Australian Aboriginal Languages: The Path to Preservation

A Playbook on Linguistic Vitality, Policy & Community Actions

International Authority on Language Preservation & Revitalization



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I. Introduction

Greetings, dear readers! We are the **International Authority on Language Preservation and Revival**, or more commonly known as the **IALPR**, an organisation dedicated to keeping dying languages alive. Our main objective here at the IALPR is simple: to preserve and revive disappearing languages in Australia.

"Australian Aboriginal Lnaguages: The Path to Preservation" is a detailed playbook about keeping languages alive, as well as the cultures they usher in, particularly through the indigenous languages from a little old place the world affectionately knows as 'down under' or more commonly known as Australia. So strap your belts as we boomerang you all the way into the past, to a time where English was not as widely spoken as it is today, and instead, a thousand different languages were on the tips of every indigenous Aussie tongue. After going through the geography and history of these languages, we'll zoom in on the one-of-a-kind Language-Vitality™ scale that will prescribe real-world measures to help in combating the loss of the languages and ensure they can be handed down to future generations, ensuring their longevity.

On a more serious note, we hope this playbook can be used as a meaningful tool by governments and people in power to understand wide-scale change that can occur if the right efforts and resources are dedicated to the preservation and revival of these languages and many more, a crucial part of any nation's cultural heritage and legacy.



II. The Problem of Language Extinction

Language extinction is a global crisis. **The third National Indigenous Languages Survey (NILS3)** conducted by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) from 2018–2019 found that 123 Indigenous languages are spoken in Australia today. 109 of these are considered endangered, and all are under threat. Driven by historical displacement, military turmoil, and assimilation policies, linguistic diversity is collapsing. Communities are systematically pressured to abandon their ancestral tongues in favour of dominant international languages like English, which carry greater economic prestige and social opportunities. This dynamic fractures intergenerational transmission from parent to child, the vital mechanism of a language's survival. When a language is no longer taught to children, it is set on a path toward extinction.

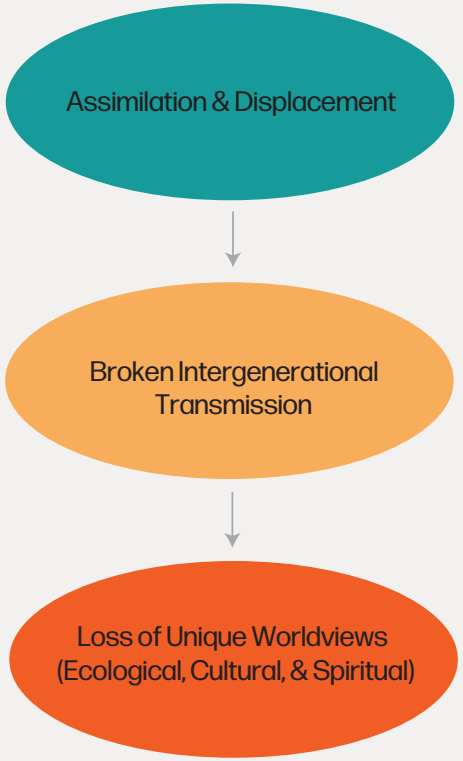


Figure 1. Graphic organizer of how language extinction occurs.



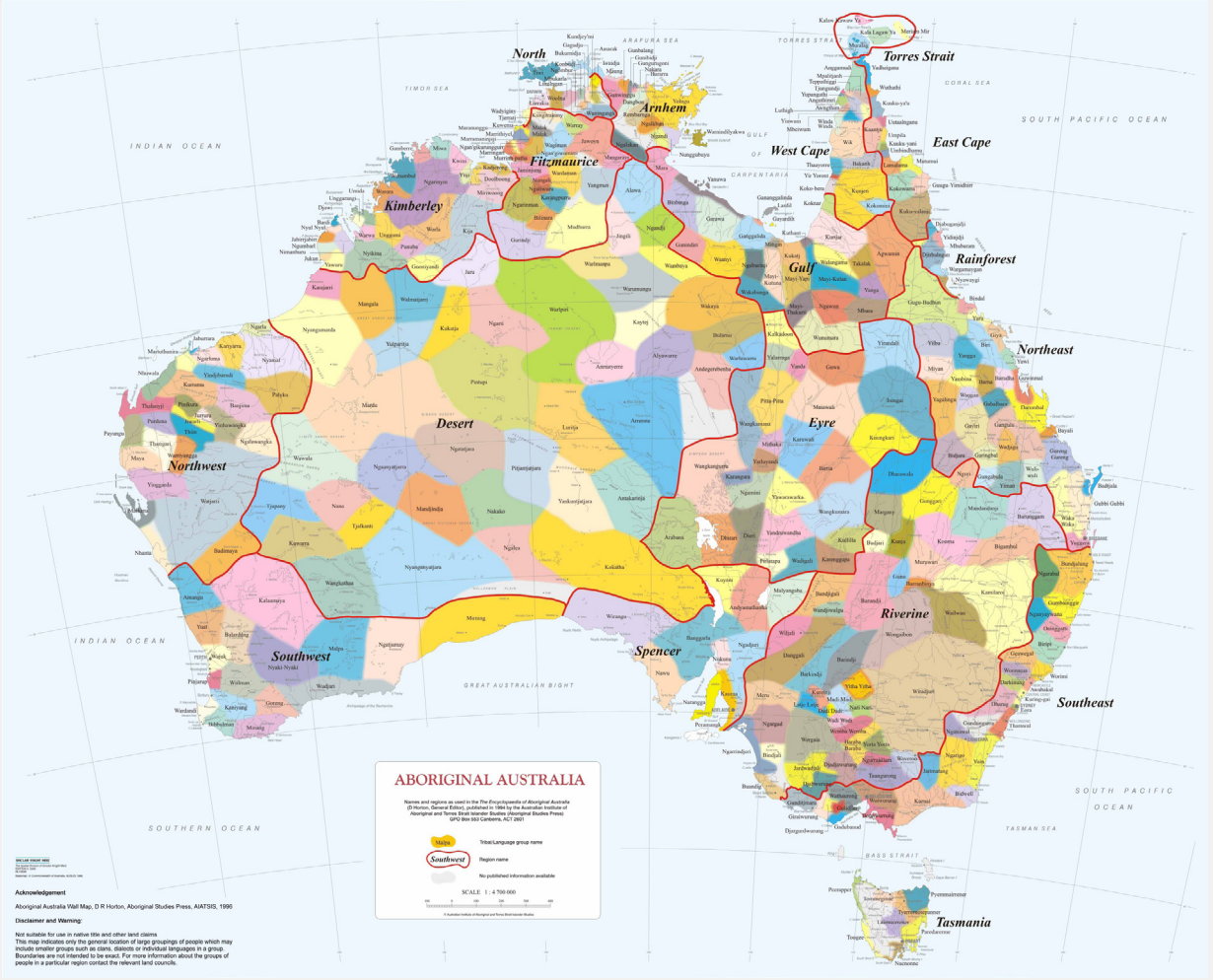
Preserving these endangered tongues is a matter of cultural justice, spiritual resistance, and intellectual necessity. Language preservation acts as a form of resistance against historical colonisation, allowing communities to reclaim their agency and identity. When a language dies, we do not just lose a vocabulary; we lose a completely distinct worldview and culture.

Languages are living repositories of traditional ecological knowledge, localised place-based insights, and oral histories developed over millennia. They encode specific information regarding local flora, seasonal changes, and animal behaviours that cannot be accurately translated into a dominant tongue.

Furthermore, as a vital pillar of human heritage, language anchors an indigenous community's spiritual beliefs and cultural identity. For social innovation projects, they must consider their primary objective depending on the severity of the language's life and its motivations behind doing so, these options shift from passive documentation to archiving to active revitalisation. True language preservation means building community structures and using accessible technologies to reconnect elders with youth, ensuring these irreplaceable systems of knowledge remain spoken in daily life.

i. Statistics

- Around **250–300** distinct Aboriginal languages were spoken across mainland Australia and Tasmania.
- These languages were divided into **approximately 700–800 dialects and varieties**.
- Only about **120 Indigenous languages** are still spoken today.
- **Fewer than 20 languages** are considered strong, meaning children are learning them as first languages.
- According to the 2021 Australian Census, **roughly 76,000 people** reported speaking an Indigenous Australian language at home.



ii. Strategy



From Crisis Management to Language Stabilization

Preservation of indigenous languages is crucial for Australia to maintain its heritage and cultural distinctiveness, as well as protect its population by strengthening the sense of cultural identity and intergenerational connections. However, in the reality of Australian linguistic diversity, turning each of the hundreds of languages into a national language spoken by millions is unrealistic and, most importantly, entirely unnecessary. Cultural preservation and support of indigenous communities do not require such extreme measures. What truly is important is strategic movement away from chaotic crisis management, consisting of misaligned initiatives on preventing language extinction, towards the structured system of sustainable language stabilisation. This will allow us to turn Aboriginal languages into strong pillars of Australian national identity and celebrated parts of its culture.

Each language exists in unique circumstances and requires a different level of support. Some languages may need wider adoption outside of the grassroots community, strong representation in education and media. Meanwhile, other languages may need to be strengthened in relation to cultural traditions and inside the original community, ensuring stable preservation within tighter Aboriginal social groups. Sometimes, the most reasonable strategy for a language is proper documentation and archiving for historical and educational purposes.

What we suggest is introducing a tailored systematic approach, covering individual needs of the language, rather than forced unification. The best strategy is to identify and provide the exact support for each language that is needed to bring it to the stage of preservation most suitable for this specific language, depending on the size of the community, connection to culture and heritage and historical value.

Language Vitality Scale

To bring this systematic approach to life, the first step is clearly identifying the current status of the language and deciding on the desired level of preservation for this specific language. In order to do that, we have developed a Language Vitality Scale (LVS). This scale identifies various statuses of the languages within Australia, defines each of them and includes the criteria required to bring the language to the said stage. As mentioned above, it is irrational to set a universal goal of making each language widely spoken and nationally adopted. The LVS helps not only to clearly identify the current language status but also to set a realistic benchmark for its preservation.

Furthermore, language revival is a long, complex process that cannot happen overnight. A language cannot be turned from being extinct straight to being used on a regional level. Language rehabilitation happens in consequential steps. The scale outlines the entire journey from any current status to any desired one, presenting clear stages required to reach the final goal. It turns a sophisticated process into a clear plan. This way, the LVS is not just a tool for status identification but a practical instrument that offers a step-by-step strategy that can be tailored to each language.



Two-Directional Approach and Strategy Alignment

This framework is designed to support official institutions in their work on Aboriginal language preservation. It offers structured systems that offer a universal yet tailored strategy for the revival of large numbers of languages to relevant ministries in federal and territory governments, as well as major language preservation organisations, responsible for strategic planning of culture preservation actions in the country.

However, the LVS can also be adopted on a micro level by local communities or smaller independent groups. Often, small groups of enthusiasts are willing to take action but struggle to develop a strategy or communicate with authorities. By using this guidebook, they can identify their language status and see what steps are required to take it to the next level. They can then use it to act independently or reach out to relevant officials. The use of a unified system allows better understanding and alignment by helping local groups turn their approach from broad funding requests to clear proposals that fit perfectly into the system already used by the authorities. This ensures alignment and understanding in the process of working towards the common goal.

A Vision for the Future

This systematic strategy can help transform the Australian linguistic landscape and strengthen its national culture. It offers a shift away from unsynchronised reaction to strategic stabilisation. In the future, language preservation will lead to Australia's unique heritage becoming a fundamental part of its identity, enhancing tourism, promoting cross-cultural education, supporting local communities and intergenerational exchange. By identifying individual approaches to each language and adopting a unified system that works for all languages and parties, we can turn indigenous languages from a fragile part of history to a safely preserved and strongly implemented part of the unique culture of modern Australia.

III. Language Vitality Scale

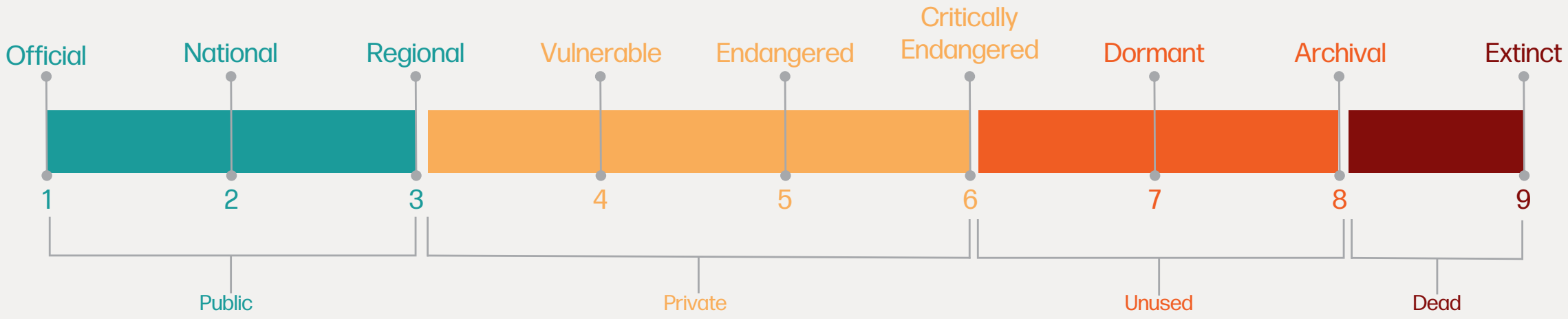


Figure 2. Language Vitality Scale with nine statuses divided into four categories.

1. Official

The language is legally designated for use in a government's administrative, legislative, and judicial proceedings. It is the language of institutional power.

Notably, a country is not required to have an official language; a nation may operate entirely on *de facto* (in practice) dominant languages without ever passing a formal law declaring them official.

Characteristics

- Used in legislative bodies, courts of law, and administrative government business
- Required by law
- May not be the most widely spoken language natively

Example

By law, **Australia does not have an official language**; instead, English functions entirely by societal consensus and historical tradition as the de facto language of government, law, and daily life.

How to Achieve this Status

- Pass laws requiring local, regional, or national government offices to provide services, documents, and public notices in the language
- Enact statutory rights that guarantee citizens the legal right to use the language when interacting with state apparatuses (e.g., in court or when requesting government forms)
- Create dedicated state departments tasked with translating legislation, court proceedings, and government websites in real-time.
- Implement mandatory language training, certification programs, and hiring incentives for government employees, police, and healthcare workers
- Require the language to be used as a medium of instruction (not just taught as a subject) in public schools, ensuring the next generation can read and write it at an administrative level

2. National

The language is spoken by a demographic majority of a country or region, often serving as the primary medium of daily communication and cultural identity.

Characteristics

- Represents the cultural, historical, and ethnic identity of a nation's people
- Of recognised cultural importance, but not mandated for official use
- Usually, the most widely spoken or indigenous language of the populace

Example

English is considered Australia's national language primarily due to its absolute demographic and cultural dominance, functioning as a vital unifying element of society despite lacking a formal legal mandate.





How to Achieve this Status

- Create community campaigns that encourage parents to use the language as the primary medium of daily, domestic communication
- Incentivise the creation of modern media in the language, such as, including music, podcasts, web series, video games, and literature
- Launch community radio stations, television channels, and digital media platforms that broadcast exclusively in the language
- Feature the language prominently in national or regional anthems, cultural festivals, public holidays, and major sporting events
- Promote bilingual or monolingual public signage, commercial storefronts, and street names
- Ensure that speakers face zero discrimination or hiring barriers, and actively encourage businesses to value fluency in the national language across professional sectors.
- Establish degree programs, university courses, and academic research pathways in the language, proving it is fully capable of handling advanced, modern scholarship

3. Regional

The language is officially recognised, protected, or spoken primarily within a specific geographic area or territory of a larger nation-state.

Characteristics

- Tied to a specific territory
- Acts as a primary marker of cultural heritage
- Granted legal or co-official status to ensure citizens can access public education and government services in the language

Example

Noongar, spoken across the southwest corner of Western Australia, is completely inseparable from Noongar Boodja (Noongar Country), a distinct geographic region stretching from north of Geraldton down to Esperance on the south coast, including the city of Perth. While Noongar holds immense legal weight and educational backing within southwest Western Australia, a person cannot use it to fill out federal tax forms in Canberra, nor is it the dominant tongue spoken by the absolute demographic majority of all Australians nationwide.

How to Achieve this Status

- Mandate provincial, state, or municipal governments to pass regional language ordinances that grant "co-official" or protected status within that specific territory
- Enact local policies ensuring citizens have the explicit legal right to receive municipal services, utility bills, and public safety announcements in their native tongue
- Mandate visible, bilingual public signage (street names, government buildings, transit systems, maps) across the specific geographic zone
- Establish regional curriculum frameworks where the language is used as the primary medium of instruction in early childhood and primary education, transitioning to bilingual instruction later
- Fund specialised teaching certifications and create incentives for educators who are fluent in the regional language to work in local schools
- Develop, print, and distribute school textbooks, digital learning tools, and literature tailored specifically to the region's history and linguistic nuances



- Subsidise regional print newspapers, local community radio stations, and regional news broadcasts to keep the language active in daily civic discourse
- Fund community centres, libraries, and archives dedicated to preserving and celebrating the specific regional dialect, literature, and oral histories
- Encourage local businesses, tourism boards, and cultural festivals to adopt and actively use the language, linking it directly to the economic and cultural identity of the area
- Create specialized, youth centric spaces both online and offline to provide the language with the structure it needs to compete against dominant tongues.
- Develop keyboard layouts, spell-checkers, and localised interfaces for popular apps and social media platform

4. Vulnerable

The language is still actively being spoken by younger generations (ages 0-29 years old) and transmitted by older generations, but restricted by certain social environments (e.g. only at home or only in community settings).

When a language is vulnerable, it is still able to maintain its vital thread of intergenerational transmission. This means that children are still growing up in environments that encourage them to listen and speak the language from birth. However, its structural long-term safety is compromised as it operates under a state of diglossia, which is the coexistence of two languages being used under different conditions within a community. Oftentimes, a dominant regional or national language (e.g., English) monopolises formal domains such as schools, government administrations, modern workplaces and mass media. Because of this, while the youth may be fluent, they find fewer reasons to use their mother tongue outside of family or community circles. Therefore, the language becomes structurally restricted, vulnerable to the economic and social prestige of the dominant language, and at a high risk of going into decline if its social constraints erode.

Characteristics

- **Active Intergenerational Transmission.** Children continue to learn the language natively from parents and elders, ensuring the current generation maintains organic conversational fluency.
- **Domain Restriction.** The language is noticeably absent from public institutional spaces, media, and schools, forcing speakers to switch to a dominant language the moment they step outside their home or immediate community.
- **Bilingual Pressure.** Nearly all speakers are fully bilingual, with the younger generation demonstrating increasing preference for the dominant tongue in daily life, signalling a looming shift in linguistic habits.



Example

Pitjantjatjara is an Indigenous Australian language spoken robustly by the Anangu people across the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) lands of Central Australia. Unlike many Indigenous tongues, it is still learned by children as their first language. However, because English dominates formal schooling, media, and regional administration, Pitjantjatjara remains in a vulnerable state, requiring constant bilingual education support to maintain its standing.



How to Achieve this Status

In order to elevate an endangered language up to the vulnerable level, the core strategy must focus on stabilising its boundaries within private homes and community environments. Intervention should not just be preserved through adult generations; it must also make the language teachable at a young age, useful to connect with the community, and socially relevant to the youth.

- Encourage use of the language outside of the home or community. Allow community-wide agreements that the language belongs in public life and the daily sphere.
- Create translations for socially relevant terms and contemporary concepts (technology, pop culture, modern trades).
- Promote and protect youth-centric spaces in which the language can be freely used by the younger generation without reprimand.
- Ensure that court trials can be conducted in the language, including the provision of bilingual judges, stenographers, and legal documentation.
- Launch “Language Nest” programs

5. Endangered

The younger generations (ages 0-29 years old) no longer learn the language as their mother tongue at home, and the youngest active speakers are the parental generation (ages 30-59 years old)



An endangered language has suffered a critical break in its intergenerational transmission. The natural cycle of passing the language down at home from birth has stopped. While the middle-aged parent generation can speak the language fluently with each other or with elders, they do not speak it to their own children. Instead, they raise their children in the dominant national tongue to ensure economic, social, or educational integration.

As a result, children in the community grow up as passive listeners or monolingual speakers of the dominant language. They may understand basic commands or hold deep affection for their heritage tongue, but they cannot generate fluent sentences themselves. The language is no longer used for daily, comprehensive communication by the youth. Without immediate, systemic structural intervention to artificially reverse this shift, the language is locked onto a direct path toward critical endangerment and ultimate dormancy as the parent generation ages.



Characteristics

- **Broken Intergenerational Transmission.** The language has ceased to be the primary tongue taught to the youngest generation in early childhood, meaning natural transmission has effectively dried up.
- **Parent-Generational Ceiling.** Fluency stops abruptly with parents and middle-aged adults. The youth demographic is composed almost entirely of passive learners or non-speakers.
- **Severe Domain Contraction.** The language is pushed out of family domestic life entirely and is generally reserved for private conversations between older adults or specific cultural and ceremonial functions.

Example

Meriam Mir, spoken throughout the eastern islands of Erub (Darnley Island), Ugar (Stephen Island) and Mer (Murray Island). As of 2006 it was estimated that there were just over 200 Meriam Mir speakers.

How to Achieve this Status

To lift a critically endangered language to the endangered level, or to prevent an endangered tongue from sinking lower, the absolute priority is to artificially restart intergenerational transmission where it has broken down.

- Implement the "Language Nest" model. Language nests are immersive, full-time daycare centres and preschools where fluent elders and trained educators wrap young children entirely in the language from infancy to age five.
- Encourage younger parents to rebuild their confidence, urging them to speak and teach the language alongside their children at home.
- Reconnect young adults to the elderly generation of speakers to repair the broken link between transmission and establish a brand-new generation of speakers.



6. Critically Endangered

A language whose youngest fluent speakers belong strictly to the grandparent generation or older.

A critically endangered language is no longer used as a primary method of communication, neither in a social environment nor at home between family members. Such languages are no longer passed down from generation to generation or spoken by youth or their parents. They may not know specific words and phrases heard from the elderly, but they can't speak the language fluently. As a language only fluently spoken by older generations, it is mostly used between the elderly during gatherings, and can be heard in spiritual or religious practices. Such language is highly localised and fragile. The existence of the critically endangered language is tied to the oldest generations. If no actions are taken, once they pass away, the language will lose all fluent native speakers.

Characteristics

- **Strict demographic limitation.** Critically endangered language is only fluently spoken by the elderly. The generations of parents and youth can know specific phrases and have a limited understanding of the language, but below the conversational level of fluency.
- **Basic documentation.** The language must have a foundational level of documentation of its vocabulary, grammar rules and pronunciation. This documentation can be limited and incomplete, but at least minimal basic records are present.
- **Passive community recognition.** Although younger generations do not speak the language, they are aware of its existence, recognise it by name and can have limited knowledge of basic words and common phrases.

Example

Pertame, also known as Southern Aranda, is an indigenous Australian language spoken in the central part of the continent along the Finke River. The language currently has fewer than 30 fluent speakers, all belonging to the eldest generations: grandparents and great-grandparents. The community is taking actions to prevent the language from disappearing, but the language is currently in a highly endangered position



How to Achieve this Status

The most crucial factor separating a critically endangered language from dormant, archival or extinct is the existence of fluent native speakers. If the language has lost its last speakers and they no longer have living descendants that still have strong memories of them, such a language can be taught on the levels of multiple generations simultaneously. However, in the alternative scenario, the best strategy would be to recreate a living speaker base starting from older generations.

First step to bringing language back to the critically endangered stage would be awakening latent knowledge amongst the "silent speakers" - elderly people who could speak the language in the past, but, as time went by and it was no longer used in conversation even in the tightest circles, they forgot the language. These would be the eldest living members of the community. For their lost knowledge of the language to be awakened, they need a safe environment where, with the help of external participants and existing recordings, they can begin speaking the language again. These gatherings should be tied to their lived experience and cultural heritage, structured around parts of the "silent speakers" lives where the language had the strongest presence. Working with them can help reconstruct missing parts of the grammar or pronunciation foundations if the language wasn't properly documented. Once the "silent speakers" reach a basic conversational level of language fluency, this awakened knowledge should be supported by the creation of an environment where they are able to meet regularly to use language with each other and support the further revival process.

In case the eldest generation of the community was never fluent in the language, their memories of the elder relatives speaking it can also create a foundation for introducing the language back in the community. They might remember certain phrases and words, the overall phonetics of the language. Most importantly, these members of the community are its strongest connection to the language and the lost part of the heritage, which is vital for successful language revival.

7. Dormant

A language that currently has no living, fluent speakers, but maintains a strong cultural connection to a community that is actively taking actions to revive it with the use of existing historical records.

A dormant language, also sometimes referred to as "sleeping", is the most unstable state of the indigenous language. It is a term used to describe a transitional state of the language, which has lost its last native fluent speakers but is in a state of revival. Such language is not used in daily communication by any living generation. However, the community remains tightly connected to the language through its culture and traditions. Even though the community lost its ability to speak the language, it remains a vital part of their shared identity and lives through memories, separate phrases like welcomes or blessings, prayers and old songs. The community is dedicated to preserving and strengthening this connection. They study existing records, work with old textbooks and take actions to reclaim this part of their heritage.

Characteristics

- **Absence of native fluent speakers.** Dormant language has lost its last native fluent speakers. The community may still remember specific phrases, but the chain of intergenerational language transmission has been broken, and the last generations who could freely speak the language have passed away. *(Note: the language which only living fluent speakers don't belong to the descendant community, is still considered dormant.)*
- **Strong connection to community.** A vital characteristic of the dormant language is its strong connection to the original community and their cultural identity. The community perceives a language as a foundational part of their heritage.
- **Existing viable records.** Dormant language is currently in the state of rehabilitation. For this process to be possible, there must be a sufficient amount of viable historical records, such as dictionaries, audio recordings, texts and missionary translations.
- **Active community-led rehabilitation initiatives.** The descendant community is dedicated to language revival and is taking organised group actions to study and rehabilitate the "sleeping" language.



Example

In 1929, the last fluent native speaker of the **Kaurna** language passed away. The language was slowly disappearing throughout the 19th century after its native speakers were forced away from their land in the process of colonisation of Southern Australia. In the 1980s, Kaurna people began coming back to their ancestral land. They were dedicated to bringing the language back, and with the use of existing historical records and the help of linguists, it was possible to reconstruct the language grammar and vocabulary, and the Kaurna people began learning the language again. There is still a long path to fully rehabilitate the language and bring it back to the lives of its descendants. However, Kaurna people are actively moving the process of their revival by creating learning guidebooks and song albums. The community takes great pride in their language and cherishes it as a foundational part of its heritage. Today, Kaurna is frequently used during a traditional ceremony of Welcome to Country.

How to Achieve this Status

- Ensure access to the academic archives. To move away from academic studies to real-life revival, the existing records must be decentralised. Provide dedicated community groups with access to archives and records, and digitise existing documents of high historical value. Resources like this are usually preserved in museums, archives or universities. It is important to ensure the community has easy access to all resources that can support the rehabilitation process.
- Build a strong library of learning resources. This includes digitalisation of textbooks, creation of modernised textbooks and audio dictionaries, and learning materials for community members of various ages.
- Strengthen cultural connection. Dormant language maintains its connection to the community through cultural heritage. Therefore, the revival process is inseparable from the enhancement of cultural links.
- Linguistic cultural attributes. Cultural rehabilitation begins with heritage: revival and popularisation of unique phrases, ancestral songs, legend, calligraphic art and other parts of culture that exist through language.
- Establish a local language centre. Language revival must be driven by the community. To reach dormant status, a community must have a dedicated group of its members who oversee and lead linguistic initiatives. A language rehabilitation centre can serve both as a place of cultural gatherings and a linguistic centre, offering language learning workshops, housing volunteers working on textbook creation and hosting cultural celebrations and initiatives.

8. Archival

Refer to languages that are no longer spoken natively but have been preserved in written, audio, or video records. They exist primarily to document and preserve linguistic heritage for future generations, often serving as a crucial resource for descendants of the original speakers and for linguistic researchers.

Some common reasons they exist include cultural preservation, research and education, and revitalisation efforts. Characteristically, these languages no longer share a cultural connection to their respective communities, hence making it so that over time they cease to recognise the language as a facet of their cultural identity and merely a tool for academia.

Characteristics

- **Lack of Native Speakers.** They are no longer spoken as a first language by any living community.
- **Preservation Through Documentation.** They exist entirely through written texts, audio recordings, video, or historical artefacts.
- **Static Nature.** Because they are not in daily use, they do not naturally evolve or adopt new slang, idioms, or grammatical shifts like living languages do.
- **Use as a Revitalisation Resource.** They serve as the primary foundation for communities attempting to reclaim or revive their linguistic heritage.
- **Historical and Cultural Value.** They are often preserved specifically for their ability to provide insights into the history, culture, and worldview of the people who once spoke them.

Primary Causes of Language Archiving

- **Cultural Preservation.** To maintain a record of a community's unique cultural identity, history, and traditions.
- **Research and Education.** To provide linguists and historians with valuable data to study language evolution, structure, and the history of human communication.
- **Revitalisation Efforts.** To serve as a foundation for future attempts to revive or reclaim the language by the community.

Examples

- **Mbabaram.** Formerly spoken in North Queensland, this language is famous among linguists for the coincidental fact that its word for "dog" was dúg (pronounced almost exactly like the English word), despite having no relation to English. It was documented by linguist R. M. W. Dixon in the 1970s before its last speaker passed away.
- **Ngamini**. An extinct language from South Australia, Ngamini is preserved only in limited linguistic records and historical texts.
- **Nungali.** Once spoken in the Daly River region of the Northern Territory, Nungali was documented before its extinction, but currently has no active programs working to revive it.
- **Umbugarla.** An extinct language from Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory, Umbugarla was considered an isolate (unrelated to other surrounding languages) and survives today only in academic archives

9. Extinct

Extinct languages refer to a class of languages that are no longer spoken or have died out due to a number of different factors that include cultural assimilation and language shift, economic and political marginalisation, political repression, physical threats to the population and even urbanisation and migration.

Unlike most other classes of languages, extinct languages are the only kind that severely lack documentation or records to cause any form of revival.

Languages typically become extinct due to a combination of social, economic, and physical factors. The most common cause is gradual language shift and cultural assimilation, where a community increasingly adopts a more dominant or economically advantageous language until their native tongue is no longer passed down to children. Other significant factors include political repression or forced assimilation, urbanisation, and physical displacement. Additionally, catastrophic events such as natural disasters, disease, and war can rapidly eradicate small, isolated speaker populations.

Primary Causes of Language Extinction

- **Cultural Assimilation and Language Shift.** This is the most frequent cause of language death. It occurs when a speech community gradually adopts a second, often more socially or economically prestigious language. Over generations, proficiency in the heritage language declines until it is no longer spoken.
- **Economic and Political Marginalisation.** Speakers may abandon their native language to gain better employment opportunities or social acceptance within a dominant culture. This is often reinforced by educational systems that prioritise the national or global lingua franca.
- **Political Repression.** Throughout history, governments have actively suppressed minority languages to promote a single national identity. This includes banning languages in public spheres or forcibly removing children from their communities to be schooled in the dominant language.
- **Physical Threats to the Population.** Languages can disappear suddenly due to events that devastate the speaker population. These include wars, genocide, severe natural disasters, and the introduction of new diseases to isolated communities.
- **Urbanisation and Migration.** When people move from rural areas to cities, or migrate to new countries, they often must adopt the language of their new environment to survive and integrate, leading to the loss of their original language over time.

Examples

- **Adithinngithigh.** Formerly spoken on the Cape York Peninsula in Queensland, this language was unwritten and is now completely extinct with no known revitalisation efforts.
- **Ngkoth**. Another extinct language from Queensland, Ngkoth is preserved only in academic classifications and limited historical records.
- **Ntra'ngith.** Once spoken on the Cape York Peninsula, this language is entirely extinct and lacks the comprehensive documentation required for any modern revival attempt.
- **Popham Bay (Wurrugu).** An extinct language from the Northern Territory, Wurrugu is known only from brief historical records and has no active community of speakers or learners.



IV. Conclusion

Australia has one of the most diverse linguistic landscapes in the world. However, today over a hundred of these languages are at risk of disappearing. The preservation of the indigenous languages is vital not only for protecting a foundational part of the country's heritage but also for ensuring support to linguistic minorities and aboriginal communities, for whom the language serves as part of their cultural identity. Considering the large number of languages spoken in Australia today, preservation can not be happening through chaotic initiatives and reactive crisis management. For ensuring fair resource distribution and stabilization of the existing languages, a systemized framework that allows flexibility to address the needs of each community and unique state of each dialect, must be established.

The Language Vitality Scale provides federal and regional authorities, as well as independent organisations, with a clear structural framework that allows it to systematically address a wide range of languages, providing individual support tailored to each specific dialect and objective. This will allow us to manage the unstable state of Australian aboriginal languages and support linguistic minorities.

Languages are a foundational part of national identity and a bearer of the unique worldview, ecological and social knowledge, spiritual history and cultural heritage. Preservation of the First Nation languages means protecting Australia's unique history and ensuring equal support to all citizens.

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