

LANGUAGE REVIVAL METHODS

WORDS IN ENGLISH

In the early stages of language reclamation, people usually like to start from English, and substitute words of their own language.

This approach has some advantages:

- You can produce early resources quite quickly, without a lot of time needed for language research and checking. One way is to start with words that are already known in your community.
- You can focus on some of the cultural knowledge, traditional stories and so on that give the language its life and meaning
- You can introduce words without translating them, using the English context, pictures, and knowledge of the story to help people work out what the words mean
- You can focus on words around a theme to support a school program, such as 'families' or 'weather'.

IDEAS

For writing stories, or translating traditional stories, people usually like to use the Language name for all their animal or Ancestor characters.

Other people add sets of words, like colours, or a range of important basic words for Country or parts of Country, sun and moon, girl/boy and man/woman, and so on.

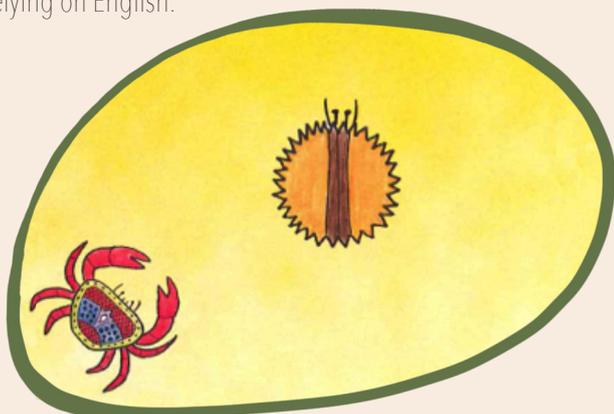
If these are well known, or if you have good clear pictures, there is no need to give the English name as well.

Sometimes people use the English word just once, and after that only the Language word. This helps readers to gradually stop relying on English.



They swam in Dungula, the Murray River, with Danela the fish. (Bartja and Mayila - Yorta Yorta - S. Atkinson, illustration by A. Sax)

Some people like to replace every English word with a Language word. This approach still uses English language patterns, so it's just a matter of finding all the words! Sometimes you might have to be a bit creative about how to look up words. For example, if you can't find 'tall', try 'big' or 'high'. Also, remember that an Aboriginal language does not need the little 'grammar words' that English has, like 'the' and 'an'.



Walalbai nalwar - Small crab - Butchulla - J. Bonner

maranga
this one

nhaa
look

mundai mundai
pretty

galangoor,
good

yaami
said

walalbai
small

nalwar.
crab

LANGUAGE REVIVAL WORKSHOP

WORDS IN ENGLISH

For this workshop, choose a story that is already known in your community. Alternatively, you could use the story below. This story is shared by several different language groups.

A long, long time ago, a giant frog drank up all the water in the rivers, creeks and billabongs, until there was none left. The other animals, afraid of not having any water, discussed what they should do. They agreed that they should try to make him laugh. If they could make the giant frog laugh, then all the water would spill out of his mouth, back into the land. They tried many ways to make him laugh, but they all failed. Eventually, a tiny eel appeared, spinning and twisting on the hot ground. The more the eel wriggled, the more the frog's face spread into a big grin, until finally he could hold out no longer. The giant frog roared laughing, and all the water poured out of his mouth, into the rivers, creeks and billabongs.



THE TASK

Using your own wordlists and dictionaries, choose some of the words in your story to put back into Language.

There are a few ways to go about this:

- You might select a few key words to look up.
 - Sometimes you will be able to find the exact English word you are looking for.
 - If you can't, think about what the word means. You may be able to find a word that is translated slightly differently. For example, what other words have a similar meaning to 'tiny'?
 - Think also about cultural meanings. For example, for an apparently simple word like 'water', you may have several words – one for salt water, one for fresh water, and so on. Your language might not have a word as general as 'animals'. Because Indigenous languages grew up with the land, words for anything belonging to that land usually express very detailed knowledge – such as exactly which animal, whether it is male or female, and so on. So how will you translate 'animals' in your language?
- If your dictionary has a categories section, it is sometimes easier to browse through a category, such as 'land/geographical features', to see what kinds of words you have available.
- Keep in mind that it is not the English words which are important, it is the meaning behind the story. If you have the meaning you want to express, it doesn't matter if it's not quite the same as the English.
- Work up some illustrations to complete your story.
 - Next, think about whether you need English as well as the Language word. Some questions to help with this:
 - Can the reader understand the word from the pictures?
 - Can the reader understand the word from the story context?
 - Would a Language – English wordlist at the back be enough?
 - What about a wordlist at the bottom of the page for any words on just that page?

When you are happy with your story, read it aloud to each other or into your phone or computer.