

**Australasian ACE Conference 2013
Adult Community Education Aoteroa
Wellington, June 2013**

HOW DOES ABORIGINAL ENGLISH AFFECT THE LEARNING CONTEXT FOR ABORIGINAL LEARNERS AND TEACHERS?



**Patsy Konigsberg
Institute for Professional Learning
Western Australia**

Welcome

Acknowledgements

- Introductions
- Workshop outline:
 - Background
 - Language Definitions (Activity)
 - What is Aboriginal English? (including activity)
 - How does Aboriginal English affect the learning context for Aboriginal learners and teachers?
 - Two-Way Bidialectal Education and how it effective.

ABC of Two-Way Literacy and Learning

- Informed by well over 20 years of collaborative research (Edith Cowan University, Monash University, Dpt. of Education, WA)
- Developed collaboratively between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal educators, researchers, trainers, officers and community members
- Two-Way methodology (across the State)



Overview and context of DoE collaborative research with ECU/Monash through the *ABC of Two-Way Literacy and Learning*

- 1990 English as a Second Language Review
- 1993-1997 Critical Steps Project
- 1994-1995 Language and Communication Enhancement for Two-Way Education
- 1996-1998 Towards More User Friendly Education for Speakers of Aboriginal English (Solid English and Two-Way English
- 1997 Aboriginality and English
- 1998-1999 Deadly Ways to Learn
- 1999-2000 Aboriginal English Genres in the Yamatji Lands of Western Australia Project)
- 2000 Aboriginal English Genres in Perth Project
- 2001-2002 Recognised and Unrecognised Literacy Skills of Aboriginal Youth

Collaborative research through the *ABC of Two-Way Literacy and Learning* (since 1996)

- 2002 Ways of Being, Ways of Talk
- 2002 The Representation of Aboriginal English in Schools Materials
- 2003-2004 Improving understanding of Aboriginal literacies: Factors in text comprehension
- 2004 An Evaluative Survey of Western Australian Education Professionals' Attitudes Towards and Understandings about Aboriginal English
- 2005 ABC of Two-Way Literacy and Learning Capacity-Building
- 2007-2009 Aboriginal Literacy Strategy Review
- 2009-2012 “Understanding stories my way”: Aboriginal English Speaking Students’ (Mis)understanding of School Literacy Materials
- 2005-2012 Tracks to Two-Way Learning
- 2013 Cert III in Two-Way Aboriginal Liaison

Key research findings:

- Aboriginal English - distinct dialect among Aboriginal students in WA
- Aboriginal English affects behaviour, expression and understanding.
- Literacy does form a part of Aboriginal youth culture.
- Materials used are not very conducive to bidialectal literacy development.

Key research findings:

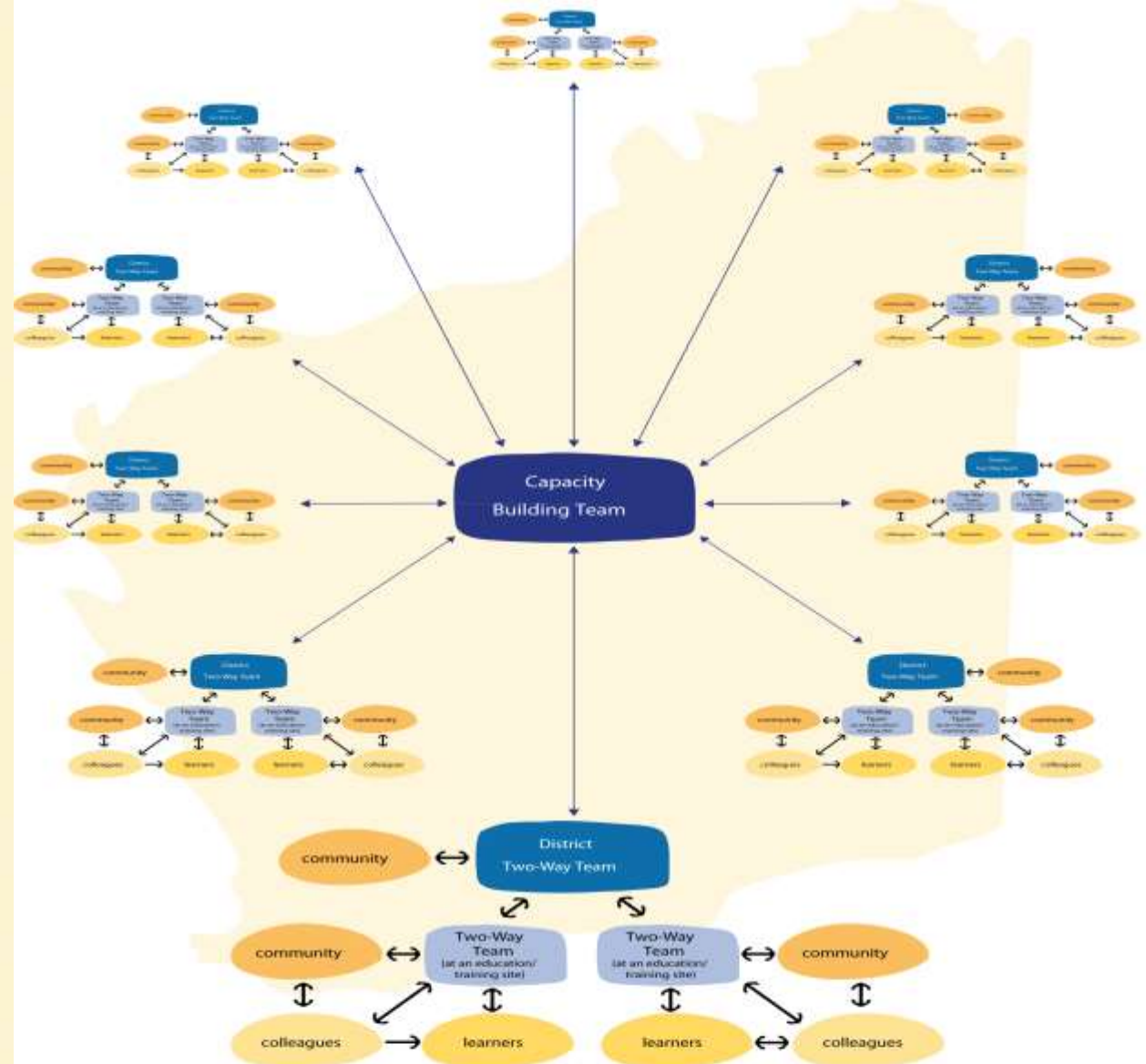
- Aboriginal speech use behaviours differ from Anglo speech use behaviours.
- Aboriginal genres differ from Anglo genres.
- WA Aboriginal English - not fundamentally different from that spoken in other states.
- Aboriginal English and SAE are not underpinned by the same conceptual frameworks.

What does 'ABC' stand for?

- A - Acceptance of Aboriginal English;
- B - Bridging to Standard Australian English; and
- C - Cultivating Aboriginal ways of approaching experience and knowledge.

ABC of Two-Way Literacy and Learning Capacity Building Project

- 14 Two-Way Teams
- 9 education regions
- 28 education and training sites (including schools)
- Total of 42 educators



ABC of Two-Way Literacy and Learning: Capacity Building Project

Aboriginal Literacy Strategy

- Two-Way Education
- Structured literacy session, taking account of and building on Aboriginal learners' competence in 'Home Language'.
- All remote schools
- 13 English Language and Literacy Consultants



System-wide development

- 1995 Policy on Aboriginal English
- 1998 West Australian Curriculum Framework
- 2003 Review of Achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students in English Language Competence Review
- 2005 Advice to national Australian Education Systems Official Committee
- 2005 Presentation to the Council of Australian Governments
- 2006 Senior EAL/D Course with recognition of Aboriginal English

Influencing system-wide policy (cont.)

- 2005 National recognition of the need to take account of Aboriginal English (Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005-2008)
- 2011 Inclusion of the terms 'Aboriginal English' and 'English as an Additional Dialect' in Australian Curriculum
- 2012 *Tracks to Two-Way Learning* resource launched by Minister of Education
- 2013 Input into Australian Institute for Teachers and school leadership (AITSL) course content

Extension across other areas of governance

- Not just education but also
 - Health
 - Family and children Services
 - Corrective Services
 - Western Australian Police Force
 - Drug and Alcohol rehabilitation
 - Housing
 - Department of Public Prosecution
 - Equal Opportunity Commission
 - Office of the Public Prosecutor

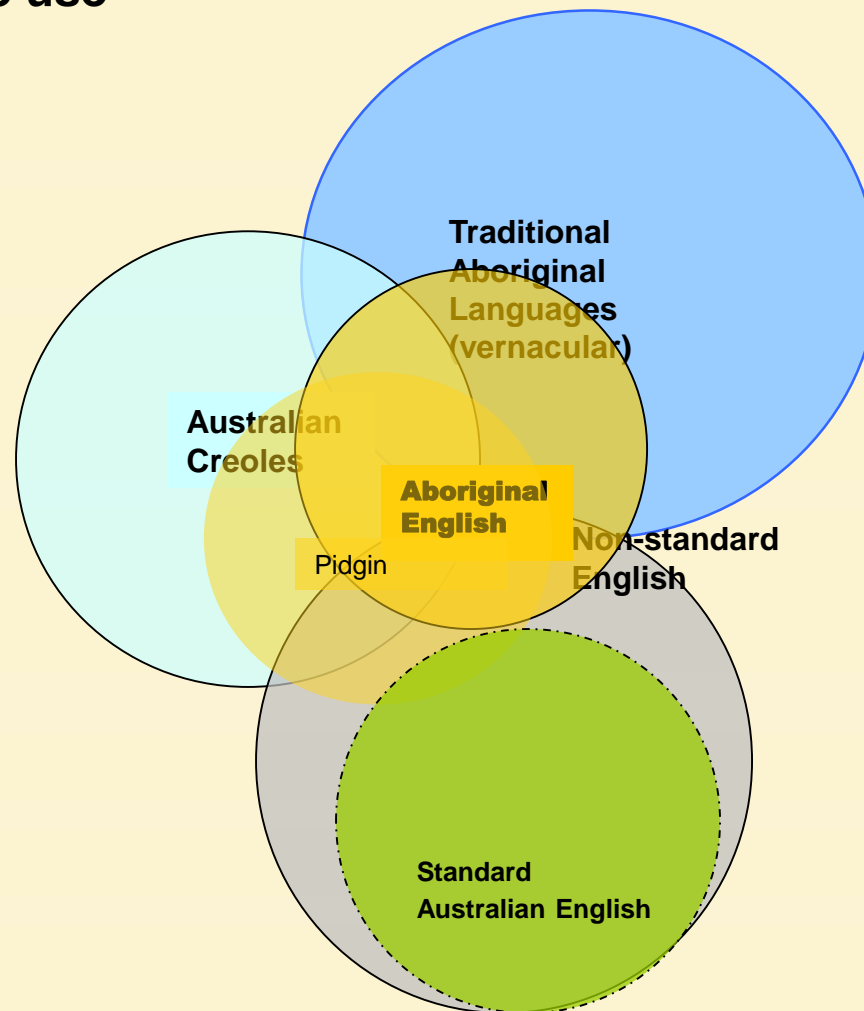
What languages?

- Definitions
 - traditional Aboriginal Languages
 - pidgin
 - creole
 - Kriol
 - Aboriginal English
 - Standard Australian English

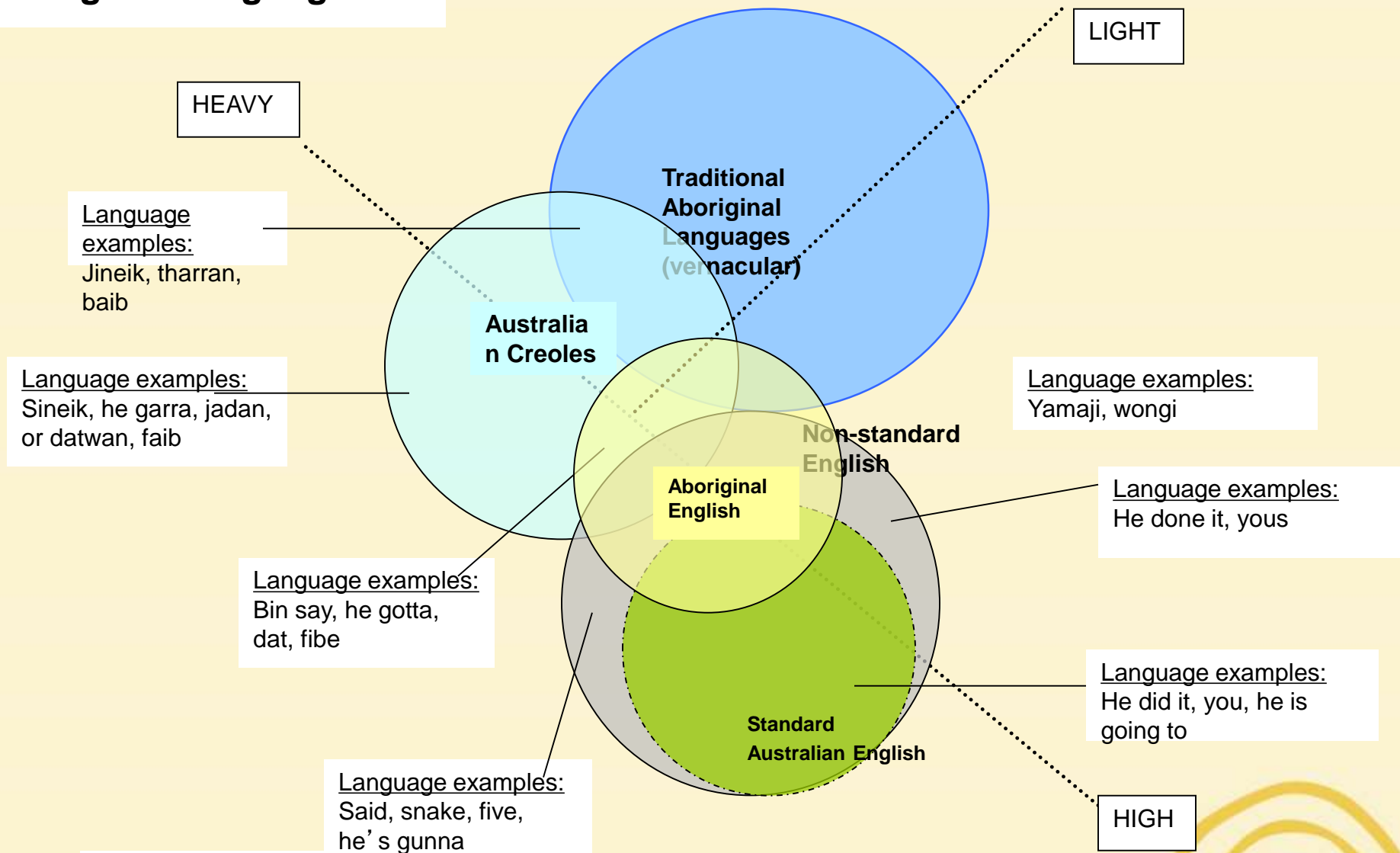


This Aboriginal languages map was created by David R Horton based on language data gathered by Aboriginal Studies Press, AIATSIS and Auslig/Sinclair, Knight, Merz, (1996). The map attempts to represent all of the language groups of Indigenous people of Australia.

Aboriginal Language use

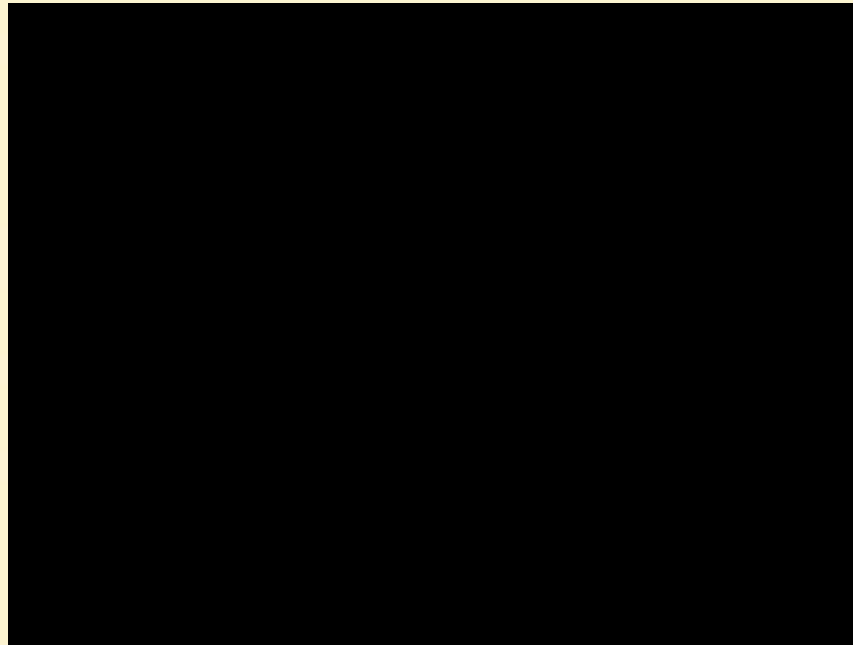


Aboriginal Language Use



Prof Ian Malcolm
Joyce Hudson
Patricia Konigsberg

- **Aboriginal English: Is it a Language or not?**



What is Aboriginal English?

- English spoken by Aboriginal people throughout Australia – lingua franca
- Distinctive features of accent, grammar, words, meanings, use of language and interpretations
- Features show continuity with traditional Aboriginal languages
- Powerful vehicle for the expression of Aboriginal identity

Aboriginal English

We go hunt then we eat the feed what we hunt for. We eat kangaroo and emu and my pop was winyarn.

Aboriginal English is a complex and rule-governed dialect of English which differs from Standard Australian English in systematic ways, at all levels of language, including underlying conceptual systems.

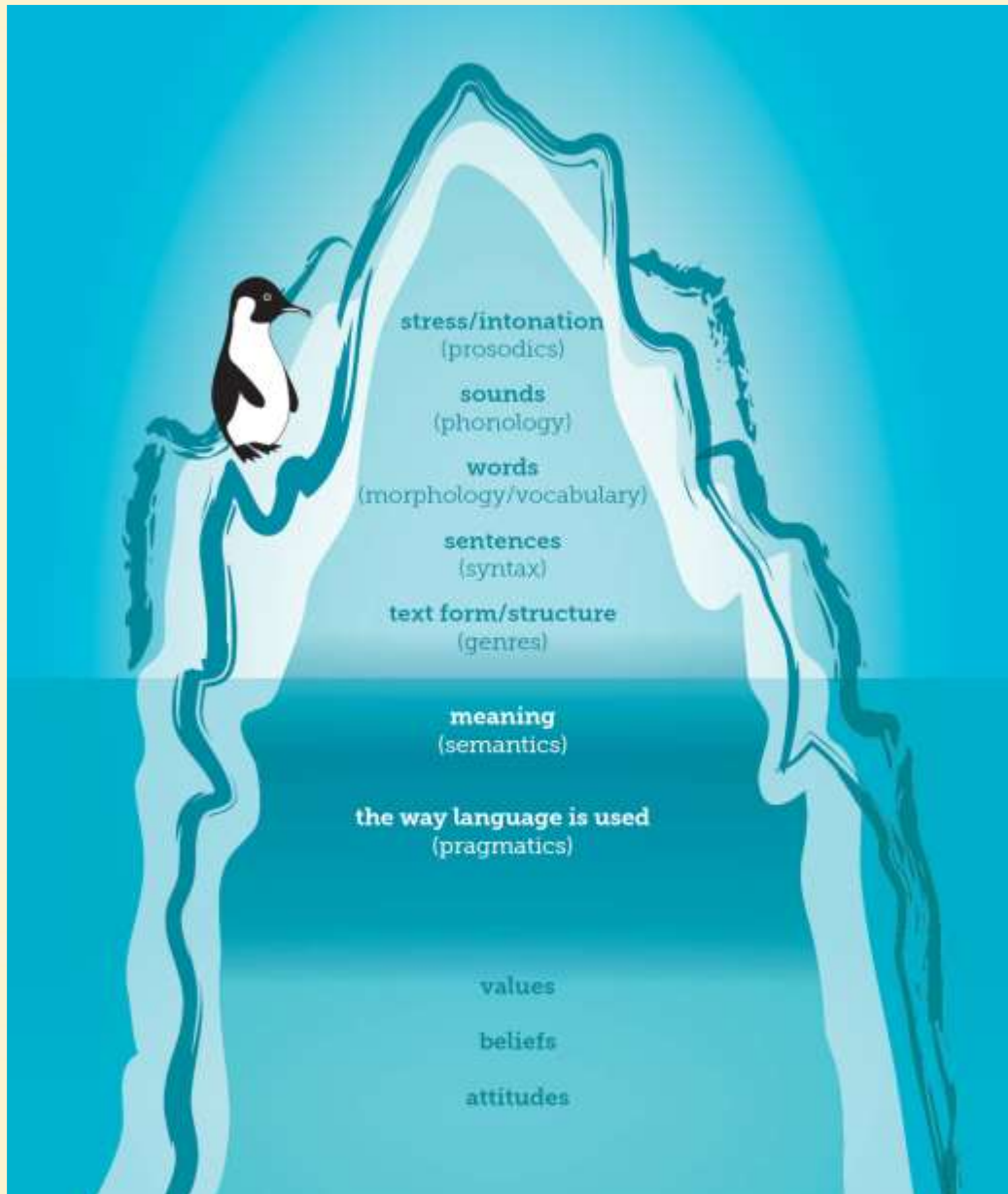
*The layers of language
above and below*

We go huntēn

The feed what we hunt for

We eat

My pop was winyarn



ABORIGINAL ENGLISH

- “*Aboriginal English* is the term covering a range of English spoken by Aboriginal people in Australia which are distinct from General Australian English on the one hand and English-based creoles of northern Australia on the other.

It is characterised socially by being spoken (...) by Aboriginal people (...), linguistically by carrying certain defining features in phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics and socio-linguistically by being associated with certain speech genres, events and communicative strategies.”

“..., it cannot be compared with other dialects of English spoken in Australia because, unlike them, it is not the inheritance passed down by an unbroken succession of native English speakers, but as a result of a complex process of adaptation in a situation where, in many parts of Australia, Aboriginal people had to make a bridge to the English of the settlers by way of an intermediate language of which their children were to become the first native speakers. Aboriginal English is a unique form of English in Australia because it is both evidence and a living record of 200 years of unequal contact between Aboriginal people and those they had to talk to in English. It bears some features which, in general English, are now archaic, some which represent a streamlining of English grammar, some which lend to the way English works and is interpreted on alternative logic.”

How is Aboriginal English different to Standard Australian English?

- Knowledge and experience are informed by and interpreted on alternative logic and cultural conceptualisations:
 - Holistic (versus segmentation: time, quantity, measurements))
 - Group/family oriented (versus individual orientation)
 - Kin relationships and owners' of knowledge
 - Spiritual (versus materialistic)
 - Times/pace relationships
- Different schemas and categorisations:
 - Animate/non animate, food/animals, gender...
- These conceptualisations are marked linguistically, eg:
 - modification of pronoun system,
 - narratives about individual human beings are very rare, etc..

How is it that we speak the same
language,
but we cannot understand each other?



The time the wadjalas stopped at our place
theys auny Glens cobbas
Jane han the other lady
the one that hate the bardi
han she ate it raw too
a rreall big one
an she never even bit the ead off
an Jane haks er
does that wiggle goin down
cause Ebony ate one too
she jus grabbed it outta the plate an bit it
cos Berty Beetle walked over the line
an caught a big mob of em
mightee bout ten
an she reckoned they was big ones
bigger n the ones she ad at Kalgoorlie
an we all went ooooooer
han started laughin
an Ebony ad one still pokin outta er mouth
han she got jarred for screamin
cause her mum took hit off er
Jane said to Berty whats that taste like
han e said it taste sorta like peanut budder
But Joey said

not even
it taste like scramble egg unna
an Robby said nahh it taste like
a bit like nuts
or somethin
Jane didn't like em much
cause you could see on her face
Uncle was roastin some out the back
on the fire
an she said where you get em from Berty
an e said I know where ta get em
Pop showed me where ta get em
an ow ya look for the oles they in
an Joey reckon cos Pop told him
the old fullahs reckon that
ya can see em through the wood
an that other lady you know the other one
Kylie said that er name's Alison
She hate another one but it was cooked this
time
han she went mmmmmmm
an we was all laughin
hand Berty said shes a cruel yorka

Questions relating to: 'Wadjellas Eating Bardies' .

1. What is the meaning of 'our place' ?
2. Who were the visitors?
3. What did Alison do wrong with the food she was offered?
4. Why were they worried about Ebony?
5. Where did the food come from?
6. Who had seen Bardies in Kalgoorlie?
7. What happened when Ebony cried?
8. What had Joey found out from pop?
9. What did Alison think of the taste of the Bardies?
10. Why did Bertie think she was cruel?

Activity

- Discuss with partner:
 - With reference to the iceberg, what Aboriginal English features can you identify?
(sounds, words, sentence structures, pragmatics, order of events, text structure..)
 - Pay particular attention to the cohesion related to the word 'cause' or 'cos' and to the pronoun 'she'

Words mean different things

<i>hate</i>	ate (phonological)
<i>mightee</i>	might be (phonological)
<i>jarred</i>	(scolded) unsettled, rocked, in SAE it refers to something physical (semantics- AE has maintained the metaphoric sense of the term, whereas SAE has maintained only the physical)
<i>hit</i>	it (phonological)
<i>cruel</i>	great, terrific, very good (used as intensifier)
<i>not even</i>	that' s what you think!
<i>big mob</i>	of bardis
<i>reckoned</i>	said

Use of different words and word forms

yorkas

we was

unna

they was

wadjallas

theys (they was/they is)

haks (asked)

it taste like

scramble egg





The time the **wadjalas stopped** at our place

theys auny Glens cobbas

Jane han the other lady

the one that hate the **bardi**

han **she** ate it raw too

a rreall big one

an **she** never even bit the ead off

an **Jane** haks er

does that wiggle goin down

cause **Ebony** ate one too

she jus grabbed it outta the plate an bit it

cos Berty Beetle walked over the **line**

an caught a big mob of em

mightee bout ten

an **she** reckoned they was big ones

bigger n the ones she ad at Kalgoorlie

an we all went ooooooer

han started laughin

an **Ebony** ad one still pokin outta er mouth

han she got **jarred** for screamin

cause her mum took hit off er

Jane said to Berty whats that taste like

han e said it taste sorta like peanut budder

But Joey said

not even

it taste like scramble egg **unna**

an Robby said nahn it taste like

a bit like nuts

or somethin

Jane didn't like em much (Jane ate them too)

cause you could see on **her** face

Uncle was roastin some out the back on the fire

an **she** said where you get em from Berty

an e said I know where ta get em

Pop showed permission from pop me where ta get em

an ow ya look for the oles they in

an Joey reckon cos Pop told him (permission from pop)

the old fullahs reckon that

ya can see em through the wood

an that other lady you know the other one

Kylie said that er name's Alison

She hate another one but it was cooked this time

han **she** went mmmmmmm

an we was all laughin

hand Berty said **shes a cruel yorka**

Pragmatic differences (rules for communication)

- Conversational organisation
- Assumed knowledge
- Economy of words
- Coherence of text
- Sequencing
- Classification and categories
- Perception and expression of space, time and quantity, including specificity

Pragmatic differences (rules for communication)

- Social protocols
- Responsibility of speakers and listeners
- Expression of manners
- Questions and associated discourse rules (direct versus indirect)
- The role of silence
- Gratuitous concurrence (yes)

Conceptual differences

- Cyclical versus linearity (sequencing of events)
- Vagueness versus precision
- Foregrounding/backgrounding
- Spiritual/material world
- Schema-based linking rather than text-based

John Brown wouldn't let
the midnight cat in

Rose got sick

She stayed in bed

The midnight cat was
rubbin his back against the
window

She saw somethin move
around in the bushes

The cat was laying
under the tree

Rose an dog was
sitting under the tree

He was waitin for his
breakfast



Protector

Sickness

Scary

Protector

Good cat



Bad cat

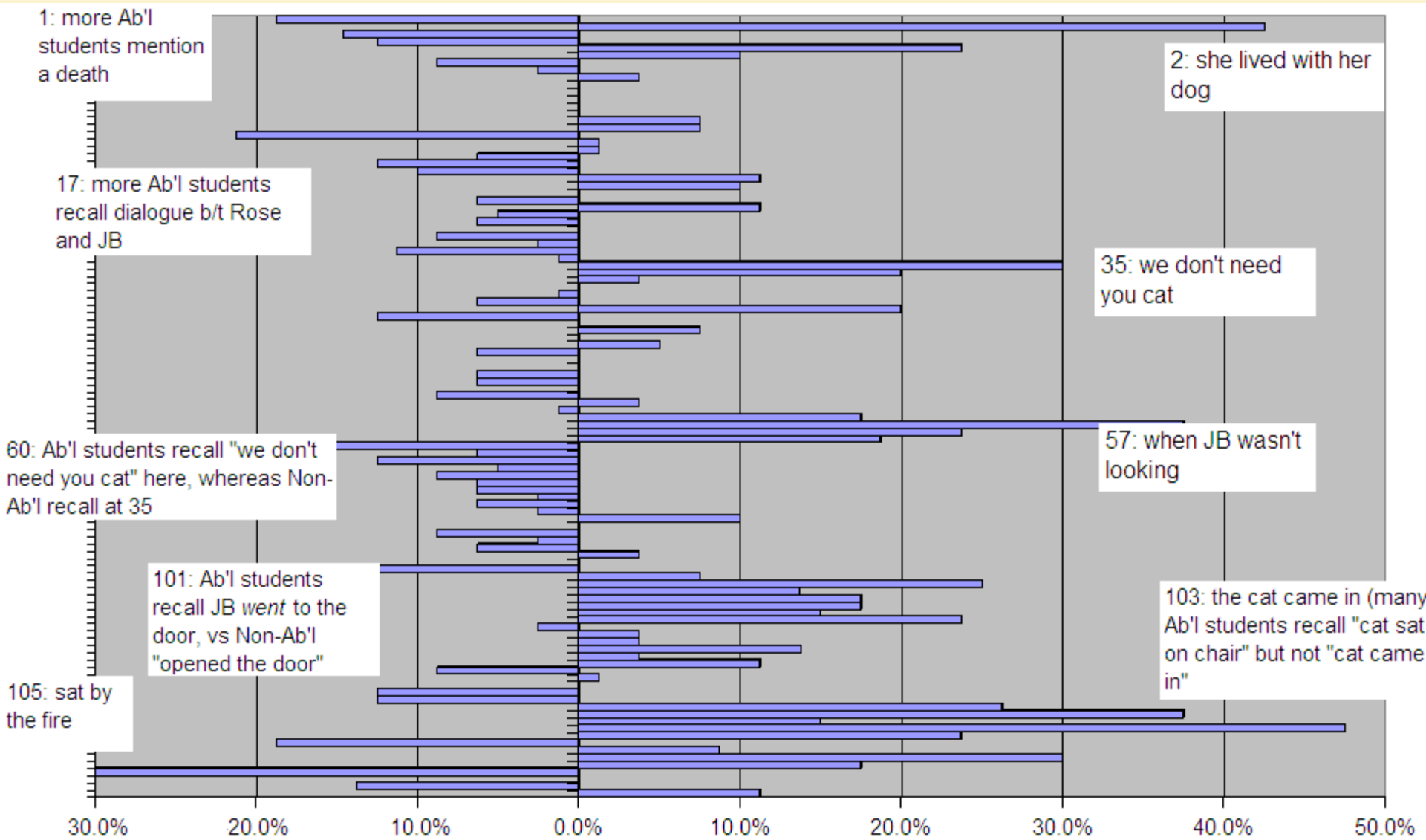


ORIGINAL TEXT

Aboriginal

Differences in recall by idea unit

Non-Aboriginal



How does Aboriginal English affect the learning context for students?

- The learner encounters problems in understanding and in being understood.
- The learner is insecure about how to communicate.
- What the learner already knows and can do is likely to be overlooked and not understood
- The learner gets frustrated and is likely to give up (ie, disengagement, absenteeism, dropping out of school, course).



How does Aboriginal English affect the learning context for teachers?

- Teachers are likely to misinterpret what the students are saying or doing as incoherent or irrelevant
- Teachers may fail to recognise Aboriginal learners' knowledge and misdiagnose Aboriginal learners' competence
- Aboriginal learners may seem inattentive, switched off, rude, abrupt or impolite when in fact they are using different pragmatics.



Helpful strategies

- Refrain from making assumptions, negotiate meaning wherever possible.
- Become a learner of Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal English.
- Explore differences in meaning and semantic fields.
- Seek advice and engage in continued professional learning with regards to Aboriginal English.

Helpful strategies

- Raise awareness about Aboriginal English and differences between AE and SAE.
- Foster code-switching skills.
- Explicit teaching of Standard Australian English conceptualisations and its related structures, features, and pragmatics as an additional language.

The monodialectal approach

- One English only: Standard Australian English.
- Tends to assume Aboriginal students' language as deficit
- Tends to deny Aboriginal students access or participation

Professor Ian Malcolm (2010):

“To assume that Aboriginal English speakers will learn Standard Australian English on the basis of ignoring, or even repudiating, the English they already have is to assume they will embrace
the alien in favour of the familiar,
the unknown in favour of the known,
the mysterious and threatening in favour of the intimate and homely.

To assume that Aboriginal English speakers will see the need for a literacy which denies expression of their own meanings in favour of the meanings of people they can only hesitantly trust and understand is to overestimate their credulity.”

The dialect sensitive approach

- Uses Standard Australian English as the main language of instruction
- Includes some measure of dialect awareness
- Allows for 'difference' rather than 'deficit' approach
- Does not provide opportunities to investigate deep-level understandings

Two-Way Bidialectal approach

- Recognises that Aboriginal students have two dialects
- Allows Aboriginal English to be used in class
- Non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal learners talk to each other and learn from each other
- Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Educators work as partners in teams (Two-Way Teams)
- Based on mutual respect of differences (no value judgement) and includes:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relationship building• Mutual comprehension building | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Repertoire building• Skill building |
|---|--|

‘Two-Way’ in WA

- Equal partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people
- Genuine collaboration
- Respect
- Takes into account both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal perspectives
- Mutual and reciprocal comprehension building
- Mutual and reciprocal skill building



‘Two-Way’ in WA

- Working as a two-way team means making the implicit explicit by
 - Deconstructing the language
 - Analysing its meanings and exploring how it used and conceptualised
 - Aboriginal learners are guided in the development of Standard Australian English (by expanding their competence in SAE, not by replacing their cultural identity; it’s additive)



QUESTIONS?

FURTHER INFORMATION AND CONTACTS:

- *Tracks to Two-Way Learning:*
 - For a free downloadable copy or to order a hard-copy, google: “WestOne Services”, click on “Resources”, “Vet Resources” and search for this title.
- To contact Patsy Konigsberg, email:
 - Patricia.konigsberg@education.wa.edu.au

