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Presenter:

Jutta Besold
Australian National University
jutta.besold@anu.edu.au

Title: *A look at orthographic issues in language reclamation in south eastern New South Wales*

Keywords: language reclamation; orthographic issues; Australian Aboriginal languages;

Abstract:

Choice of orthography in the context of Australian Aboriginal languages has been part of discussion for some time. For example, Hudson (1984) and Patz (1991) talked about the Gooniyandi and Djabugay respective orthographies being chosen by speakers of the language(s). The orthographies were “based on their [the language speakers’] knowledge of the representation of English sounds in spelling” (Patz, 1991:252), for example in Gooniyandi, /oo/ was chosen to represent /u/, /ar/ to represent /a:/.

However there has been little discussion about choices of orthographies in the context of reclamation/revitalisation projects where no speakers of the language(s) exist, and work is being done exclusively from archival written material. One such example is found in South Australia, where Amery (2000) and Kaurna community representatives chose to adopt the orthography as it was used by two of the early language describers from the mid 19th century “despite its deficiencies, because the vast bulk of Kaurna words were recorded in it” (Amery, 200:118). This approach was adopted to allow communities to draw upon and extract words straight from the source material without having to go through the process of appropriating the items into a different orthography.

With the increasing Aboriginal language reclamation and revitalisation projects in New South Wales, issues regarding choice of orthographies for teaching purposes arise and I would like to take the opportunity to introduce some of the issues encountered in the evolving Dhurga language projects on the NSW South Coast and invite discussion on this important aspect of research for language teaching purposes.

References:

- Amery, Rob. 2000. *Warrabarna Kaurna! Reclaiming an Australian Language*. Lisse: Swets&Zeitlinger Publishers
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