Aboriginal languages: The same but different

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The ‘doer’ and word order

• All NSW Aboriginal languages share this feature
• We can learn about it in one language, such as Gumbaynggirr
• Now we know to search our own language for such a construction, which may have a different form, that we can keep learning about
• What is the form of the ‘doer’ suffix in your language?
How linguists know what to search for?

• Learning about Aboriginal Languages rather than learning one Aboriginal language
• So just like the ‘doer’ suffix there are many grammatical features that we know to search for in any Aboriginal language when we want to learn about it.
• E.g. I know that a number of NSW languages have dental stops so that I should search for them
• E.g. I know to search for dual pronouns in learning an Aboriginal language
• E.g. I know that all Aboriginal languages has case marking and that there should at least be a Locative form
How linguistics can help in learning

- It can really help to know what to search for while learning a language
- You can also learn about your language by learning about other languages
- Knowing which grammatical features to look for really helps reconstruct a language
Reconstruction

- When there are fluent speakers linguists and Aboriginal language researchers **DESCRIBE** a language
- When there are few or no fluent speakers they **RECONSTRUCT** a language
- This means they take written or audio material and analyse it
- They also work closely with Aboriginal people combining their language knowledge with such archival material
- They use all this to create a grammar of a language
- All NSW Aboriginal languages require some or total reconstruction
- Some have already been through this, some are in the process and some are going to have to start
The same

• They all have to be reconstructed to some degree
• They share many grammatical features
• They sometimes share words

but different

• They are all unique languages
• They have their own words and unique grammatical features
• They are each connected to different country and people