlier and explicit overall language policy – the NPL – it now mainly follows a de facto policy of non-intervention, meaning that Indigenous language development is left to happen on its own without any direct strategic assistance from the government. This approach to language planning and policy favours the dominant group. What happens as a result is that language planning becomes heavily influenced by decisions taken in a range of areas that affect language use and perceptions. These areas include education, immigration selection and foreign trade patterns and priorities (Lo Bianco 2000), the media, language in the public space (see Figure 1), citizenship tests and rules and regulations (Shohamy 2006). Over time the sometimes subtle effects and consequences of these areas on language use become readily accepted everyday practices.

What does visible language policy currently look like?

Australia has many statements of policy and intention that give due regard to Indigenous people, their languages and their aspirations. These statements address language education and revitalisation as important factors for ensuring the identity of Indigenous peoples and their access to equal opportunities in work and education. The Australian Labor Party's ALP National Platform and Constitution, for example, is very positive about Indigenous language revitalisation:

Figure 1. A wonderful sight: a multilingual road sign on the Ernest Giles Road,
Nothern Territory – a popular spot for tourists; but notice the order of languages
(English, German, Italian, Japanese and Western Desert).

> Labor will make the protection, preservation and revitalisation of Indigenous
> languages a major priority. The urgency of this is underscored by the probability
> that 90 per cent of Indigenous languages will disappear over the next generation.
> (Australian Labor Party 2007, Chapter 13, Principle 105)

The main visible language policy embodying this principle is the Maintenance of
Indigenous Languages and Records program (MILR). In the 2007–08 period this
federal program spent 9.3 million Australian dollars on 72 projects that worked on
about 160 languages (Hansard 2008).

These projects are mainly carried out by short-term (annually funded), Indigenous-
run regional language centres and community programs which play 'a central and
invaluable role' in language maintenance and revival (Tsunoda 2005, p. 21). However
language centres are highly vulnerable, as their survival and operation is at the
whim of the federal government (Sussex 2004) and there is no long-term Indigenous
language continuance strategy currently in place.

In education, the main vehicle for language policy implementation, there are many
more statements of good intent, such as the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander Education Policy (DEET 1989) and the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs' Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005-08 (MCEETYA 2006). The Labor Party constitution chapter on 'Respecting Human Rights and a Fair Go for All' (ALP 2007, p. 125) states, among other things, that the party will:

- value 'Indigenous decision making in education and promote community leadership on the importance of education'
- support 'quality teaching environments and institutions that are culturally inclusive and will encourage Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in education curriculum'
- support 'bi-lingual and bi-cultural education [which] ... have value for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians'.[4]

The MCEETYA Taskforce 2000 explicitly states the principle that schooling should acknowledge the 'capacity of all young Indigenous people to learn by expecting all Indigenous children to be fluent in SAE and at the same time being inclusive of the student's home language' (MCEETYA 2000, p. 20). There is, then, a stated commitment to being inclusive with respect to the home languages of Indigenous people, recognition of the importance of the maintenance of Indigenous languages and of the role of Indigenous people in educational decision-making. Moreover there is an acknowledgement of the role of bilingual/bicultural education. All this suggests that education poses no threat to the home languages of Indigenous people. Yet these assurances are always overshadowed by the co-existent commitment to use education to make all Indigenous people fluent in SAE. It is interesting to note the wording of the press release coming from the office of the former Minister for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Julia Gillard, in releasing the report 'Indigenous language programs in Australian schools: a way forward', in December 2008. After a brief reference to the 260 schools with Indigenous language programs, the release quickly and irrelevantly introduces the subject of '[SAE] literacy and numeracy outcomes':

> The Australian Government is committed to supporting [all] languages education in Australian schools. The School Languages Program provides funding of $112 million from 2005 to 2008 to support the learning of all languages, including Indigenous languages.

> The Australian Government has also committed $540 million to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes and close the gap in educational attainment for Indigenous Australians.

> The Government firmly believes that all Australian students need to be proficient

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4 Despite the last principle former Federal Education Minister and Deputy Leader of the Labor Party, Julia Gillard has voiced support of four hours compulsory English in bilingual schools (Robinson, 2008). This paper was also written before the release of the 2009 ALP National Platform and Constitution, which no longer recognises these statements.

> in English to be able to fully participate in the world of work and further study.
> (Gillard 2008)

The only reference to what the government firmly believes relates to English, despite the fact that the subject of the report being released is Indigenous languages. Thus no real commitment is shown to Indigenous languages. The government's primary concern is with English; and this brings us to invisible language policy.

What does invisible language policy look like?

Invisible language policy is the effect, intended or otherwise, direct or indirect, of government policies on language use. It is seen as the allocation of priorities – that is to say, funding – whatever the rhetoric of visible language policy. If 'language policies are mostly manifestations of intentions' (Shohamy 2006, p. 51) then what happens on the ground tells us what the policy is really doing. Invisible language policy has been documented worldwide[5] and is associated with the promotion of the language and interests of a linguistically and politically dominant group while giving lip service through visible language policy to the languages and interests of non-dominant groups within the society. This unwritten and indirect form of policy is informed by ideologies which favour social and linguistic mainstreaming and centralised control.

The ideologies mentioned above can actually reverse the positive principles of policies by the way they are put into practice, and these reversals can often violate democratic principles and personal rights (Shohamy 2006).

Let us take, for example, the principle of language maintenance. It is possible to endorse this principle at the policy level with the MILR, but to implement it in a way that brings limited benefit to the speakers, or future speakers, of the language – as language work has no community required development dimension and language risks being maintained as a museum piece rather than as part of living culture: if funding were given, for example, to language documentation projects and not to long-term projects of community-led language revitalisation.

Similarly it is possible to endorse the principle of community control but, at the same time, not to give communities the continuity of resources required to exercise that control over their language maintenance in an effective way. Again, with the MILR, funding is short-term and not guaranteed to communities – although it may be more secure for some more established language centres. The Reference Group of the National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples made the following comment about education (including language maintenance) for Indigenous students:

> The Joint Policy [the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education
> Policy] is criticised for its perceived concern about Aboriginal and Torres Strait

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5 Schiffman (1996) examines the US, France and India. Shohamy (2006) mainly looks at the UK, Israel and the US.

Islander people's access to, and participation in, 'mainstream' education and its silence about supporting alternative and community controlled education initiatives (this leads some authors to brand the joint policy as assimilationist). (Commonwealth of Australia 1994, p. 6).

The principle of inclusivity may be subverted by being interpreted in a subjective way, as simply a way of bringing everybody together, rather than as a means of achieving social justice for groups that experience exclusion because other groups are being privileged (as discussed more fully in Malcolm 1999).

The principle of equal opportunity, when applied without adequate reference to the differing prerequisites for different groups to benefit from it, may actually worsen disadvantage. For example, Indigenous students unfamiliar with SAE will be disadvantaged when they are exposed to the same SAE immersion and literacy testing programs as other learners.

These violations happen when policies are enforced from above without appropriate and transparent consultation with communities, Indigenous representative bodies, Indigenous and, if appropriate, non-Indigenous language professionals and when following ideologies of the dominant group. These ideologies run the risk of perpetuating negative stereotypes, misunderstandings about education and misleading representations of Indigenous people, often children. For example the Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey Report implied that low academic performance and attendance among Indigenous students were greatest where they spoke Aboriginal English or an Aboriginal language (Sharifian 2008). The report recommended explicit SAE teaching throughout all years of school. This view of the student's home language devalues the identity of the child through devaluing the home languages; and it wrongly implies that the students' home languages are an obstacle to SAE development.

Skutnabb-Kangas (2000, p. 571) has observed a general change from *old* (overt, physically punitive and direct) to *new* (covert, psychologically punitive and structural) forms of language control and oppression used by those in power to exert their ideology. In Australia the results of the old forms of discrimination on the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are officially documented. However the newer forms of control exist, deliberately or not, in invisible language policy.

In the next section we will focus on two areas in which Indigenous education has suffered as a result of invisible language policy: the areas of bilingual education and national testing. Two issues will become clear:

- mechanisms that create invisible language policy may comprise influence from diverse fields (for example media, education, legal practice, and so on) (See Schiffman 1996; Shohamy 2006)
- though intentions are good, control is exerted on groups such as students, schools and language speaker communities through financial reward and incentive, psychological punitiveness, ideological rhetoric and often passive acceptance.

Bilingual education

Indigenous people are being documented by government and the media as failing to achieve policy objectives either in their own languages or in SAE. For example, despite the positive policy statements mentioned above in the introduction, the documented improved learning outcomes of bilingual education (NT DEET 2005), the positive involvement of local communities, the rights associated with language and the overwhelming research on the benefits of bilingual education, the Northern Territory government has decided to put an emphasis on English learning in schools. The explicit intention of the Territory government was to 'improve attendance rates and lift the literacy and numeracy results of remote schools' (Toohey 2008). The decision, however, effectively reduces bilingual education to monolingual education; this is the implicit effect of the decision and is therefore an example of invisible language policy. It is based on the ideology that English is more important in the lives of children and teachers than their own languages, regardless of the wishes of communities. The community reaction to this decision – which goes against the human rights principles of the government as well as international human rights declarations of which Australia is a signatory – was expressed in *The Australian* newspaper:

> It's like spitting on the bilingual program and devaluing the Indigenous children's first language without any respect. Language is our living treasure and our survival, we nurture our language just like a child. (Robinson 2008)

Some schools have already started to enforce English and ban Indigenous teachers from speaking their languages, which is having negative effects on the schools (Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2009). Serious consideration is required by policy-makers with regards to democratic principles and their violation, as well as the ideologies upon which these principles are grounded.

One size fits all: The National Assessment Program

This decision to end bilingual programs was encouraged by the results of the national, standardised SAE literacy and numeracy test, the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLaN), which began in 2008. NAPLaN is just one part of the Australian federal government's two-billion dollar 'Education Revolution'. This is a high-stakes test for schools and, ultimately, state education departments as they will be either rewarded or penalised depending on results. Though the tests are for all students, regardless of their language background, they have been designed for students who speak SAE as their home language or dialect of English.[6] More specifically the tests do not account for the progression of English language learning that the students follow, as well as learning the subject content. Therefore Indigenous students who speak an Aboriginal language, creole or Aboriginal English

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6 This is not to say that designing the tests in this way has been intentional; the test writers may simply not have considered the needs of the minority students because of a lack of awareness of additional language and dialect learning issues.

are immediately disadvantaged. While the intention to improve SAE literacy is noble, the consequences for Indigenous languages maintenance and education efforts are disastrous. Following the NAPLaN results of the nine bilingual education schools in the Northern Territory, the Territory government, with the support of the federal government, has moved to effectively end all bilingual programs. It should be noted that this justification of closure has not been based on second language acquisition research (Krashen 1982; Cummins 1981); rather it can only be assumed that such decisions, like those of the past, are based on ideology and instinct.

How can we counteract the effects of invisible language policy?

Language teachers, language centres, language workers, linguists – Indigenous and non-Indigenous – schools and some government departments together have long been working hard to overcome the enormous challenges described in this paper. To counteract the effects of these de facto practices and policies, these groups need more support. Those who wish to support Indigenous language education and maintenance, as well as Indigenous education by Indigenous people more generally can take action to:

- reassert the rights of Indigenous people to the maintenance of the languages that are important to their lives and culture, as equal members of a wider society which acknowledges plurality and equity
- expose the use of public language which can promote exclusivist and invisible language policy at the expense of the interests of Indigenous and other non-dominant groups
- question the practices which are supported in whole or in part by invisible language policy and which undermine the interests of Indigenous and other non-dominant groups
- promote the Aboriginal idea of two-way bicultural education and insist on the resourcing of language education programs which realise it
- engage cross-sector support from local government and government departments – particularly from the health and justice areas, among others – professional education organisations, community providers and the media.

Language centres have the experience, contacts and expertise to continue these actions in their regions through their government and private networks. This work could be supported by a national and independent Indigenous body which could also provide the necessary political strength to ensure governments, at all levels, are kept in check. Universities can interrogate government practice and distribute knowledge to raise awareness wherever their networks allow them. Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, working two-way (Malcolm & Konigsberg 2007, pp. 267–97) where possible and appropriate, can create a positive change for languages and their speakers.

Conclusion

The range of government statements and policies present a mix of opportunities and obstacles. One obstacle is the gap between policy and practice that we have called invisible language policy. We live in a country that despite the best of intentions, actively, as well as unconsciously, reinforces monolingualism. Governments continue to deploy a range of tactics to improve the western ethnocentric educational outcomes of Indigenous students. While the goal of SAE proficiency is necessary and widely accepted, this goal is pursued in such a way that what happens in practice directly and indirectly undermines the Indigenous languages of Australia, their speakers, people and cultures. What is happening to bilingual schools is a shocking example of this policy–practice gap. Even when there are written policies to maintain and revive languages, the opportunities to achieve this are limited by political decisions based on ideology rather than knowledge gained through consultation or research. Such decisions do not help resolve urgent issues of education, health and social justice. Nor do they enable reconciliation. They prevent it.

However an awareness of issues that hold back equal cultural prosperity can create new possibilities to take language maintenance and revival to the next level. Governments need to be held accountable for the often vaguely worded and poorly respected policies they make – and the well-worded policies they forget about – as well as the language they choose to use. The success of language revitalisation requires more than language-specific funding and initiatives. The complexity of the social, cultural, economic and political issues behind language use and rights needs a broad strategy to confront it. Those involved in Indigenous languages, education, health, media and social justice can work together to ensure structural change, so that these invisible and visible language policies are monitored and questioned and that words like *inclusivity* and *equality* are used only with transparent and agreed meanings.

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